



# Virtual Networking Toolkit

This Toolkit provides Club and Shared Interest Group volunteers resources that will empower them to host virtual networking events for their communities.

Here you will find:

- An event planning checklist to help hosts/cohosts plan and prepare for their virtual event.
- A suggested agenda/run of show for the program of the virtual networking event.

## Event Planning Checklist:

---

- **Getting Started**
  - Follow-up with all volunteers helping with this event and set up planning calls.
  - Have two pre-event planning calls with all volunteers involved several days/weeks out from the event to determine all details of the virtual event (responsibilities and event flow).
- **On your planning calls**
  - Determine clear roles and responsibilities for all volunteers involved.
    - 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).
    - 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.
    - 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”.
    - If you are having breakout rooms, consider if you want a member of the planning committee present within each room to help facilitate conversation.
    - 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.
    - Consider the attention span of your attendees; one hour seems to be the best allotted time for a virtual event.
    - 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. This will be helpful if someone has technical difficulty during the event.
  - 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.
    - Find out how many people have registered for your event to determine how many breakout rooms you will need per round.
    - A good group size for a breakout room is about seven to ten people.
    - 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.
- **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.
    - 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.
    - 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.
- **Leading up to your event**
  - Make sure your event is listed on each hosting organizations website.
  - Connect with the HAA.
    - 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.
  - Encourage all board members to register early.
    - 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.



- **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!!
    - 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.
    - 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.
    - 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!
    - 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.
- **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.
    - 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 Title:

Date/Time:

Event Link/meeting ID/passcode:

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)



HARVARD

Alumni Association

CLUBS & SHARED INTEREST GROUPS

- 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.**

