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## HYBRID MEETINGS

Most meetings in our intergroups and region transitioned from face to face to online or phone formats during the pandemic and are considering what to do next. Other meetings shut down completely and plan to reopen. This document addresses how meetings decide when and how to reopen, and how they can transition to hybrid meetings if that's what they decide to do, including what to consider for the face-to-face meeting and what technology to be used for the phone or online participation.

### *How do meetings decide when and how to transition?*

**OA Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose -to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.** How will your group Carry the Message – what types of meetings will best serve this purpose?

**OA Tradition Four: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.** The meeting may vote in a business meeting, call a group conscience, or delegate the decision to a committee of trusted servants from the meeting. There are many factors to consider:

- A. What is the group conscience of the meeting?
- B. Is there a substantial unanimity for the decision?
- C. What happens with members who disagree with the decision? Are there alternative means of accommodating or alternative meeting possibilities for these members?
  1. Meetings can transition back to face-to-face or start again as face-to-face.
  2. A meeting can remain on the phone or online only and still be part of the current intergroup.
  3. Hybrid Meetings can be set up that would mean the meeting remains on the phone or online (Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting, etc.) and will also go back to face-to-face at the same time. These will not be separate meetings. The phone or online participants and the face-to-face meeting participants will be at the meeting at the same time.
  4. Meeting members who disagree with the decision may start a meeting of their own using hybrid, face-to-face only, or online/phone only.
- D. What are the state, federal and local guidelines and insurance criteria for the various forms of meetings? An OA group must make sure their activities do not impact OA as a whole in a negative way. Violations of law and violations of insurance policy considerations are examples of activities that affect the local OA Intergroup and thus OA as a whole.
- E. What resources must the meeting have to be self-supporting in the type of meeting it wants to transition to or remain as?

In all of these decisions, we take into account the principles and traditions of the OA program.

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***This document supports meetings that are considering or have decided to transition to hybrid meetings. What are some things to consider when moving to a hybrid meeting now?***

The face-to-face part of the meeting will have to consider the size of the room. The room size will impact how many members can attend based on current social distancing policies and, guidelines. Room size, layout, and social distancing policies/guidelines will impact room setup and the technology that may be required.

- A. To find guidelines, first ask the venue if they have specific policies or criteria that they are following or mandating.
- B. An internet search of local (city, town, county), state, and federal guidelines, laws, and best practices for social gatherings will generally help identify this information. These policies are continually updating, so it is the meeting's responsibility to keep up with the changes.
  - 1. Who will be responsible for cleaning before and after the meeting. If the meeting is responsible, what supplies will need to be kept for this?
  - 2. Are members willing to sign up for this cleaning service? Where will the in-person service sign-up be kept? Will the sign-up list be held by a person, on Google Drive, at the venue. Please consider backup in the event a member cannot make the meeting to perform the service.
  - 3. Make sure the meeting's geographic location is listed on the intergroup's insurance policy.
  - 4. Will masks be required? If masks are needed, this should be noted on the meeting list, intergroup website, and on Find-a-Meeting on oa.org.
  - 5. Will temperatures be required to be taken? Does the meeting have a thermometer, or will it purchase one? Who will sign up for this position? Is there a backup?
  - 6. Are members advised to bring their own pens, books, wipes, etc.? Will the meeting supply hand sanitizer? We will cover technology later, but in some instance, members may be required to bring their own technology (laptops, smartphones, tablets, etc.).
  - 7. What happens if the room reaches capacity? Do members need to schedule attendance in advance? What happens if a visitor or newcomer attends and the meeting is full?
  - 8. How will the 7th tradition be conducted in the room? How will it be combined with the phone /online 7th tradition? Can alternative technologies be used, such as Venmo, PayPal, Zelle, etc.? Are there methods available through the intergroup?
  - 9. Is a contact trace list required? Have members been advised about this and its impact on their anonymity?

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- C. What about members who inquire about their health and safety in coming to a face-to-face meeting? All members and newcomers should be advised to seek personal medical advice from a competent medical authority, such as their personal doctor before attending the meeting. OA cannot guarantee any members' safety at the meeting. Members should be advised to stay home if they have been exposed to Covid, or are experiencing any symptoms such as a fever, cold, or sore throat.

### ***Technologies and set up for hybrid meetings.***

First, you must determine what technology you utilize: phone or online (such as Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting). Online meetings and meetings in larger rooms generally will require more technology and setup than phone meetings and smaller spaces. In most cases, the technology setup would be easy, and the cost can range from \$25- \$400. This cost does not include Wifi or data usage. Meetings will want to access Wifi legally, and there would be no cost on devices that have unlimited data charges. It is important to confirm data charges before utilizing Wifi, hot spots etc.

