Networking Event Toolkit

In-Person Events

This Toolkit provides Global Networking Night volunteer hosts and co-hosts resources that will empower them to host in-person networking events for their communities.

Here you will find:

- Suggested roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders involved in hosting/co-hosting a networking event.
- Process overview for hosts and co-hosts including key dates to be aware of.
- Harvard Alumni Associations email marketing calendar to promote this event series.
- An event planning checklist to help hosts/co-hosts plan and prepare for their event.
- A suggested agenda/run of show for the program of the networking event.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Club Volunteer Responsibilities:**
  - Host the event and manage event logistics
    - Connect with your fellow SIG co-hosts to coordinate event logistics. The HAA will make these introductions for you.
  - Complement HAA marketing via your own email and social media channels to encourage attendance.
  - Field and respond to any event questions that may come in directly to the Club.
  - Act as host by welcoming guests, facilitating connections, and supporting discussions.
  - Provide information with attendees about how they can further engage.
    - Follow up with attendees (using your registrant download) via email re: further engaging with the club.
- **Shared Interest Group Responsibilities:**
  - Connect with your fellow Club co-hosts to coordinate event logistics. The HAA will make these introductions for you.
  - Complement HAA & Club marketing via your own email and social media channels to encourage attendance.
  - Act as co-host at the event by welcoming guests, facilitating connections, and supporting discussions.
  - Act as an ambassador for the SIG by sharing information with attendees about how they can further engage.
  - Follow up with attendees (HAA will provide you with a list of registrants who opted in to hearing from your group) via email re: further engaging with the SIG.
- **Harvard Alumni Association Responsibilities:**
  - Introduce all co-hosting organizations to each other for each location.
  - Create all registration pages for all GNN events.
  - Track all registrations for all GNN events.
  - Share registration lists with all hosting organizations via registrant download link.
  - Manage an email marketing campaign to encourage alumni to register.
  - Send out event specific confirmation emails/links for all GNN events.

Process Overview:

Below is the general timeline of what hosts and co-hosts of GNN events should expect leading up to the March 16, 2023 event date.

- o Thursday, January 26, 2023 – Deadline for SIGs to sign-up to host/co-host a GNN event
- o Thursday, February 9, 2023 – Event pages begin to become live on the GNN event directory page
  - *Note: your event will not be listed unless you have shared your event link or full venue information with our office*
- o February 7, 2023 at 8:00 a.m. ET – First Information Session via Zoom for hosts and co-hosts on how to host a virtual networking event
- o February 9, 2023 at 2:00 p.m. ET – Second Information Session via Zoom for hosts and co-hosts on how to host a virtual networking event
- o February 16, 2023 – Registrant downloads becomes available for event Club contact & Professional SIG Contacts. Hosts should share downloads via email with co-hosts as applicable.
  - *Note: Registration will not close unless event capacity is reached, so these lists will continue to grow. We recommend re-downloading the list periodically leading up to the event.*
- o Wednesday, March 15, 2023 – HAA to email all registrants with event-specific details including venue information or event link
- o Thursday, March 16, 2023 – Global Networking Night

Email Marketing Calendar:

Once finalized, we will share the email schedule the HAA will use to send out marketing emails to all University- wide alumni inviting them to register for Global Networking Night.

Clubs and SIGs should plan to send follow-up emails to attendees as well to continue to cultivate engagement. This event should be a starting point for building stronger relationships with alumni interested in getting to know your community.

