How? | Format, technology, documentation, language(s), care and budget design

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- How to choose the format that suits your online event best?
- Which technology/platform to choose?
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- Language(s): Translation, interpretation, closed captioning
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How to choose the format that suits your online event best?

When choosing the format of your event, it’s challenging to find one-fits-all as you would want to balance your goal, content, accessibility options, safety and technology choice. Will it be a real-time synchronous or asynchronous event, or perhaps a mix of two? Do you want your participants to fully engage and interact on the spot, or do you want to give out a resource and schedule a time for sharing and learning? What are the limitations or challenges of the format that you might need to adjust as to meet the different needs of your participants?

In deciding your online event’s format take into consideration the following elements:

- benefits and challenges relevant for your event in terms of
  - synchronous communication and format
  - asynchronous communication and format
  - combination of the two
- your goal and type of engagement relevant for your event
- duration of the event
- time zone(s) and time availability of your participants
- your participants’ needs (accessibility, challenges and safety risks)

Formats based on goals and participants’ response and engagement

Some formats provide more opportunities for engagement and interaction, such as: online trainings and workshops, collaborative sessions, (live) chat, live streaming events with Q&A session, conferences, online meetings. They are mostly synchronous with all participants in the shared space and entail “immediate response” and real time participation both from you and your participants. Though they have many benefits, such as addressing questions and issues immediately, enhancing the connection and interaction between participants, etc., they also bring many challenges. These formats rely on access to uninterrupted internet connectivity, technology, availability of all participants during the event, and also pose time zone and safety issues that need to be addressed and taken into account.

There are formats that also have the element of “immediate response” for dynamic engagement and participation, but the response is scheduled and required only after the content is shared. One of the examples of this format is a webcast where a pre-recorded content is shared on a platform while designated time for knowledge exchange and learning is set up. Another example is a prerecorded conference that is streamed and then followed by a live Q&A. In these cases, the material is prepared in advance (prerecorded) and then live streamed or shared for direct participation in real time. Choosing these formats provides you with a possibility to schedule the

time for feedback, engagement and mutual learning.

Some of these formats can also be completely asynchronous and have an element of “adjusted response”. Some examples are: collaborative writing sessions, workshops, discussion boards, webcasts, etc. In these events, everyone works towards their goal, but not necessarily at the same time and shared pace. This means that the person decides when, for how long and in what way they want to participate based on their sense of safety, needs, availability and situational capacities. People take their own time and pace for processing information, which supports different participation models and diverse needs.

One of the challenges for asynchronous events is that the material preparation, documentation and shared instructions need to be thorough as to support self-paced participation, clarity in communication and avoid confusion. Schedules also have to be revisited, shared agreements on due dates made, and potential homework assigned within the group. On the other hand, while working on preparatory documentation, you can make the documentation more accessible and focus on translation, readability, adjust images, and make beautiful and creative visual and audio content. As they lack real time exchange, it might be challenging to sustain a community spirit and a feeling of togetherness, but this can be compensated with additional spaces for games, exchange of artworks, poetry, etc.

[Possible illustration] When thinking about your goals and diverse possibilities that suggest the appropriate format for the event, here are some examples of possible formats:

- To do capacity or skill building with your participants, or a storytelling session, a workshop would be the most appropriate format.
- To exchange knowledge with attendants about a specific subject with the contribution of subject matter experts, you could select a webinar or a conference.
- To engage your participants, encourage real time interaction, and explore a certain issue or a topic, a plenary session or live Question and Answer session on a streaming platform would be a best fit.
- To reach a decision in a horizontal manner among many members, you could choose to organise a virtual assembly.
- To collectively inform the course of an organisation and connect with peers you can opt for online staff meetings.
- To have some fun / leisure time and bond with your community you could organise an online party with music, drinks and “corridor discussions”.
- To provide support and check-in on folks you could hold collective care and group support sessions.

