Why? | Unique value and general challenges

Questions in this section

- **Why do I want to host this event?**
- **Could this experience be an opportunity or a risk for us a team?**
- **What challenges should I consider during this process?**

Online events require a substantial amount of time, resources, imagination of digital spaces, and skills invested in the organising process. Choosing to host an online event rather than using alternative ways of communication (e.g. email, forums, instant messaging) can be a daunting task with many organisational challenges and should thus be grounded on specific needs that cannot be addressed otherwise.

Before you are fully on board to host a specific online event, ask yourself these questions to decide if your event is necessary and timely:

- Why do I want to host this event right now?
- Does it add any value that other formats fail to provide?
- Could a paper or an email help me and my organisation achieve our goal with less investment?

Do you have a pressing issue on which you need to decide swiftly? From our experience, the best option is probably an online call, rather than exchanging emails. A webinar, as opposed to a recorded video lecture, offers the possibility for learning, interaction and participation. A workshop, as opposed to a kit of documents and guidelines, creates a dynamic space between participants and allows for sharing and cross-pollination. On the flip side, all of the online events require participants to have time availability, technology, internet access and dedicated presence, which might be challenging when working with people across the globe.

Could this experience be an opportunity or a risk for you as a team right now? The workload around the design, implementation and follow-up of the event can definitely serve as a new learning and bonding experience for your team, and it can also boost your personal and organisational capacities. However, if your organisation has already shifted some or most of the work online, one of the aspects to keep in mind is the current level of digital fatigue within your team in the context of burnout prevention. Talk to you team and discuss some of the challenges that you think might come your way based on your sense of capacities and shared intention to organise your online event. That can help you think about facilitation of internal and external risk mitigation in the overall process.

Here are some of the challenges to consider when thinking about organising online events:

- Planning, design and implementation of online events is a time consuming process (research, learning, and practice regarding technology, platforms and tools)
- Risk assessment and mitigation measures should be adjusted (digital safety, privacy issues and policies of certain platforms, etc.)
- MEL tools and activities need to be adjusted.
- Access and participation is hindered by structural discrimination and exclusion of people. Online events require access to technology, rely on the internet access, stability and uninterrupted electricity - which can limit the participation of women, queer communities and people in rural and (post)conflict areas, or people with different needs.
- Time zone issues that impact program design, participants' focus and engagement, etc.
- Multiple or non-native language(s) used which requires translation, interpretation, close captioning and adaptation of the content to meet different accessibility needs of participants.
- Digital privacy and safety issues that involve additional actions and considerations on specific policies related to platforms chosen, participants' personal information, their context, and content shared.
- Organisation (and participation) requires focused and dedicated presence before, during and after the event, when most of the work and activities are already taking place online.
- Policies and guidelines on participation for ensuring a safe environment during the event (including effective facilitation) need to be designed and adjusted, as power dynamics and unequal power relations are present in online just as in the offline space.
- Sharing, connecting and networking during informal get-together sessions need to be initiated in designated spaces.
- Organisation and participation in your online event has real costs. Budget has to be carefully planned, including costs around supporting participation.

Check in
Throughout this guide, you will find content around the responses to most of the issues listed above. In the next section we will talk more about the goals of the event, and we hope that these two sections combined will be helpful for your initial considerations as a factor in the decision to organise your online event.

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