Event Planning Checklist:
- **Getting Started**
  - o Follow-up with all volunteers helping with this event from the introductory email that was sent from the HAA.
  - o Have two pre-event planning calls with all volunteers involved (club leaders and SIG leaders) several days out from the event to determine all details of the virtual event (responsibilities and event flow).
- **On your planning calls**
  - o Determine clear roles and responsibilities for all volunteers involved.
  - o Assign someone to welcome the attendees, share how the event will flow and communicate directions as the event continues.
  - o Really think about who the best person for this role would be. This will be the main person all attendees will see as the "face of the event".
  - o **Think about timing and the appropriate hours for the event**
    - What time do people in your area typically get off work? How far are people coming? How difficult will rush hour be?
    - Consider reserving your space for an extra hour or two to accommodate latecomers. If the event is rolling, try to avoid cutting it short, and encourage people to keep talking (within reason).
  - o **Consider your space requirements**
    - How many people do you anticipate?
    - Can you get a space that is appropriate for that number? Ideally, the space would be small enough to make for a cozy, yet energized, atmosphere but not

so small that people are jostling against each other. Also, do you have any seating? In previous GNNs, some people have noted that it can be difficult to have to stand for two hours or more.

- The HAA strongly suggests providing a capacity amount that is higher than what the venue can accommodate. For free events, the HAA typically sees around 40% attendee drop-off.

  o **Food**
  - Although GNN should remain a free event, previous attendees have occasionally complained about not having any food available.
  - Can your Club or the site host provide any free hors d'oeuvres?
    - You might want to consider holding GNN at a restaurant or bar. Even if the establishment cannot offer any free food, at least attendees will have the option to order snacks and/or meals à la carte.
    - If food will not be available, whether free or for purchase, that is worth highlighting in your messages to registrants.

- **Leading up to your event**
  o Make sure your event is listed on each hosting organizations website.
  o Make sure you provide a link to the [Global Networking Night- City Directory page](#) so alumni know where to register. Please only link to the directory or your specific event page, not the registration form itself. You risk encountering capacity issues if you share the direct registration form link.
  o **Market your event to your membership and make sure your event is listed on your Club and SIG website.**
    - Encourage your Board Members to register early and have them identify their areas of interest on their registration form so that attendees can identify them as well. Plus, having a list of people already registered tends to make others want to register as well.
    - Send an email out to attendees before your event to remind them of time and location. Sending out an email the day or two before your event with the time and location will help eliminate any confusion for the attendees. It's also a good reminder to them that they registered.
    - As a site coordinator, you will have access to download your registration list from the HAA website, so you will have the list of emails to reach out to your attendees. As only hosts will be able to access the download, we ask that you share this information with your co-hosts as applicable.

- **During your event**
  o Considering renting a PA system if you anticipate a large crowd.
    - Your large crowd is there to mingle, so it will be difficult to quiet everyone and shout out the instructions audibly.
  o **Use Facilitators**
    - Some attendees will have specific goals in mind about the people they wish to meet (e.g., "I am interested in moving from the private to the public sector, and I'd like to talk to others who have done the same.") But it can be hard to find those specific other people in a crowded room.
    - You can help the sorting process by appointing a handful of facilitators for various career areas (e.g., law, media, medicine, non-profits, etc.). You might want to arrange your facilitators around the room in certain areas, or you can have them float around the room so long as they are easily identifiable (sign or nametag). While the facilitator might say, "I just met so- and-so and you need to talk to her," others congregating around this person will share an interest and may strike up their own conversations directly.

- o **Use nametags**.
  - Get nametags and big markers – pen is difficult to read on a nametag.
  - Consider using color-coded stickers to help group people by professional area (e.g., yellow = finance, blue = education, etc.), so people can see right away the area in which everyone works without having to ask.
  - Also consider allowing people to advertise their own messages (e.g., "SHOULD I GO TO MEDICAL SCHOOL?", "ASK ME ABOUT NONPROFIT FUNDRAISING", "I AM A DOCTOR, BUT I LIKE GOLF", etc.). Consider opening it up to avocations so that conversations are more wide-ranging.
- o **Do a formal introduction at the beginning of the event.**
  - Take a few minutes to explain the ground rules. If you have facilitators, explain who they are and how to find them. If you are using a colored tag system, explain the system.
  - If people don't have nametags, explain where they can get them.
- o **Ring a bell.**
  - While some attendees will naturally flit about the room making connections, others may feel stuck in conversation and don't want to offend someone by abruptly moving on. Save people the embarrassment by explaining in your opening remarks that it's OK to keep conversations short, and that you will ring a bell from time to time to signal that it's time to move on to another conversation.
- **Post-event**
  - o Follow-up with your attendees to continue to cultivate engagement. This event should be a starting point for Clubs and SIGs to build stronger relationships with recent alumni in your region.
  - o Fill out the HAA host/co-host survey.

