

# EVENT GUIDANCE: VIRTUAL

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This resource is one part of the events planning framework that will be used by the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies – British Columbia (ACEC-BC) when planning events and meetings. This section covers event logistics. It will assist event planners with understanding timeline and actions required for the different event types and identifies key information required to support event planning and logistics.

## 2.0 ACEC-BC REQUIREMENTS

The following section outlines ACEC-BC requirements for the selected event type, including:

- a) Timelines and responsibilities for organizing and delivery of events
- b) Technology considerations for the different event types

Please note that the timeline provided in this section is the minimum time required to ensure successful delivery of any event type. When possible, it's encouraged to coordinate with the ACEC-BC team as early as possible to begin the event planning process to allow for proper planning and preparation which are critical to the event success.

### **Health, Safety, and Insurance Requirements:**

All ACEC-BC events are required to adhere to WorkSafe BC requirements, Provincial Health guidelines and restrictions, and be in accordance with ACEC-BC's event insurance policy. When organizing events that may include in-person components, please coordinate with ACEC-BC staff to ensure Health and Safety and Insurance compliance when developing an event plan. Venue booking and commitment of resources is only authorized for ACEC-BC staff.

If an event is hosted at an ACEC-BC member firm's office, event organizers are asked to review and consult with firm representatives to ensure compliance with any office health and safety requirements prior to the event. ACEC-BC staff will also work with you to ensure all speakers and guest are provided with a safety briefing prior to any in-person event.

Timelines outlined in the following sections are based on ACEC-BC team capacity and support appropriate communication with event partners and participants. Occasionally conditions and capacity may support or require shorter timelines. These situations should be considered exceptional.

## Timeline

Step	Timing	Champion
Planning Meeting to walkthrough ACEC-BC Events Framework	2+ months prior	Organizing Committee
Kick-off meeting with ACEC-BC Staff	8-12 weeks prior	Organizing Committee
Secure date in ACEC-BC Calendar	8-12 weeks prior	Organizing Committee
Secure date with speakers and anyone supporting the event (networking room hosts, etc.)	8-12 weeks prior	Organizing Committee
Provide ACEC-BC with additional event details (speaker bios, etc.)	8 weeks prior	Organizing Committee
Registration opens	6-8 weeks prior	ACEC-BC Staff
Communications released	6-8 weeks prior	ACEC-BC Staff
Check-in meeting with speakers to discuss content	4-6 weeks prior	Organizing Committee
Technology test run meeting	1-2 weeks prior	ACEC-BC
Technology management and logistics	Day of Event	ACEC-BC
<b>Event Day</b>		
Thank you gift/note to speakers	1 day after	ACEC-BC Staff
Follow up thank you to speakers	1 day after	Organizing Committee
Event debrief	1-2 weeks after	Organizing Committee

## Technology:

Over the past few years ACEC-BC has researched and experimented with various virtual event technologies to provide members with the best possible virtual event experience. Below you can find the options available at ACEC-BC for virtual events and their recommended use:

- **Microsoft Teams:** Small group discussion, <15 attendees, invite only events
- **Zoom Meeting:** Small – medium size group discussion or presentations, <25 attendees, invite or registration
- **Zoom Webinar:** Medium broadcast style presentation, <50 attendees, registration required
- **StreamYard:** Large broadcast style presentation, >50 attendees, registration required
- **Hopin:** Large broadcast style presentations, virtual networking, >50 attendees, registration required

Please note that the above only includes the technology options the Association had access to when this report was written. As virtual event technology advances, the ACEC-BC team will continue to monitor and recommend new event software and tools to better support ACEC-BC events.

### 3.0 GUIDANCE

Selecting the right event type is critical, but successful events require much more: planning and delivery are critical to event success, regardless of format. ACEC-BC has identified a number of effective practices to delivering events that are engaging, effective, and valuable. The following section provides guidance, identify practices that event organizers should consider.