*Some good suggestions to follow:*

- A. As stated before, know the room and how it will need to be set up for social distancing before determining the best setup and what technology will be required.
- B. Does the meeting have money set aside for the technology? A prudent reserve? Or will it need to take a special collection.?
- C. Price the technology and review customer and trade recommendations to find your best fit. In most cases, this will not be complicated or costly. Will members' equipment be used? Will the members be reimbursed? Is the equipment under warranty or insured? Agree with the member ahead of time what equipment will be used and what will happen if something breaks. The meeting should have backup plans or equipment if its primary equipment does not work.
- D. Determine if the room has Wifi or cell service. Does the meeting have access to the necessary passcodes etc. for the WiFi or cell service? If Wifi is required, what are the contingencies if it goes down? Can someone's cell phone be used as a hot spot? Is there a public hot spot nearby and available, such as a local cable network, phone/cell phone carrier or government/public hot spot? Will data charges be incurred? Will the meeting reimburse these? Meetings or intergroups may consider purchasing Wifi packages from local phone or cable providers as a business account to make available to members for access during meetings. In some cases, this may require multiple account holders.
- E. Test Wifi and primary devices in advance and have contingencies in place.
  - 1. Test the technology in advance of your first meeting. Make sure to have extension cords with power strips, the proper connecting wires with inputs/outputs identified and labeled. Do you need HDMI, USB, etc.? Test power outlets. Can speakers online and on

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the phone be heard in the room? Can members who want to be seen in the room be seen? Can online participants be seen and heard? Map your set up, even if it's with stick figures on paper. Take a photo and store it or share it where members can access it. Label every wire and cable you use by name or color code with a sharpie or non-flammable paint or nail polish.

2. Plan for contingencies. Will the technology battery last in the event of power problems? Does the meeting need to acquire a backup battery or portable power sources.? Are there backup meeting leaders if a connection is lost with the phone or Wifi? Again, what is the backup plan if the power goes down?

3, Have power strips, extension cords, devices (computer, phone and/or tablets) speaker , and internet/ Wi-Fi connections set in advance for all meetings



*Some considerations for room set up:*

### ***Phone Meeting***

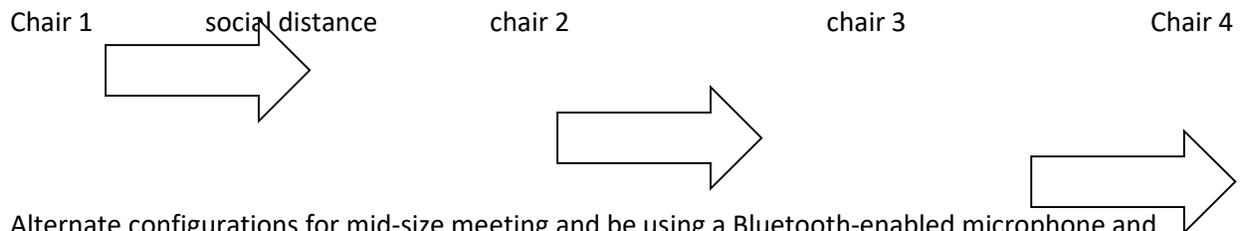
- A. In a small room, a cell phone with both a good microphone and audio at the center of the table may work. However, social distancing may make it more difficult to hear and be heard. (Image cell phone on the center of the table only)
- B. For a medium-size meeting:
  - 1. A phone in a docking station with a portable speaker connected by a Bluetooth device may be used. There are portable microphones that will work with phones and a Bluetooth system.

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2. A computer laptop, smartphone, or tablet may be used with external speakers and one or two microphones. Many of these options also include connectivity option for HDMI or USB cables.

### Small Phone meetings

Place a phone with a high-quality speaker and microphone in a docking station in center of a table with chairs surrounding it.

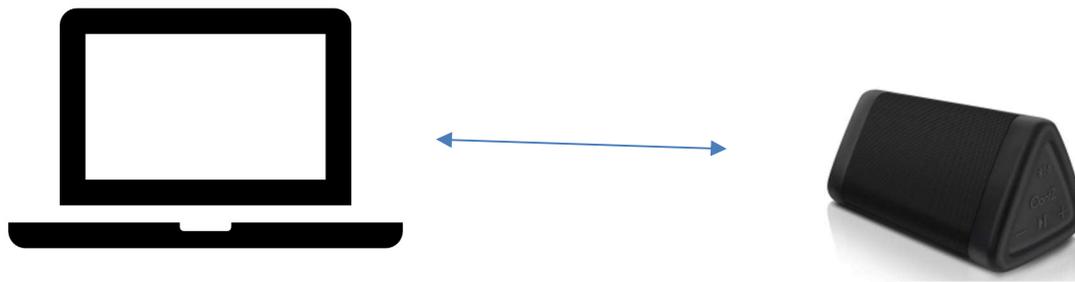


Alternate configurations for mid-size meeting and be using a Bluetooth-enabled microphone and speaker or replace the phone with a lap top or tablet.