- Sharing your insight and what you learned in this process will be crucial as we plan for future virtual networking programs.

Virtual Events

This Toolkit provides Global Networking Night volunteer hosts (Clubs and SIGs) resources that will empower them to host virtual networking events for their communities.
Here you will find:

- Suggested roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders involved in hosting/co-hosting a virtual networking event.
- Process overview for hosts and co-hosts including key dates to be aware of.
- Harvard Alumni Associations email marketing calendar to promote this event series.
- An event planning checklist to help hosts/co-hosts plan and prepare for their virtual event.
- A suggested agenda/run of show for the program of the virtual networking event.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Club Volunteer Responsibilities:**
  - Host the virtual event and manage virtual event logistics.
  - Connect with your fellow SIG co-hosts to coordinate virtual event logistics. The HAA will make these introductions for you.
  - Complement HAA marketing via your own email and social media channels to encourage attendance.
  - Field and respond to any event questions that may come in directly to the Club.
  - Attend an HAA Zoom information session and review virtual event resources provided by the HAA.
  - Act as host by welcoming guests, facilitating connections, and supporting breakout room discussions (if you are utilizing that feature).
  - Act as a club ambassador by sharing information with attendees about how they can further engage.
  - Follow up with attendees (using your registrant download) via email re: further engaging with the club.

- **Professional Interest Shared Interest Group Responsibilities:**
  - Host the virtual event and manage virtual event logistics.
  - Connect with your fellow SIG volunteers to coordinate virtual event logistics. The HAA will make these introductions for you.
  - Complement HAA marketing via your own email and social media channels to encourage attendance.
  - Field and respond to any event questions that may come in directly to the SIG.
  - Attend an HAA Zoom information session and review virtual event resources provided by the HAA.
  - Act as host by welcoming guests, facilitating connections, and supporting breakout room discussions (if you are utilizing that feature).
  - Act as a SIG ambassador by sharing information with attendees about how they can further engage.
  - Follow up with attendees (using your registrant download) via email re: further engaging with the SIG.

- **SIG co-host Responsibilities:**
  - Complement HAA & Club marketing via your own email and social media channels

to encourage attendance.
- Connect with your fellow Club co-hosts to coordinate virtual event logistics. The HAA will make these introductions for you.
- Act as co-host at the event by welcoming guests, facilitating connections, and supporting breakout room discussions (if that feature is being utilized).
- Act as an ambassador for the SIG by sharing information with attendees about how they can further engage.
- Follow up with attendees (HAA will provide you with a list of registrants who opted in to hearing from your group) via email re: further engaging with the SIG.
- **Harvard Alumni Association Responsibilities:**
  - Introduce all co-hosting organizations to each other for each location.
  - Create all registration pages for all GNN events.
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  - Share registration lists with all hosting organizations.
  - Manage an email marketing campaign to encourage alumni to register.
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  - *Note: Registration will not close unless event capacity is reached, so these lists will continue to grow. We recommend re-downloading the list periodically leading up to the event.*
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Email Marketing Calendar:

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Clubs and SIGs should plan to send follow-up emails to attendees as well to continue to cultivate engagement. This event should be a starting point for building stronger relationships with alumni interested in getting to know your community.

Event Planning Checklist:

- o **Getting Started**
  - Follow-up with all volunteers helping with this event from the introductory email that was sent from the HAA.
  - Have two pre-event planning calls with all volunteers involved (club leaders and SIG leaders) several days out from the event to determine all details of the virtual event (responsibilities and event flow).

