

Public Engagement Online Resources

These resources were compiled from an event organised by University of Exeter's Impact and Engaged Research Network and Public Engagement Strategic Advisory Group in May 2020

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We heard from three researchers who have conducted online public engagement activities and events and as a group we shared ideas on how to make online engagement interactive, innovative, and inclusive.

Our speakers (contactable through the weblinks) were:

- [Dr Jana Funke](#), Senior Lecturer in Medical Humanities at Exeter. Jana has co-devised and co-delivered online workshops for a small group of young trans and gender diverse adults, in response to the lockdown, as part of planned events for the Wellcome-funded Transformations public engagement and performance project.
- [Megan Maunder](#), PhD student in Mathematics at Exeter. Megan is a regular contributor to the popular science engagement programme, I'm a Scientist which connects scientists and engineers to school students and teachers in live chats.
- [Dr Kate Baker](#) and John Puckey, creators of Agile Rabbit, an organisation that helps academics engage their work with the public through events and podcasts. They have successfully taken their events online using Zoom Webinar, reaching hundreds of people across the world.

Key Group Discussion - challenges and learnings

1. Ethics & inclusivity

Challenges

- How to discuss sensitive topics online?
- Can online events be (more) inclusive or reach new/different audiences?
- Problems for those who are not able to access online resources e.g. older age groups including anxiety and adjustment with new technologies.
- Ensuring people feel safe and have support, especially once divided into groups in breakout rooms or similar.
- Safety of all participants - e.g. may not be safe if people can overhear conversations.
- Power dynamics within meetings and how to manage these as a facilitator, how to engage everyone equally.
- Online safety and security fears - Data protection governance, GDPR

Learnings

- Potential to increase inclusivity - greater accessibility (for those who can use the tech); alternative ways of communicating such as the chat function gives people options for how to interact. This requires good facilitation however to give equal voice to all
- Can be useful to define ground rules/code of conduct at the start
- Important to give people the option of turning off video and mics, according to how they want to, or need to engage
- Important to provide support after discussing difficult issues, ensuring people have the necessary support and resources post meeting if affected e.g. when difficult issues are discussed.
- Encouraging the use of headsets to ensure conversation is kept "private" if appropriate.
- Zoom can be accessed by phone
- Other online platforms may be more familiar with e.g. Facebook chat
- Offline options could be phone calls or letter-writing.
- Institutions will often support specific platforms that are compliant with their ethical procedures.

2. Interesting and Interactive

Challenges:

- How can online events be interactive and fun?
- How to keep things interesting!

- How to generate active participation, make sure participants have 'meaningful' experience, rather than only 'keeping busy'
- We don't yet have a standard etiquette for this work
- Dealing with very large groups

Learnings:

- Ensure the meeting really needs to happen - does it need to be discussed at length? Could an email suffice?
- Break up screen and non-screen activity - so people go offline for a section of the allocated time.
- 45 mins to 1 hour or so maximum (otherwise breaks are important)
- Icebreaker/ introductions are good - something friendly like stating a song title describing how you're feeling, use of visual wordmap to describe feelings (depends on number of participants and type of meeting)
- Use different short formats e.g. discussions, speakers presenting, break out rooms
- Give people the option of turning off video and mics.
- Can be useful to have something to do with your hands when you are just observing. Consider giving worksheets for people to do.
- With a large group, it's not ideal to have everyone talking; better if interacting using the Chat function (and facilitator can ask questions) or breakout rooms, etc.
- An alternative to a meeting is a webinar format which some Zoom packages include, as well as Crowdcast - this only allows participation via chat function.
- Polls / quizzes to keep it interactive

3. Technology

Challenges

- What platform to use & how to make the most of the technology?
- Poor connectivity
- Institutional restrictions on certain platforms
- Costs of access to some platforms

Learnings

- Lots of resources on which platform to use and how to use them are available (see below)
- Breakout rooms on Zoom can be really useful but essential to have some way of documenting discussions e.g. through a google doc
- Don't share Zoom link everywhere but with participants only
- It may be possible to make the case to use platforms which are not approved by your institution.

Examples of online engagement from University of Exeter and beyond:

- [Transformations](#) public engagement and performance project
- [I'm a Scientist](#) which connects scientists and engineers to school students and teachers in live chats.
- [Agile Rabbit](#), an organisation that helps academics engage their work with the public through events and podcasts.
- [The Big Tent Festival](#)
- [Citizen science on Facebook](#)

Helpful Resources

General resources on online engagement

- [University of Exeter Guidance for Online Events](#)
- [NCCPE - Online Engagement: A guide to creating and running virtual meetings and events](#) - includes a table of pros and cons of different platforms
- [Wakelet on virtual conference resources](#)
- [Nancy White on Moving Online in the Pandemic](#)
- [UCL PE blog: 8 Simple \(recommended\) Rules for running online training.](#)
- [SpaceEU webinar recording "Converting Workshops to Online Training"](#)

Making online events engaging and effective

- [8 Simple \(recommended\) Rules for running online training](#)
- [Engage2 – Making virtual events engaging](#)
- [Nancy White, with Pete Cranston, Susan Stewart and Bonnie Koenig - So You Want to Host a Web Meeting?](#)
- [Moments of togetherness in shared digital spaces. | THEATRE MATTERS: RESEARCH@CENTRAL](#)

Opinion pieces on online or socially distant engagement

- [UCL Public Engagement blog - Engagement In A Time Of Social Distancing](#)
- [Paul Manners NCCPE in Wonkhe: Communicating your research during Covid-19](#)

Specific tools and methods

- [How To Make Pro Videos With Your Phone During A Pandemic with Barry J Gibb.](#)

- Zoom's online training webinars
- Zoom-Complete training in Breakout Rooms
- WILDLABS.NET: Running Engaging Events on Zoom
- [Zoom's GDPR resources](#)
- Zoom and Crowdcast can be used for a webinar rather than meeting.
- Zoom whiteboard
- Google jamboard online whiteboard
- Prezi
- Mentimeter - digital polls and quizzes
- [Zoom polls resources](#)
- Google doc for creating a shared document
- Mailchimp for group emailing

Engaging specific audiences and groups

- Make. Share. Care: Social Media and LGBTQ Youth Engagement
- Sarah Knowles @dr_know on Digital codesign and remote Patient and Public Involvement