Following are key considerations for planning an inclusive and effective event, regardless of format:

- Clearly define the event outcomes and objectives and then use these to guide decision making and planning throughout the process.
- Identify key messages for the event and ensure your facilitators have this information.
- Be clear about who your intended audience is and plan your objectives and key messages to align with the interests of this audience. As you prepare for the event, track who is registered to confirm whether your audience is the same or different, adjusting your event focus if needed.
- Identify key audience members or representatives that may be attending and confirm how they would like to be recognized.
- The event format and design need to align with the objectives. For example, if a primary objective is to encourage learning through participation, then the agenda needs to allow sufficient time for discussion and participation.
- Plan for inclusion and accessibility, including budget if necessary. Ensure physical spaces are accessible and that virtual platforms are configured to include accessibility.
- Facilitators and speakers can be more comfortable or effective with different event types. It is important to select the right presenter for the event type selected.
- Evaluate your event (planning and deliver) to identify successes as well as opportunities for improvement. Use these to guide the development of future events and share this feedback with others who are organizing and planning events.

Depending on the event type, there are different actions and approaches to consider. In **Appendix A** provides additional guidance for different event types.

At a high level, following are key considerations when organizing your event:

1. Understand your presenters and audience, considering not only their interest in the event from a content perspective, but also their needs related to format and accessibility.
2. Decide on the content and goals for the event, clearly articulating these to everyone involved in the organizing process.
3. Choose a venue or platform that meets the needs of your presenters and audience and can effectively achieve your event goals and objectives.
4. Consider participant engagement, recognizing there are many different ways to achieve engagement and connection in a range of event types.
5. Understand the importance of redistribution of content from this event and then identify options to meet that redistribution need.

# **APPENDIX A**

## **Additional Guidance**

Although some aspects of the planning process are easier, virtual events have a number of considerations that differ from in-person events.

Based on a hierarchy of needs perspective, the following outlines a model that is useful for virtual events, starting with foundational needs and building to higher-order requirements, recognizing that event success requires the foundational elements to be met before the higher order elements can be effective. To deliver a successful and impactful virtual event, organizers should consider all of the considerations outlined with the

Element	Description	Considerations
<b>Structure</b>	Events that lack structure result in attendees that are unclear about where the event is going, and it makes them less likely to interact and engage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share the agenda or outline with attendees</li> <li>2. At each stage of the event, provide a reminder of what's next</li> <li>3. Begin and end in a timely manner</li> </ol>
<b>Guidance</b>	Providing participants with rules on engagement and orienting them in the environment creates confidence in how to engage and participate.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share ground rules for participation and enforce them</li> <li>2. Orient attendees in the virtual environment; do not assume they are familiar with it</li> <li>3. Provide guidance on how to get the most out of the event</li> </ol>
<b>Unique Value</b>	Create a compelling reason for participants to attend, recognizing that participants are busy and have many events they can choose to attend.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Centre your event around a uniquely valuable experience</li> <li>2. Clearly articulate the reason your guests should attend</li> <li>3. Respect participant's time by making your event the right length for the purpose</li> </ol>
<b>Engagement</b>	Find ways to engage your participants, considering not just what you are delivering, but also how the content is delivered.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incorporate interactivity into the content and delivery</li> <li>2. Use visuals, videos, and other materials to illustrate messaging and create variety in how the content is shared</li> <li>3. Connect activities to key lessons or takeaways</li> <li>4. Give attendees a break part way through if the duration is 1.5 hours or longer</li> </ol>
<b>Connection</b>	Be intentional and plan for ways to create connection and engagement, giving consideration for when these moments will occur and how they will be facilitated.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start your event with networking or an activity to create connection</li> <li>2. Include a host in each breakout room to support the conversation</li> <li>3. Minimize on-camera time to times when interaction and engagement is occurring, recognizing that on camera time can deplete energy</li> </ol>
<b>Purpose</b>	To create a truly meaningful experience, the event should let participants connect to the purpose. The more defined the purpose, the easier it will be to make the right decisions for your event.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choose a distinct purpose for your event</li> <li>2. Decide what is the single most important thing for attendees to take away from the event</li> <li>3. Consider how you will facilitate achieving this purpose and communicating the key message</li> </ol>