- o **On your planning calls**
  - Determine clear roles and responsibilities for all volunteers involved.
    - o Assign one person to manage the virtual meeting functions, Zoom calls this person the meeting "host" (facilitating breakout rooms and/or polls, muting microphones when needed).
    - o Assign one to two other people as the Zoom "co-hosts" as backup for the main host in case internet connection is not strong and the main admin host drops off the call.
    - o Assign someone as "MC" to welcome the attendees, share how the event will flow and communicate directions as the event continues.
      - Really think about who the best person for this role would be. This will be the main person all attendees will see as the "face of the event".
    - o If you are having breakout rooms, consider if you want a member of the planning committee present within each room to help facilitate conversation.
    - o Assign someone to manage the chat function of Zoom and answer any questions that come in that way.
  - Think about timing and the appropriate hours for the event.
    - o Consider the attention span of your attendees; one hour seems to be the best allotted time for a virtual event.
    - o For breakout rooms, think about how long you want each group chatting for in small groups and how many rounds of breakout rooms you want to have. Breakout rooms should last no longer than 10 minutes.
  - Create a run of show for all volunteers. (See section below)
  - Have a contingency plan!
  - Make sure to identify an understudy or volunteers who have a key role in running the event.
    - o This will be helpful if someone has technical difficulty during the event.
    - o Brainstorm how to best engage your attendees. Below are several Zoom features that can help facilitate:
      - Breakout Rooms
      - Polling Questions
      - Chat Box
  - Plan out how many breakout rooms will be needed.
    - o Find out how many people have registered for your event to determine how many breakout rooms you will need per round.
    - o A good group size for a breakout room is about 7-10 people.
    - o Plan to have your rooms be assigned randomly. This will be less administrative prep and will allow the breakout rooms to be more general networking.
- o **When you create your Zoom event, if you are using Zoom**
  (the Club/Professional Interest SIG for each event is responsible for creating the Zoom link)
  - Enable a waiting room when you create the Zoom event.
    - o Having a waiting room enables the host to have control over when attendees

enter the event. This is helpful to designate the official start time of the event and have everyone enter at the exact same time, rather than people calling in early and sitting a waiting with their videos on.
- o When you enable a waiting room, un-check the passcode option.
- Determine if you would like to mute your participants upon entry.
- Make sure the "Required" box is un-checked within the registration section within the Zoom platform, this feature is not needed as the HAA is managing registration.
- Allow attendees to connect their audio through both the telephone and their computer audio.
- Send your Zoom event link to clubs@harvard.edu if you have not provided it to us already.
- o **Leading up to your event**
  - Make sure your event is listed on each hosting organizations website.
    - o Make sure you provide a link to the Global Networking Night- City Directory page so alumni know where to register. Please only link to the directory or your specific event page, not the registration form itself. You risk encountering capacity issues if you share the direct registration form link.
  - Connect with the HAA.
    - o Attend a live Information Session on Zoom about how to best host your event using the platform.
  - Find out how your registration numbers look. This will allow you to plan out how many breakout rooms you might need.
    - o Encourage all board members to register early.
    - o Have them identify their areas of interest on their registration form so that attendees can identify them as well. Plus, having a list of people already registered tends to make others want to register as well.

  - Pre-load your polling questions into the Zoom platform if you plan to use that feature.
  - Do a test run of your event with all volunteers who have a role. Run through all the functions you plan to use for the event.
- o **During your event**
  - Have all volunteers helping with the event log on before the event begins (at least 15 minutes before) to test internet connectivity and run through any last-minute questions.
  - Do a formal introduction at the beginning the event. Take a few minutes to explain the ground rules. If you have facilitators, explain who they are.
  - Make sure all hosting organizations are acknowledged. But make it brief!
    - o If there are just one or two co-hosting organizations, have them share something short about their organization/communities and share how attendees can get in touch with them after the event.
    - o If there are multiple co-hosting organizations, have the MC of the event briefly mention all organizations and ways to get in touch with them. This will save time and get you to networking in a timely manner.
    - o Suggestions: Share a Power Point slide during the event listing the organizations that are co-hosting, share the links to all co-hosting organizations in the chat box, explain that these links will be shared to them after the event as well (and plan to do so).
  - Make your event welcoming and fun!
    - o Consider using a Harvard themed virtual background and encouraging your fellow volunteers to do the same.