Alternatively, use a USB or HDMI connected tablet or computer with speakers.

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All technology should be tested in the room first. The meeting may also want to consider purchasing power strips and extension cords as required. The group may additionally wish to purchase a backup battery in the event of power issues.

The room must be tested for optimal set up of microphones, speakers, power outlets, etc.

### ***Online meetings***

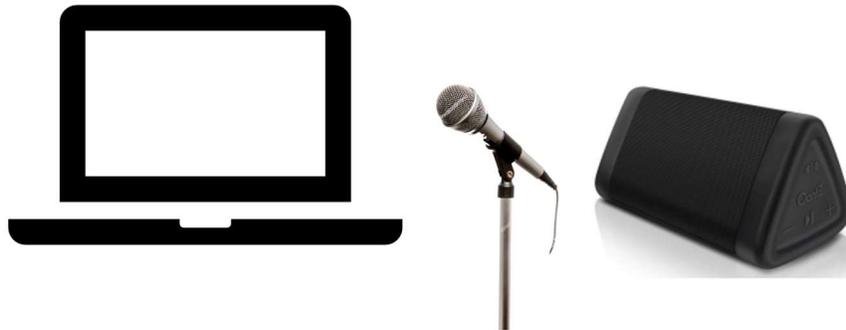
The online portion of a hybrid meeting may be impacted by the size of the room. All technology and setup should be done in advance, taking into consideration both the size of the online meeting and the face-to-face meeting?

### **Small Meeting**

- A. A laptop can be set up at the end of the table. A wireless/Bluetooth microphone can be placed on a stand in the center with speakers placed at each end or one speaker at the end of the table.
- B. You may want to purchase speakers and a microphone that allows wireless and connection through a USB cable.
- C. Members may bring their own laptops, tablets, or smartphones. They would then mute their volume, and use their device to see and be seen. This will allow members to also flip through screens if they want as well. A screen share, handout, or a document on the intergroup's website explaining how members can mute their devices and reduce the volume. Members are asked to take personal responsibility to familiarize themselves with this function on both their device and the meeting platform. Intergroups may want to offer technology assistance in teaching members how to do this as it will prevent feedback in all size meeting rooms.

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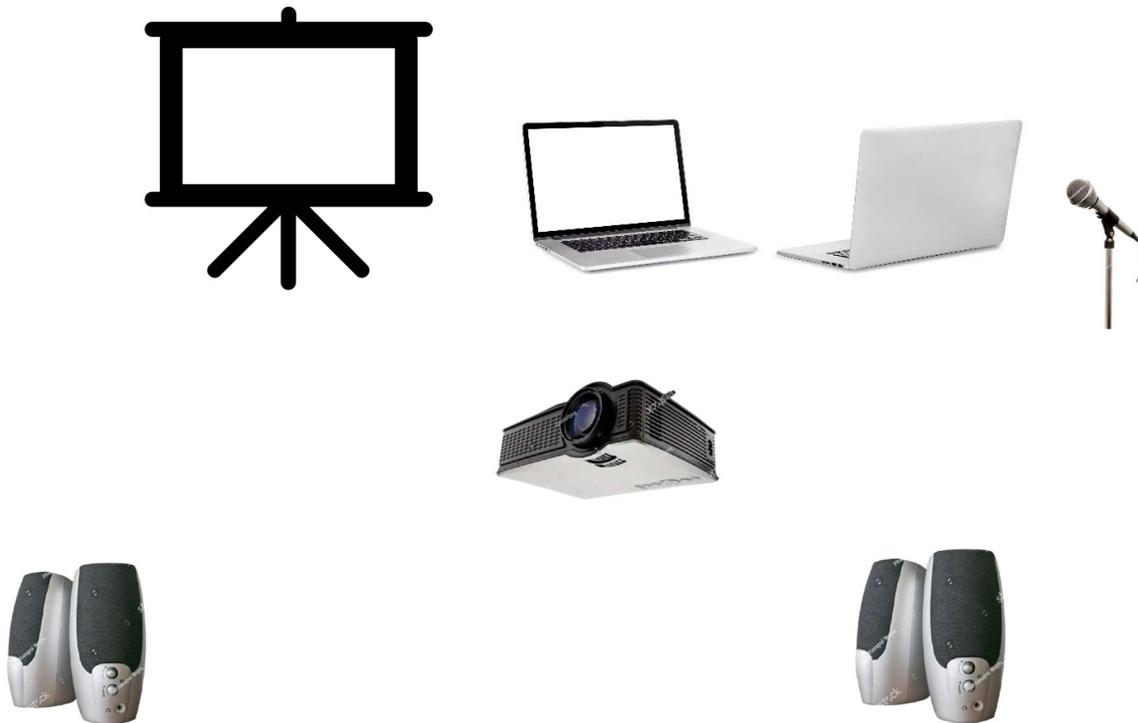
A set up similar to a mid-size phone meeting with a computer or tablet may work for a small meeting with a microphone for social distancing, Connect via Bluetooth or USB connected devices.