We suggest going back to your participants, risk assessment and survey results and align your decisions. In addition to this, it’s helpful to draft a script with your content, speakers, etc. and see how that will fit into the format chosen. The most important thing to keep in mind are the different needs of the participants, how to meet them and format limitations. The format you select will also define the technologies you will use, as well as the kind of planning and adjustments that you will have to use from this point on.

APC examples of practice on different formats

The shift from an in-person meeting to an online workshop in response to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an experimental exploration of creative and feminist space-making grounded in collective care. Up to date, this is still a learning process for us where we are combining many elements and building different structures with an intention to dedicate maximum attention and resources to our events. However, we would like to share some examples of our online events and convenings of different formats:

- Storytelling from remote workshop
- APC member convening Closer than Ever
- Take Back the Tech 2020
- APC Staff meetings

One of APC's first experimental spaces was our **Storytelling from remote workshop** held online in August 2020 for 16-18 participants. For this five day long workshop (with two optional days two weeks after) we combined tools for synchronous and asynchronous activities: BigBlueButton for our meetings, Mattermost for instant and asynchronous communication, Telegram as back-up, Etherpads for text writing and editing (eg. on Riseup.net) and wiki pages as repositories instead of folders. For more content around methodology and a complete list of tools used during our workshop, check our Storytelling from remote module and section Recommended resources, tools and further reading.

APC member convening Closer than Ever was a five-day long multi-lingual online convening with about 200 participants organized in October 2020, which also marked the 30th anniversary of APC. The programme spanned across all time zones, starting at 3:30 UTC and ending at 22:00 UTC. Each day was dedicated to a theme where we had 12 plenaries (90 and 120 minutes) in two major time zones, intended for everyone to participate. Each day we had two main plenaries with translation, interpretation and captioning. Along with the plenaries, we had:

- 25 hosted events of 30 and 60 minutes;
- 9 Digital Booths of 60 minutes each in English, Spanish and French held in permanent rooms with APC staff. The boots served as info point to orientate members into the space and happenings, digital participation grants and other questions/needs;
- 12 sessions of 2 hours each for the APC 30 year timeline for our stories;
- Care events as ongoing, open rooms;
- A bar, a park and a beach as informal spaces to relax and organise pop-ups on topics chosen by participants, as well as a Square and a Market Place to promote and share pop-ups;
- 2 parties.

The convening ran in two main spaces, one structured and the other flexible with five types of possible event formats (60 to 90 minutes) organized by the community. We also prepared a Host/Propose an event template for participants to fill in with necessary information so we could support them, along with relevant repository links for materials and a list of tools. Here are the possible formats that were featured:

- **Interactive one-hour long workshops**for 15 – 30 people using simple participatory exercises designed to inspire and facilitate participants' engagement, such as spectrograms or small group discussions.
- **Story-circles** for reflective and transformative conversations for 5-15 people with a theme or a question (for example, "my online body"). Story circles are first-person, confidential, safe spaces for interpersonal reflections and exchange.
- **Annotate sessions**for 5-7 people to ask and collect feedback on a specific research, study or plan where the host makes available the documents and prepares a set of three to five questions they would like to receive feedback or collect insights on. Annotate sessions can be writing sprints and use the Pomodoro Technique for real-time writing and annotation, or they can take the form of a discussion documented through note taking and recording.
- **Fast-forward sessions** are creative sessions where participants receive one or multiple scenarios and are invited to imagine new possible actions, advocacy strategies, etc. They can work for a small group of 10 as well as a larger group of 30 to 40. Participants can write their possible future in a group or individually and this can be done using text,images, or creative art materials.
- **Share your format** option where participants are invited to use their own event format that facilitates engagement and participation.

Following our member convening, in December 2020 we organized **Take back the Tech 2020** as a three-day long online convening for 50 persons with a more fluid structure. Our aim was to explore creative ways of holding space online in ways that are inclusive and forefront of self and collective care. We designed a series of facilitated and self-paced asynchronous jam sessions, real-time sessions of care and playfulness, and live multi-lingual plenaries.

