

How to Setup a Virtual Workplace

Telework or “work from home” programs are necessary to keep local governments moving forward during this time.

To help alleviate the process of setting up a virtual work environment for your staff, the Houston-Galveston Area Council compiled resources and information to make the transition as efficient and successful as possible for you.

VIRTUAL COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORM

Microsoft Teams and Zoom are two conferencing and collaboration tools that are easy to use for any size organization. They facilitate chat rooms, meetings, and videoconference calls all in one place. Teams and Zoom can be accessed through a web browser like Internet Explorer or Google Chrome, or you can download and install these applications on your desktop for increased functionality.

To register for a Microsoft Teams account, click [HERE](#).

To register for a Zoom account, click [HERE](#).

CONFERENCE CALL LINES

A conference call line allows three or more people to converse simultaneously over the phone. Many organizations use conference call lines as an additional meeting tool or to distribute information to a large number of listeners at one time.

Google, RingCentral, and Join.Me are examples of free conference call line providers.



PUBLIC MEETINGS

Effective March 16, 2020, and subject to certain conditions, Governor Greg Abbott temporarily suspended certain statutory provisions to the extent necessary to allow telephone or videoconference meetings in order avoid congregating groups of people in physical locations. For more information, visit h-gac.com/COVID-19.

Below are guidelines to follow when holding a public meeting via telephone or videoconference.

- Select a resource – toll free conference call line, virtual meeting resource
- Assign a moderator (different than presiding officer)
 - If your service does not support a “Mute All” function, remind participants to mute phones when not speaking to limit distractions
 - Certify the quorum
 - Assist in coordinating the public comment portion
 - Track all votes and motions
- Announce temporary suspension of certain requirement and what measures were taken to comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act

VIRTUAL MEETING NOTIFICATION TO STAKEHOLDERS

Keep your stakeholders and audiences aware when you transition an in-person meeting to a virtual meeting. Below is a sample message that can be edited accordingly to fit your needs.

Sample Message:

“The Houston-Galveston Area Council will conduct its Transportation Policy Council meeting on Friday, March 27, 2020 via teleconference. The teleconference is open to the public. Interested persons that would like to join the teleconference may dial 1-800-240-3895, follow the prompts, and enter pass code 1066640#.

To submit a public comment for record prior to the Transportation Policy Council, individuals may do so in two ways:

1. Email public comments to publiccomments@h-gac.com
2. State a public comment while on the teleconference call during the public comments section of the agenda

Persons joining the meeting by telephone will be invited to provide public comment and are requested to limit their comment to three minutes. Public comments on agenda items may also be sent by email to publiccomments@h-gac.com. Comments received by 9 a.m. Friday, March 27, 2020 will be read into the meeting record.”

For more information, visit h-gac.com/COVID-19.