VIRTUAL AGMs: YES, YOU CAN!

A Virtual AGM Facilitation Guide

Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations

ONTARIO NONPROFIT NETWORK

02

VIRTUAL AGMs: Yes, You Can!

Switching your Annual General Meeting (AGM) online? As a provincial network, the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN) has been doing virtual AGMs for four years! The ONN team has compiled their best tips and tricks to help nonprofits move their AGMs online and facilitate them effectively and efficiently.

We at ECVO have then worked to modify the document to align with Alberta's Society Act and other legal requirements.

Big thank you to the ONN team for letting us build on and share their hard work!

Can your non-profit host an AGM online?

Yes!

Under normal circumstances, we would focus heavily on consulting your bylaws before you can answer this question. But things are not normal.

We're going to keep things simple. You can read out our recent post on the ECVO blog for a more detailed legal explanation, but here is the short answer:

> *"The board must still follow its bylaws and policies to the extent possible without breaching provincial and city orders under various statutes. However, in the majority of circumstances, a board may need to temporarily modify its behaviour in contravention of its bylaws and policies (only around meeting in person) to comply with current legislative restrictions."*
>
> - Gabrielle Battiste, BA, JD Partner, LadderUp Consulting Ltd. April 6, 2020

So, until things return to normal, you **do not** need to consult you bylaws or change them to move things online.

Note: The Government of Alberta has officially announced that non-profits and societies can postpone Annual General Meetings and filing of annual returns until meeting restrictions are lifted.

Additionally, cancellation or dissolution processes for societies and non-profit companies that have not filed previously outstanding annual returns are suspended until further notice.

More information is available on the [Government of Alberta website](#).

0 3

CHOOSING A PLATFORM

It's important to have reliable platform, ideally on that your team has tested or has some experience with. ONN uses GoToWebinar and Zoom platforms and will be referring to these platforms for this mini-guide. Other common platforms include:

- Adobe Connect
- BigMarker
- Google Meet
- Microsoft Teams

Each platform has free access to training to get your team started!

MEETING vs WEBINAR PLATFORMS

A common question is whether you should host your AGM in a meeting platform versus a traditional webinar platform.

The two main differences between these platform styles are polling and attendee participation. In a webinar platform (e.g., GotoWebinar and Zoom), you have options to poll and survey attendees. This is especially helpful for completing your voting. Additionally, in a webinar platform the host has the option to mute all participants.

In a meeting format, polling functionality is not always available and participants typically control their own mute/unmute function to ask questions and join discussions.

Although having active participation is a benefit, remember that not all attendees will remember to mute themselves or know how to use the function. If you have a large AGM, this can cause delays, background noise, and distractions during the proceedings. For this reason, ONN chooses to use a webinar platform, while also leveraging the chat, question, and poll functions to foster engagement from attendees.

You can view the full breakdown of meeting and webinar benefits for GoToMeeting and Zoom. In addition to traditional meeting and webinar platforms, which include all of the functions we will discuss, there are also voting software options for nonprofits including Election Buddy, Loomio, and Simple Survey.

0 4

WHAT FUNCTIONS ARE NEEDED

While many non-profits will have unique needs for their AGM, we have compiled some of the most common online meetings functions for virtual AGMs.

Meeting quorum and tracking attendance

A good practice is to ask attendees to type their name in the chat box once your webinar is live. Asking for their full name allows you to track attendance in your AGM minutes and ensure you have met quorum.

Using the chat function as opposed to the registration for tracking attendance is important because not all attendees will use their full names when they register or follow through on attendance.

Remember, if your membership is composed of organizations and not individuals it will be important to identify who has voting privileges and who represents what organization.

ONN designates a staff member to record all names entered into the chat function in the meeting minutes. If you do not have the staff capacity to record names during the webinar, you can ask a volunteer to assist (in advance) and also leverage the "save chat history" function with GoToMeeting and Zoom. *Tip: saving the chat history should be done prior to the webinar through your account settings and tested on a "mock webinar" ahead of time.*

Voting

The polling function in webinar platforms allows users to create a question with multiple answers for attendees to choose from. Once a poll is launched, attendees can vote on answers. The organizer is able to see the percentage of votes per answer and the percentage of attendees who have completed the poll. This helps to see participation and once the poll closes, webinar organizers have the option to share the results of the poll.

On most platforms, total responses can be shared and individual responses remain confidential. Depending on the platform, you may be able to see who voted and how after the session. This may be needed to verify votes, especially if some of the attendees do not have voting power.

0 5

Voting (continued)

By inserting the motion you want to pass in the question area of a poll and setting the answers to "[favour], [opposed], or [abstain]", nonprofits can use the polling function to complete voting for passing motions.

There are a few important things to remember:

- To start collecting responses for a poll, you must click the button to share the poll. Once you have shared the poll, you cannot launch it again without erased the collected data. This includes during practice mode.

- The character maximum for poll questions and answers is low for many platforms. Prepare exact questions and answers prior to your AGM and add them ahead of time to avoid last minute troubles. You don't want to be editing "on the fly" as speakers and participants are waiting.

- You may or may not need to include [abstain] as an option. These are determined by your governing documents.

Passing motions

The chat function allows non-profits to record motions.

Depending on your rules of order, the speaker can ask for a motion verbally and/or onscreen. Members can type "first" or "second" in the chat box to indicate their support. Using the chat function as opposed to having members speak minimizes the chances of audio challenges, members speaking over each other, and ensures a record of voting.

