# on the table.

# Tips For Hosting
# A Successful Virtual Gathering

Virtual gathering is becoming the norm as a safe way to host large or public groups, and a convenient way to gather those that live afar. After you've chosen your online tool, a quick Google search will give you plenty of tips to help you prepare for your event. Remember to let your guests know the meeting platform ahead of your event, so they have ample time to download, set up, and become familiar with it.

Beyond technology, here's a few key considerations when gathering people online.

## Basic Online Etiquette

Some guests may not be familiar with meeting online, so it can be helpful to start your event by sharing a few things before the conversation gets going.

### INTRODUCTIONS

When guests join the call, invite them to introduce themselves and write their names in the chat box, along with anything else you'd like them to contribute about who they are. This will help others in remembering names and get them familiar with using the chat box, which can be a useful tool for large groups to post questions. Guests can even make a name tag for themselves to pin on or hang behind them - adding little opportunities to be creative is helpful!

### VIDEO

On  Invite all your guests to turn their video on so everyone can see each other, and let them know about the various viewing options. Gallery view makes you feel most like you're in a room with others. If you're hosting a large public event, respect individual preferences for those wanting to join without video and acknowledge that it's ok just to listen in.

### MUTE BUTTON

In order to keep background noise at bay, remind your guests to mute their speaker when they aren't speaking

# Virtual Gathering Guidelines

Even though you're at your computer, the same manners apply as when meeting face to face.

## BE PRESENT

Even though you're on your computer, try to focus and behave as you would if you were in a face to face gathering (having your video switched on so others can see you helps!). Be sure to close other apps like email and Facebook so you'll have the best quality for your call and nothing else trying to get your attention - some computers even have a do not disturb mode as well. Remember where your camera is so that you can make eye contact as best as possible!

## LET EVERYONE SPEAK

As a host, it's important to encourage everyone to have a chance to speak, so feel free to invite thoughts from specific people in your group. To lessen interruptions in larger groups, encourage people to use the chat box to add questions or thoughts. It can also be tough to find an opening in a lively discussion, which is where introducing cues such as hand raising can be helpful.

## COMING AND GOING

Virtual gatherings don't allow for a natural mingle situation, and it's important to manage expectations. Remind guests they are welcome to get up and take a break, and let them know when your event will end, as ending promptly is respectful of other people's time. Ask guests if they're ok with you sharing everyone's contact details so that others can connect after the conversation, for those wanting to.

We know online gathering is new to many of us and can be a little awkward sometimes. That's totally okay – we're all in the same boat and are learning as we go! Embracing the quirks that come along with online meeting platforms is part of the fun. Take the pressure off of everything being perfect, and remember that at the end of the day, the main goal is to spark a conversation and connect with others.