Effective Breakout Rooms

Step 1: Give clear instructions.

- Build enough time into your agenda to ensure participants know what is expected in the breakout rooms, how long they will last, and how information will be recorded.
- Share discussion questions and links to the collaboration platform that you’ve set up.
- Consider sending these resources out in advance so people are prepared for the discussion.

Step 2: Create breakout rooms.

- Place participants in groups of three to seven people with a facilitator assigned to guide them.
- Having designated co-facilitators for the breakout rooms helps ensure the notes are accurate and feedback is incorporated.
- If no facilitator is available, have participants select a notetaker to document and report the group's discussion.
- Create a notes template in advance to support leading and capturing the group's discussion. Live notetaking during the discussion portions of the meetings, whether in a large group or breakout rooms, can serve as virtual “flip charts.”

Step 3: Monitor breakout rooms.

- Ensure the participants know how long they will be in the breakout rooms and use the broadcast feature to give them updates on timing, so they know what to expect during their discussion.
- The facilitator, host, and any other support role players can stay in contact using a group chat in Teams or another platform in case they need assistance or more/less time in the sessions, including visiting breakout rooms as needed to clarify information and troubleshoot any issues.

Step 4: Have a method for sharing back.

- Invite the large group to share questions, comments, and takeaways in response to the breakout summaries.
- If time is limited, you can skip this part but ensure transparency by sharing the notes afterwards so participants can see their feedback has been incorporated and is accurate.