TIPS FOR HOSTING
NWTF A VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Successfully converting an in-person workshop to a virtual one requires thoughtful design changes. Energy and vibrancy is possible in an online setting! Consider the tone you would like to set, and work with your team to embody that energy.

Choosing a Platform

You have choices when it comes to virtual conferencing platforms. Some offer options such as participant mute and breakout rooms. Research your options and make an informed choice. Test out platforms on different devices (phones, tablets and computers) to ensure usability.

- Zoom
- Google Meet
- Microsoft Teams
- GoToMeetings

Promotion/Registration

- Write a clear promotional description for the program. Include all of the details you would normally include when advertising for an in-person program.
- Make it very clear that this is a virtual or online program.
- Include platform details and list what type of equipment participants will need.
- Register your event with NWTF and require participants to preregister.
- If using Zoom, it can be set up to require a password and participants to sign in.

PLANNING YOUR WORKSHOP

Workshop Design

- **Program length.** Optimal time for webinars/workshops is one hour; extend to one-and-a-half hours or longer with breaks, participant interaction and active lessons.
- **Have clear objectives.** There should be a purpose beyond "we were going to host this in person." Communicate the objectives to your participants.
- **Adjust objectives.** Pare down previous in-person objectives, if needed, to fit online workshops.
- **Know your audience.** Conduct a pre-workshop survey to gauge participants' needs and available technology.
- **Don't over-rely on slides.** While slides can be helpful, they can also create a "presentation" feel and inadvertently shift your workshop to be less interactive. Build in "face

time" for the group, intersperse presentations with active engagement and use your chat tools.

- **Make it interactive**:
  o Provide something for participants to do right from the start (as they log into the platform)
  o Use the poll feature
  o Conduct snap surveys
  o Add a quiz (consider utilizing Kahoot! or Quizlet)
  o Use the chat (Zoom has chat storm)
  o Add some sort of icebreaker
  o Use all available features in the platform
  o Embed videos into the presentation
  o Have participants go outside for an activity or do something during the training that causes them to get up (for longer sessions)
- **Build in extra time.** Allow for introductions, transitions and more. People have a tendency to over-stuff agendas. Remember participants won't have the opportunity to connect in the hallways or at the snack table so consider creating space for these informal interactions.
- **Design a while-arriving slide.** It should include the name of the program, quick directions for using the platform and some sort of point to ponder for participants while they wait for everyone to arrive. Have something for participants to do right from the start as they log into the platform (see "Make it Interactive" section). For example, "What do you hope to learn today?"
- **Slide design tips:**
  o Make your slides as large as possible. The platform will make the slides smaller. If participants have the chat or other functions open, it can make the slides even smaller.
  o If possible, use the sans-serif font family. These are considered universal fonts that everyone can read. Avoid italics.
  o Slide font size suggestions: 30-plus for titles, 20-plus for the body (18 is the absolute minimum font size).