- We combined synchronous and asynchronous sessions: plenaries, self and collective care sessions and DJ live boards.
- Plenaries and specific real time events of self and collective care were set in BigBlueButton and organized in two time blocks: 9:30 UTC to 13:00 UTC and 14:30 UTC to 18 UTC, with interpretation provided.
- Asynchronous events were collaborative spaces featuring DJ live boards on WeKan with curated resources, tools and learnings in English, French, Spanish and Arabic by 5 different DJs, as well as all participants.
- We also set up a Mattermost channel TBTT Garden which featured all information related to events, including the DJs playlists.
- This convening was login-based, meaning that schedule, maps and ReadMe documents were set up as Wiki pages.

Since COVID-19 outbreak we have started experimenting during **APC online staff meetings** on formats that help connecting with one another, enhance participation and facilitate learning. APC Staff meetings are three-day long meetings held quarterly for up to 50 APC staff members. Our meetings represent dedicated time to come together as team, share information, learn from one another and have a space to develop and deepen the way we work, influence and create changes. We have a staff meeting wiki (fashioned after the APC convening wiki), a separate staff meeting Mattermost space to keep conversations in one place and a folder in Share2 for all documentation.

Formats used are:

- plenary and group discussion sessions
- hanging out, storytelling and music sessions
- self-reflection through journaling sessions

Which technology/platform to choose?

Essential to your event design are the technological platforms and tools that will be used. This determines accessibility, opportunities and possible limitations for your event. Be flexible and make sure the team designing the event involve technologists. They can be part of your coordination team or trusted members and partners of your network. They can provide advice and support throughout the process.

Here is an overview of the basic tools you will probably need during the overall process of online event planning and implementation:

- email (mailing lists included)
- direct messaging (chat),
- wikis, etherpads
- blogs and websites
- video conferencing system/platform
- shared document repositories
- collaboration boards which allow a card-based layout for tasks, to-do management and resource sharing
- social media: social networking service or platform
- interactive tools for surveys, polls, registration forms, etc.

We suggest checking our Closer than Ever guide for a deep dive into the use and choice of ICTs for online work, as well as its specifications and limitations. Here is also a list of Available FLOSS tools with a high level of stability, adoption (and available support) in the APC community that you might want to consider as well. You will probably use a combination of tools that fits the needs and conditions of your organisation and your participants. The most important thing is that it is user-friendly, safe and accessible for your team and your participants who will be using it.

Make sure you check the specifications of each tool you are considering. Here is a list of general questions to consider at this stage:

- What do I need this specific tool for? Think of your specific activities and tools you will need for them.
- What is the number of participants? For video conferencing tool, is the load on server-side processing or client-side processing? Think of platform limitations.
- Who is participating and what content will be shared? Can it put anyone at risk? Go back to your “Who will attend” section and identify the gaps.
- What are my safety concerns? Think of user-server communication, is it established over a secure connection? Is there a risk of information interception? Can it be self-hosted or is

there a third-party involved?
- Is it free to install and use or is it a proprietary tool/platform?
- What features of the tool do I need to use? Think of multiple presenters, audio and video recording, accessibility support, translation, close-captioning and voice-over, breakout rooms, private chat for participants, chat block options.
- Do I need my meetings to be audio or video-recorded? Do I need to log chats, list of participants, etc?
- Is it a browser-based tool that works on most operating systems or an application must be installed that might cause operability issues?
- How complex is the interface? Will people need to complete multiple actions at the same time in one space to participate in the event?
- Do I want to enable easier access with invitation code, or will participants have to create a profile/user account?

If you are worried that the tool will pose a threat to your team or your participants, you would want to consider finding an alternative and safer tool. You can find more information on the specific software, platform and apps in our FTX: Safety Reboot, Alternative tools for networking and communications including a referenced Alternative To website that can help you check the security functionality of any tool and offer a spectrum of alternatives.

Check in
Be aware that you will still be doing adjustments as the planning process proceeds. You might drop some of the original technological solutions and choose some other or you might be confronted by costs or human resource implications when moving forward into the planning.

