

Tips for Hosting Hybrid Work Gatherings

After nearly two years of avoiding large gatherings, some groups would like to hold them again. While we have adapted to many hybrid situations, arranging and running a larger hybrid event requires careful planning.



Please refer to Cornell's current guidance on [group gatherings](#) before you begin any event planning for details about attendee oversight, space use, masks, and food/drink. Continue to revisit the guidance up to the day of the event for any updates.

Keep in mind that although Cornell's guidance may allow for in-person gatherings, there are people who are not yet comfortable attending them. Offering a hybrid gathering (both onsite and remote options) will improve attendance and engagement of your group, regardless of their location.

Carefully consider the comfort level of the group and the associated risk factors when determining if it makes sense to hold an in-person event given the continued risk of spreading infection (especially when food and drink are involved). If your group opts for a fully virtual gathering, we encourage you to read [Priya Parker's](#) guidance on virtual gatherings, particularly when thinking through the purpose of your event.

Key areas to consider when planning include:

1. Technology
2. Activities
3. Give-a-ways
4. Contingency planning

Plan your technology

Plan the technology in advance to ensure everyone can actively participate.

- Assign a designated in-person supervisor who will continuously monitor the connection experience and serve as the in-house voice (e.g., overseeing chats) for those attending the event virtually.
- All onsite connections should be hard-wired since wireless connections are less reliable.
- For smaller gatherings, secure a large monitor with a high-quality web camera which provides a wide view of the area. Obtain a high-quality microphone and speakers to allow virtual attendees to hear people speaking from different locations in the room. For expert guidance in setting this up, contact [CIT](#).
- For larger functions, speak with someone familiar with the venue's technology capabilities to make sure it can support the activities being planned. If it is limited or if you are unsure, consider contracting with [CIT](#) to have an AV specialist manage the event. To maximize the virtual experience in a larger venue, you would optimally have cameras, microphones, and/or use a large monitor. In these cases, it is also recommended you consider space with a way to amplify the person in the room which is commonly referred to as a 'voice-lift.'



Plan hybrid activities

To increase the likelihood that all of your participants will feel included, plan activities in advance that work well both virtually and in-person. When organizing, include at least one employee who will attend remotely. This person may also serve as a 'virtual experience manager' and can quickly address any issues that may arise during the gathering.

Some example activities include:

- If you are planning time for people to walk around and engage in small group discussions, consider using [break-out rooms through Zoom](#) and allow participants to choose and move around these rooms. Assign discussion topics for each room so attendees can select ones that interest them.
- Choose an overall theme and ask those on Zoom to use virtual backgrounds (offer event specific pre-designed ones) and other fun 'props.'
- Watch a movie or video or schedule a fun virtual team class or social activity together (e.g., cooking, painting, scavenger hunt). There are many vendors who now offer these – here are a few examples from a Google search. These are not meant as recommendations, just examples.
 - [33 Fun Virtual Event Ideas](#)
 - [Boombox Events](#)
 - [Team Class](#)
 - [AVVA Experience](#)

- Plan a contest that all can participate in. Use an online polling system for attendees to select contest winners. In-person participants can use cell phones and virtual guests can use their computers or phones.

Provide the same perks

If you are offering special gifts or giveaways for those onsite, find a creative way to also offer them to remote attendees. One option is to send things to the virtual participants in advance or offer a pick-up or ship option afterwards for those who don't attend in-person. If you are planning to provide a gift, the Cornell Store offers discounts for department purchases through their special [department link](#) and items can be sent directly to people's homes.

Have a contingency plan

Be prepared to move a hybrid gathering to a fully virtual gathering in the event of a change in the prevalence of the virus or in situations of inclement weather. Share the contingency plan with everyone, including when and how updates will be shared in the event of any changes.