Facilitation

- For large workshops, consider soliciting help just like you would for an event. You will need more help than you might expect to make a virtual workshop run smoothly. Assign roles such as meeting host, tech support, chat box monitor, facilitator and registrar.
- Webinars/trainings work best with at least two presenters (especially if longer than one hour).
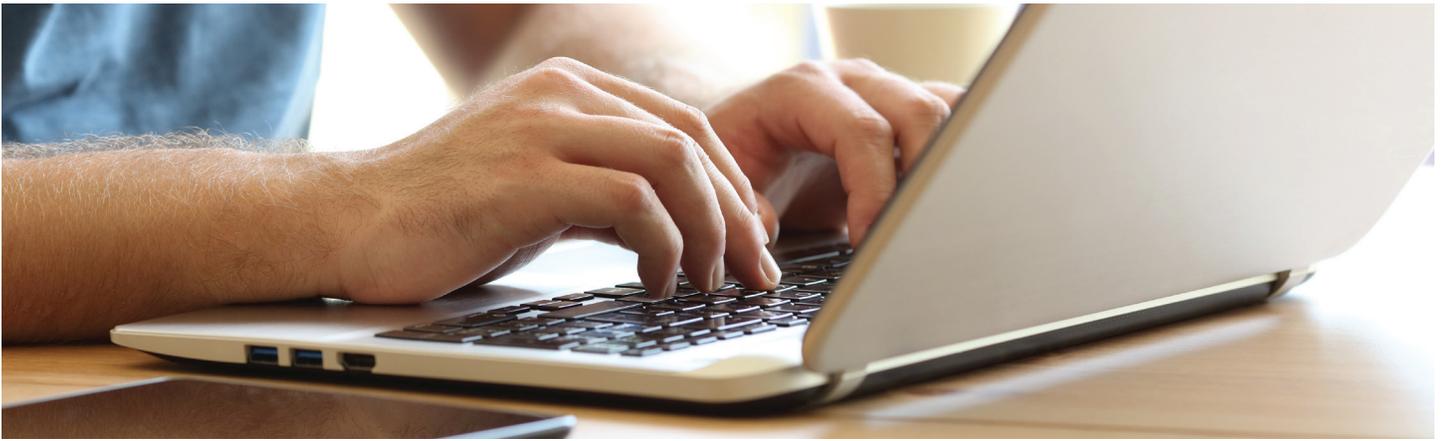
- Avoid too many presenters. Two or three is generally a good number. More than three becomes cumbersome.
- Create a facilitators' agenda. This is NOT THE SAME as the participant agenda. The facilitators' agenda should include scripted notes, roles, timing, breakout groups and any other information needed for the event to run smoothly.
- Consider a group text thread in case the internet goes down for one of your team members.

Communication
- Remember to communicate with your workshop attendees ahead of time. Prioritize what you need people to know. Write and format your emails clearly, but don't assume people have read everything you send them. Follow up as needed; send reminders.
- Provide contact information for the workshop team. Choose a point person who will be regularly available and checking the chosen channel (e.g. email, phone, text) before and throughout the event.
- Add a disclaimer about recording if you will be recording and sharing the session. (Note: not recording workshops or parts of them will allow for more open discussion).

Final Preparation
- Have coworkers/friends test out materials to see where they might have questions.
- Everyone involved in your workshop design should review your agenda and know their specific role(s) during the workshop.
- Update your virtual platform (especially Zoom), restart your computer before your session.
- PRACTICE! If you don't routinely use the platform, consider a tech practice run with those in presenter, facilitator and tech support roles.

DELIVERING YOUR VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

The Day of
- Control your environment.
    - o Find a quiet, uncluttered space (preferably a room with a door) to present your training or record your video.
    - o Take a practice run and check your background.
    - o Use good quality headphones with a microphone.

- o If possible, turn off items that cause a vibration (such as fans).
- o Silence your phone!
- o Lock the door to your presentation/recording room. Post a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door.
- o Try to move all pets (and loud coworkers) to an area that they will not be heard.
- o Beware that virtual backgrounds fail if you are moving around a lot.

During the Workshop
- Orient people to the platform at the beginning of the workshop. Highlight the mute button and identify the specific features (e.g., chat, reactions) you will be using.
- Use the camera function. Simple gestures like a thumbs up can provide immediate feedback. How's my volume? Thumbs up or thumbs down! It's low-tech, but something almost everyone can do. Run on time! This is especially important for workshop start times, breaks and ending.
- Provide brain breaks every 30-45 minutes if your workshop is longer than one hour.
- If things begin to go wrong, let people know.
- For small groups, you can try to leave audio unmuted and ask individuals to mute their own microphones when they are not speaking. If there is a lot of background noise from someone who should have muted themselves, use the administrative function to mute everyone. If needed, let the group know that they are muted. For large groups, mute the audio and video for all.
- Collect feedback as you go. It can be harder to read a virtual room. If participants aren't energized and engaged, consider ways to shake it up or move on. Give people time to respond to questions. Unmuting mics and/or typing can take more time than you may expect.
- Include a conclusion to the training. Thank everyone for attending.

After the Workshop
- Send your post-event evaluation. Prepare it in advance to send as soon as possible (while feedback is fresh).
- Send articles, contact information or other resources that you promised participants.
- Provide a follow-up email with information covered in the workshop. Use this as an opportunity to promote future programs, to receive feedback and to add resources that may have come up during the workshop.