

Exploring Together: Navigating Hybrid Engagement

Session 1: Emerging Practices & Challenges

August 18, 2021

Notes

Please review this document for a summary of the conversations from the first session of the MAPC Hybrid Engagement workshop series. This was a virtual workshop that brought together 166 participants over 1.5 hours to discuss emerging practices and challenges in hybrid engagement.

To view the full recording, please [click here](#).

To view the slides from the presentation, please [click here](#).

The below notes and recommendations reflect the chat and small group conversations that took place during the workshop.

Participants: 166

Industries/Roles Represented:

- Municipal Staff
- IT staff
- Elected Officials
- Cable Access TV Staff
- Other

Key Concerns with Hybrid Engagement:

- Technology & Set Up
 - Issues around lack of technology
 - Access to affordable and appropriate technology
 - Enabling two-way interactions
 - Having access to technical support (as staff and for participants)
 - Time needs of set up and breakdown
 - Increased demand on the work of cable access news staff
 - Managing recordings
 - Cost and need of outfitting meeting spaces with appropriate technology
 - Frequent updates and changes in zoom, you need to stay on top of it to avoid issues during live meeting
 - Concerns with zoom bombing
- Engagement & Facilitation
 - Effectively engaging remote and in person participants at the same time
 - Virtual meeting fatigue
 - Experience level of participating public using the tools we have at our disposal
 - Managing multiple sources of comments
 - Ability to read the room with mixed participation
 - Mutual awareness of everyone in the meeting (i.e. in person participants can see who is participating remotely and vice versa)
 - Increased demand of staff capacity and split attention/capacity with needing to staff both in person and remote
 - Need for strong facilitators who are championing this process/experience

- Continued need to onboard individuals to zoom/tech use
- Trouble knowing whether virtual participants are present – mixed messages with use of video and/or multi-tasking
- Developing a process for speaking by attendance (board, in-person, raised hands virtually, etc.)
- How to manage an event when you have low staff capacity (1-2 people hosting entire event with both in person and remote components)?
- How to identify members in person on a screen if they are not joining via individual devices
- "Seeing the room" depending on how a meeting is structured. Webinar vs. meeting. Video for panelists only or all participants. Having participants moved to PANELIST in order to speak (e.g. public speaks). If in a hybrid meeting and only panelists are permitted video, the general public can't see who else may be participating.
- Equity & Access:
 - The digital divide
 - Equitable engagement of remote and in person participants
 - Equitable staffing for hybrid events (I.e. having clarity on when and why we ask staff to participate in person vs. Remote)
 - Accessibility for people who are hard of hearing or other needs
 - Simultaneous translation. Having interpreters in person and virtual and making sure everyone is saying the same things.
- Policy & Regulations:
 - How will Open Meeting Law requirements impact hybrid and/or remote participation?
 - Need for privacy and security vs. registration requirements creating a barrier to access.
 - Policy around video use (or lack of) during public meetings. Should video be required for participation?
 - Policy that could fund for technology and staffing (CARES act was helpful for this)
 - Policy and/or guides around when to choose hybrid/when hybrid is the best option
 - Policy on naming (I.e. do people need to use full name when using zoom?)
 - Wonder about Open Meeting Law and if there is a violation when participants are required to register in advance of a meeting
 - What is a quorum? Is it for in person participation only or are virtual members counted as well?
 - Use of facial recognition technology?

Ideas Shared:

- Technology & Set Up:
 - Using gaming technology for virtual facilitation
 - Platform uniformity helps the public know what to expect
 - One municipality keeps a playlist for each department on their youtube channel, which includes all relevant videos to that department. This keeps the information organized and categorized for constituents
 - Using the hand raise function on zoom offers a really easy/streamlined way to keep track of order of remote participants
 - Using CARES funding to support funding for technology purchases
- Engagement & Facilitation:
 - To Chat or not to Chat:
 - We've left chat on, mainly so that people can let us know of technical difficulties. When discussion veers toward commenting on something on the agenda, they are directed to wait

until the Chair opens discussion to public comment. We only allow comment in chat when the person is having audio difficulties, and the Chair will read the comment.

- It is always great idea to have someone as a chat/Q&A staff person.
- During Zoom meetings, we disable the chat and Q&A features. We found there were too many chats occurring among attendees that went way off topic. We have had a huge increase in participation during remote and hybrid meetings.
- I like the idea of also engaging new people in local government - and by giving someone a “role” would be a great way to intro people into what your municipality is up to!
- Meeting hosted on zoom (presentations and main speakers via zoom) but there was an on-site watch party and there was a person on site facilitating and managing the in-person attendees
 - Shifted/leveled playing field of folks on zoom vs. folks in person
 - Focus was on remote participation/adjustment
 - Folks in person would come up to laptop in the room to ask questions
 - Flips the hybrid meeting frame of hosting on zoom and then in person participants can watch in
- Remote participation has created a pathway for municipal engagement
- Helpful to share board packets online ahead of time – including applications and share plans by screenshare (as PDFs and link online to one page with all information)
- In public meetings it is helpful to ask all participants to state full name and address regardless of location or access
- Having clearly defined roles was useful for event facilitation
- Local community colleges and/or high schools with AV, tech, IT or technology programs could be good areas to get volunteer support with a specific knowledge base.
- Hybrid is good because it includes proactive discussion and explanation of topic and throughout the meeting to ensure that all participants have full access and ability to participate.
- Doing dry runs to test out technology/mixed facilitation

Resources Shared:

- a. Blue Jeans (<https://www.bluejeans.com/>)
- b. Owl Pro
(https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07WNK4PHW/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o01_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1)
- c. We started a conversation on using volunteers to help facilitate hybrid meetings. After a quick Google, here are two Community Colleges with communications programs:
 - i. <https://www.bhcc.edu/programsofstudy/programs/communicationconcentration/>
 - ii. http://catalog.massbay.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=4&poid=374&returnto=141
 - iii. Tech Goes Home or MACIR could also be some partnership opportunities for additional support
- d. <https://www.mentimeter.com/>
- e. <https://miro.com/app>
- f. MassAccess is an advocacy agency for community media in MA. You can register for their listserv here: <https://www.massaccess.org/get-involved/join/>
- g. <https://minutessolutions.com/>
- h. <https://jamboard.google.com>
- i. <https://miro.com/app>