### **Mid-Size Meeting**

- A. A laptop can be set up at the front of the room, along with a wireless microphone and speakers. Members can bring their own laptops, tablets, or smartphones. Personal devices must be muted to stop feedback but the devices can be used to see and be seen. Another computer can be set up with a microphone at a distance. This device will be for members to come to the front of the room to share.
- B. This same method described in A. above can be used with a laptop connected to a monitor or television.
- C. Following the same format as A. above, a portable projector can be used. Most current portable projectors can be set up with phones, laptops, or tablets. In the event of Wifi problems, having a wired hook up as a backup is advisable. (This will enable a hot spot connection that only requires connection with the on-line meeting platform.) The projector can be focused on a light-colored wall; many venues have screens. There are also roll-up hanging lightweight, portable screens available online. Most projectors have built-in speakers. These can be linked to an external speaker. However, depending on the size of the room, this should be done in advance. Speaker volume increasing can cause feedback at times.

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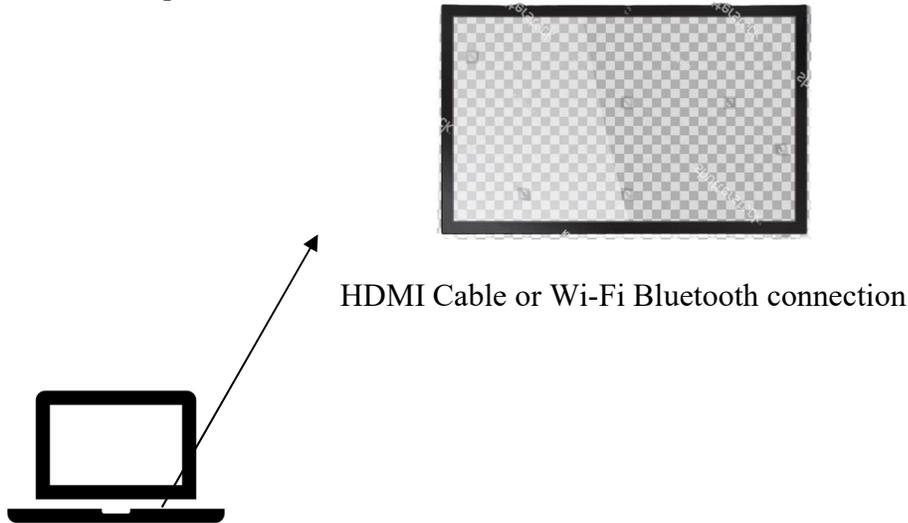
The lap tap on the left will focus on the members it should set up to the left or right of the projector so not block the projectors screen share. The room screen or portable screen can be placed center room for maximum visibility light may need to be lowered. It is important that microphones not associated with the on line meeting and speakers on all devices are turned off or volume completely lowered. . This should be set up in advance and tested. The screen should be set for maximum visibility for participants’/or to ensure part of the room is not seen.

Alternative configurations to mid-size or large online meeting may include the following:  
Replacing the second laptop with a phone on docking station. Alternatively, a camera or tablet that faces the room may be used.

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Alternative configuration to using a standing screen may include a pull-down screen built in to the location, a roll up screen that can be hung and remove from the wall using nonstick hook, or attach a computer to tv via blue tooth stick or HDMI cable.



## Large Meeting

Generally, many large rooms have pre-existing setups. Check with your facility to see if you can link a laptop in with the pre-existing hardware. In some cases, you may be able to use methods B. and C. above, connecting with the facility's speaker or PA system. The sound and video need to be configured in advance to ensure there is no feedback. (If you are only using part of the room, a good set of speakers from the medium room will often cover a large room. That said, if your room capacity fills up and you tie in with the facility's system, you will then get feedback if you are using speakers or the projector built in speaker.. In short, plan and have everything labeled for a quick transition.

A large and a medium room can be set up for members who do not want to be viewed on the camera. This setup will accommodate members who may be uncomfortable with being online or being seen on line.