

Benefits of Virtual Engagement

Benefits to the Public

1. **Access to health information:** In-person events require access to and time for transportation. Online platforms provide more timely updates and participation in public health processes, educational or participatory opportunities that can be recorded and viewed any time, and incorporating multiple formats (e.g., interactive content, downloadable PDFs, and videos), so people engage with content in a way that fits their learning style.
2. **Public participation and engagement:** The public can have a voice in discussions directly impacting the health of their communities. This includes participating more easily in data collection activities (like surveys, focus groups, or town halls), but, more importantly, in data interpretation, planning and prioritization, sharing data, and decision-making. When done well, virtual engagement can improve access by removing geographic barriers, limitations due to work schedules or dependent care needs, and barriers resulting from inaccessible physical environments. These same considerations can improve relationships with the community that the agency serves and include a broader, diverse range of community members.
3. **Health improvement:** By enhancing participation, engagement, and relationship building with communities, virtual meeting and collaboration platforms can improve access to and awareness of public health resources and opportunities. Messages and services can be tailored to specific needs and delivered more effectively to populations that may encounter barriers when attempting to participate in person.

Benefits to the Workforce

1. **Workplace culture and values:** Virtual engagement [can support workforce wellness and retention](#). Work-life balance is supported by reducing stress due to commutes, packing healthy meals, and a person's physical presentation. Additionally, adopting and thoughtfully developing an inclusive virtual engagement policy can demonstrate the organization reflects an employee's values of responsible resource use, public engagement, and equitable participation.
2. **Responsible resource use:** Reduced travel, lodging, per diem, meeting equipment, rental, and printing costs all yield savings that can be applied directly to public health services and programs. The reduced burden of commuting, setting up, and breaking down meeting spaces for events that can be held virtually allows for more effective and efficient use of worker time.
3. **Flexibility and collaboration:** Fully remote or hybrid meetings can allow more flexibility in timing, which means meetings can accommodate different time zones, schedules, and responsibilities, such as dependent care. Employees can also participate in a variety of formats depending on how they are most comfortable (verbally, via chat, using their camera, participating anonymously through polls, small group breakouts, etc.) and in an asynchronous manner that allows them to collaborate at their own pace through shared documents or other collaboration platforms. It can also allow for improved collaboration between teams that may operate in different locations or settings.