Free/libre and open source software

APC prioritises free/libre and open source software (FLOSS) and open standards. This is important because it reminds us that our choices need to always make sure that they are:

- Driven by community needs
- Sustainable
- Secure

Which are amplified and echoed by the values of Feminist practices and politics of technology:

- Participatory/Inclusive
- Secure
- Appropriate/Sustainable Technologies
- Free and Open Source software will be given priority, but only if the participants can sustain their use post-training
- Transparent/Open

- Creative/Strategic
- Emphasising the Role of Women in Technology
- Emphasising Women's Control of Technology
- Fun!

In terms of concrete choices for our online events, most of the platforms and tools we are using are FLOSS tools and tech platforms, such as: CiviCRM, Mattermost, WeKan board, etherpad, wiki and/or Nextcloud suite.

We are using Mattermost as one of the main open source, cross-system, communications platforms hosted on APC servers that ensures synchronous and asynchronous private one-on-one or group communication. We have designated spaces (channels) for different threads (topics) and also use it as a quick and simple back-up channel for announcements during our events. Mattermost has become our shared “office space” where we check in, come together as a team and have conversations.

For real time video conference APC uses a self-hosted open source conferencing system BigBlueButton (BBB). It provides us with whiteboards, presentations, breakout groups, chat and shared notes features - for up to 55 participants (stress-tested!). We have internal practice of not going all on video at the same time as not to stress both the system and individual devices. We have been developing a translation interface for BBB and are currently in the testing phase of providing a safe and easy interpretation system.

At this stage and despite the investment of time, human dedication and funds, the BBB installation is not stable enough to host larger plenaries. We hope that in the future, with the collective effort of many organisations investing in alternatives and autonomous infrastructures, we will be able to run our real time video convening securely, smoothly and comfortably on FLOSS platforms and tools only.

Limitations to the adoption of FLOSS

While FLOSS development and promotion remains APC's priority, we are also very aware of the real-life limitations to the wide adoption of FLOSS for all of our ICT tools and services.

We understand that using FLOSS can represent a significant change in organisational and individual culture and behaviour, and it can require considerable effort to switch from one system to another.

We understand that promotion and use of FLOSS requires (non-monetary) investment from users, and the price to be paid can in some cases include longer production times, lower usability of FLOSS tools, more frequent bugs that require frequent workarounds, etc.

When some challenges or barriers (such as the limitation on the number of our participants) become too costly, we make a conscious decision to use proprietary solutions, but always with the long-term goal of migrating to FLOSS when this becomes a viable option. For example, in case of our large 2020 member convening we needed to complement BBB with a proprietary system and

we communicated our decision with our participants. In BBB, the load is on client-side processing, as opposed to server-processing on proprietary system. In this particular case, it was not a question of server power, but the architecture of existing systems. The BBB developers explicitly discourage hosts from attempting to bring more than 100 people to a single session.

Documentation design and preserving memories

Documentation can be utilized to the extent of easing the entire process of event preparation and further used as your organisational and community archive for community knowledge building. Not only does it serve your participants for preparation and the navigation during the event, but it can also be a great tool for your own organisation for reflection, lessons learned during the process, or as a capacity building or advocacy tool. Preparing and saving all documentation related material would be a strategic move as it could be a resource that you can further develop, build on, adjust and share in your community and wider network.

Here are some types of preparatory documentation and materials to consider during your planning and designing stage. You would probably want to have some or most of these ready at different stages, as well as to include your participants in the design of some of the documents.

- preparatory surveys and registration forms for your participants
- post-event surveys and evaluations for your participants
- post-event surveys and evaluations for your team
- consent forms for your participants
- consent, privacy and confidentiality protocol for your participants during the event
- manuals/instructions on chosen tools and platform for participants
- goodie bag (postcards, profiles, stickers, wallpapers, backgrounds and designs)
- manual for interpreters and captioners
- core values document
- principles of participation document
- event communications plan
- event roles and responsibilities
- event planning and design process timeline
- event schedule and agenda
- event documentation plan
- session(s) design outline
- read me document for your participants which can be a compilation of relevant documents and important content
- biographies of facilitators, key speakers, guests, panelists, etc.
- list of participants and their contacts
- material relevant for activities (speeches, presentations, books, songs, links)
- budget for your event
- contracts, agreements, reimbursement forms
- back up plan and preventive measures

Check in
Remember to communicate with your speakers, facilitators and other relevant persons on delivering their prepared material as soon as you design your program so it can be adjusted and/or translated in advance and that it is accessible to all people. Also, don't forget that some of the material will contain personal data and content that could put some people at risk. Make sure to anonymise any compromising data (gender, region, name), secure your channels of communication, as well as your repository system.