- If you plan to use polling questions or prompting questions for breakout rooms, consider using Harvard themed or local themed questions to make it specific to your community.
  - o **Post-event**
    - Follow-up with your attendees to continue to cultivate engagement. This event should be a starting point for Clubs and SIGs to build stronger relationships with recent alumni in your region.
    - Fill out the HAA host/co-host survey.
      - o Sharing your insight and what you learned in this process will be crucial as we plan for future virtual networking programs.

Draft Event Agenda/Run of Show

(This is not prescriptive, please adapt for your community as you see fit)

Event: Global Networking Night
Date/Time: Wednesday, March 16, 2023 from 6-7 p.m.
Event Link:

Speakers: [List out all alumni volunteers who have a speaking role within the event]
Breakout Room Facilitators: [If you have identified them, list them here]
Production:
[Full Name], waiting room, breakout rooms, polls
[Full Name], chat box management
[Full Name], program timing, MC
Confirm Meeting Settings: Waiting room: On | Raised hand: On | Chat box: Open | Screen-sharing: On or Off (depending on what you plan for) | Attendees muted upon entry

5:45p.m. **Planning committee enters meeting.**
Co-hosting ability is shared with the appropriate volunteers.
Waiting room is enabled/confirmed, confirm anyone who plans to share their screen has permission, check that poll question is set-up and breakout rooms feature is ready.

6:00p.m. **Event begins.**
Event needs to begin no later than 2 minutes after the hour.
[First Name] admits attendees from waiting room.
[First Name] gives welcome remarks, shares general information of the goals of the event, overall flow of how the event will run/networking will work, and additional housekeeping remarks around Zoom (keeping yourself on mute when others are speaking, having your camera on if they feel comfortable).

6:05p.m. **Take a quick poll of the room.**
Engage the group with a question via the polling feature to get them interacting. (Example: What Harvard School are you affiliated with?)
[First Name] administers the poll and then shares results with all. Then closes the poll.

6:07p.m. **Introduction on alumni communities.**
[First Name] shares with attendees a short description that this event is co-hosted by several alumni communities and points attendees to the chat box to find their websites.

[First Name] shares links to all organizations in chat box.

6:10p.m. Breakout Discussions.
      [First Name] describes how the breakout rooms will work for all attendees (how many, how many people will be in each, how long they will last for, that these rooms are randomly assigned, and that they will be brought back to the main room once time is up).
      Provide one to two prompting questions for the group to help kick-start conversation. (Example: one Harvard themed question and one local themed question)

6:12pm. Breakout Rooms are enabled.
      [First Name] activates breakout rooms.

6:17p.m. Five-minute warning in room.
      [First Name] gives the five-minute prompt to all breakout rooms.

6:22p.m. Group reconvenes in main meeting room.
      [First Name] welcomes everyone back, asks if anyone has any good tips that they just learned from the first breakout room that other should apply to their second and third round of breakout rooms.
      Describes that there will be a second round of breakout rooms and everyone will be places with a different set of people to connect with.

6:27p.m. Second Round of Breakout Discussion.
      [First Name] activates breakout rooms.

6:32p.m. Five-minute warning in room.
      [First Name] gives the five-minute prompt to all breakout rooms.

6:37p.m. Group reconvenes in main meeting room.
[First Name] welcomes everyone back and describes that there will be a third and final round of breakout rooms and everyone will be places with a different set of people to connect with.

6:38p.m. Third Round of Breakout Discussion.
      [First Name] activates breakout rooms.

6:43p.m. Five-minute warning in room.
      [First Name] gives the five-minute prompt to all breakout rooms.

6:48p.m. Group reconvenes in main meeting room.
      [First Name] gives concluding remarks, thanks everyone for attending, reminds attendees how to keep in touch with the alumni organizations represented.

7:00p.m. Event concludes.

We hope you find these suggestions useful, and that you and your Club and/or SIG have a successful Global Networking Night. Thank you for your time and efforts in bringing Harvard alumni together on this one momentous day.