Answering questions

The question "channel" is a great way to respond to questions and track them throughout the meeting. You can respond to attendees directly by message, or if you believe the question is helpful for everyone in the meeting, you can have the speaker respond to the question during their presentation.

06

WHAT ROLES MAY BE NEEDED

We've compiled a list of roles to help smooth the transition from in-person to online. We recognize that not all non-profits have the capacity or number of staff or volunteers to match these roles. Feel free to combine the roles when appropriate.

Completing a mock AGM to ensure all team members are comfortable multi-tasking and with their technological requirements is a good idea.

Moderator/host

Limiting the number of speakers can help alleviate some of the logistical challenges of online AGMs. We recommend having one speaker to complete the introduction, land acknowledgement, and to present the motions. This speaker is typically the Chair of the Board. Depending on comfort with the platform you may want to delegate another team member to be responsible for advancing slides.

Slide advancer

With varying levels of digital comfort, we recommend designating one person to be responsible for advancing all slides during a presentation. This could be a team member whose sole responsibility is advancing the slide deck. If necessary, this could be combined with a moderator/host role, but in most cases, it's preferable to keep the slide advancer separate from other roles in the proceedings.

Poll manager

The poll manager is responsible for setting up the polls, launching the polls, and sharing the results with the attendees during the AGM.

Chat and motion manager *(x2 if you allow participants to phone in)*

The Chat and Motion Manager in an online AGM has two responsibilities. First, they tell the speaker when the AGM has met quorum and when a motion is passed. Second, if there is a question regarding a specific motion prior to passing, the moderator will present the question to the speaker.

To help limit the interruptions for questions, we recommend all questions not related to motions be discussed following the AGM.

07

Tech support *(x2 if you allow participants to phone in)*

Having a separate staff or volunteer(s) available for tech support ensures that the speaker and moderator can focus on the meeting. ONN opts for one person completing tech support questions through the question box and another person available to answer questions by phone. The Tech Support team member can also be responsible for starting the AGM online and ending the AGM for all participants.

Phone/email reception support

If your team has additional capacity, whether it's an additional staff member or volunteer, we recommend designating someone to answer email and phone questions during the set-up period.

TIPS & TRICKS WE'VE LEARNED

Members often register, but don't show up. Aim to have more than you need.

To ensure you meet quorum, make sure you have more registrants than needed. Aim to have at least 20% more attendees than necessary to meet quorum.

Always complete a mock AGM with your speaker and moderator.

It's crucial to ensure each team member is comfortable with their role and the specific order of the AGM using the online platform you have chosen. What may seem straightforward on paper can be more difficult when carrying out virtual and in real time.

Complete technical testing at least one hour prior to the start of the AGM.

Tech testing, meaning audio and video checks for speaker(s) and moderator, only takes five to ten minutes if everything works. However, if it does not work, you will need the extra time to determine what the problem is. Trust us.

08

Have a backup plan if audio cannot be fixed.

Most online meeting platforms have an alternate call-in number for both speakers and attendees. Make sure that your speakers and moderator know the phone number prior to the event. Should their audio not be able to work, they can call in by telephone.

Assume things will run late.

Setting a timed agenda for your meeting is a helpful way to ensure you respect your attendees' time. Reviewing this at the beginning of the presentation will set expectations, while also helping attendees follow along. Since you cannot start the meeting without quorum, assume your meeting will start a few minutes late. It's easy to let attendees know that you have finished early. However, if you run late, you risk attendees leaving early and missing out on important information or votes.

Make registration easier with reminders.

Some of the platforms we have listed have their own registration functions to capture registrants' names prior to the AGM so you can track anticipated attendance. Or you can use other scheduling platforms, like online calendars, to do this. Some platforms also enable you to set automatic reminder emails to participants. You want to make it as easy as possible for participants to join (and find the meeting link in their full inboxes!).

KEEPING ATTENDEES ENGAGED

Keeping attendees engaged may be a challenge when completing online events such as AGMs. Here are some ways to improve attendee attentiveness during your AGM:

- Keep your AGM as concise as possible.. If you plan on having an AGM for longer than 90 minutes, have a set break time in your agenda. You can also use polls and ask the audience questions to break-up content for longer AGMs.

- Have both your speaker(s) and moderator use their cameras so attendees can see their body language and expressions as they speak.

- Use clean, easy to read slides - especially for longer presentations. This means less words per slide, more images, and contrasting colours when possible. Here is a helpful list of slide deck recommendations by TED.

0 9

TEMPLATES & RESOURCES

Feel free to use ONN's online AGM script template and AGM critical path template as samples to start your planning.

Additionally, here are a few Alberta-focused resources that may help:

- https://www.ecvo.ca/covid-19
- https://ecvo.ca/blog/guest-post-can-a-non-profit-board-ignore-its-policies-during-social-distancing-a-deep-dive/
- https://fusesocial.ca/covid-19-resources/
- https://albertanonprofits.ca/COVID_Resources
- https://integralorg.ca/about-us/resources/covid-19-resources-for-nonprofits/

QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK

We welcome your feedback about this virtual AGM facilitation guide. Have additional resources to support nonprofits with AGMs? Contact us by email at governance@ecvo.ca or by reaching out on social media.

Share thoughts and questions with us on social media by tagging us **@EdmCVO** on Twitter and Facebook.

SPECIAL THANKS

to our friends at the **Ontario Nonprofit Network** for their hard work in making this document, and for giving us permission to modify it for Alberta audiences! Pay them a visit a www.theonn.ca.