Documentation and participants

Some of the documents listed above will need to be designed and sent out to your participants beforehand. Think how to engage your participants in documentation design process so you can be on the same page and create a good plan. Here are some questions to have in mind when thinking about documentation and your participants:

- Are there pre-activities to design and send to them (for example, surveys, registration links, consent forms)?
- Consider preparing a goodie bag as to bridge the offline and digital realms. Here's an example of APC's Member convening 2020 goodie bag.
- Will participants need support documentation, manuals, or material to prepare beforehand?
- You might want to consider a Read me document that can be collection of different documents (schedule, principles of participation, manuals, etc.)
- Is the material in accessible format? (consider readability, color contrast, image description, etc. and your choice of format)
- Is the material queer-friendly and supporting of diverse lived experiences? Mind the language and tone.
- Consider providing participants with a shared publishing space that can be easily managed by your preparatory team, and yet participants can contribute to.

Think if you plan to share and use the entire event or some aspects of it later on for promotion or resource development. Go back to your "Who will attend" section. Think of privacy, risks and safety of your participants when it comes to documenting the event and ask yourself some questions that can help you prepare in advance:

- Will people be able to maintain their anonymity?
- How will you ensure participant consent in relation to any information that might be shared?
- Will you as an organizer or the platform you have chosen be storing personal information, and does that comply with privacy and data protection regulations?
- Will the event be recorded?
- Where will different information be stored?
- How will you make sure the information stored is protected?
- Will the entire event or fragments of it be made public?

- Will participants quotes, photos or contacts in any way be publicly shared?

Check in
All of these listed questions involve consent forms, revisions of platform policies or adjustments and announcements you might want to start making already at the planning stage. You will find practical examples that address these issues during your online event in ‘Consent, privacy and confidentiality’ section of this guide.

How will you document your event?

As we already shared in this guide, there are dozen documents that you would want to prepare in advance. However, the documentation of the event itself is an element that is adapted, adjusted and made unique by each organisation’s framework: values, practices, approach, content and issues covered. Documentation serves the function of preserving the memories of powerful shared moments, conversations, insights and people - which can always be revisited. In this way, you can go back to the conversations, review highlights, and reflect on what worked and what can be improved. Video recordings, notes, quotes and visuals can also be incorporated in your advocacy activities, media campaigns, research, reports, etc.

To decide what to document go back to the purpose of your event as mentioned in the “What do I want to accomplish” and choose what can help you achieve that. Different forms will suit your different needs. For example, at APC we find visual documentation and graphic recording very effective to convey the content of meetings and discussions. Here is an example of APC Member Convening 2020 - Closer Than Ever graphic recording.

Documentation can take different forms: audio recordings, text notes (reports, highlights, summaries, transcriptions), video recordings, visual/graphic notes (illustrations), whiteboards (as a freeform space that could be informal but also intentionally used). However you decide to document, take into consideration consent, privacy and confidentiality protocols and forms for your participants. You can read more on these in the section “During the event”.



Types of documentation from APC’s experience during our Member Convening and Take Back the Tech! 2020 campaign

- Audio recordings for internal use (with the consent of all participants in the plenaries).
- Text notes with the aim of writing up reports for internal use and to incorporate learning into our work and practices or used as base for posts during the convening or after it, as “shares with the wider community”.

- Graphic/visual recordings to capture ideas spontaneously and synthese them through illustrations.
- Recording is happening only in the plenary and only for documentation purposes. Recordings are stored securely on APC servers.



Event documentation plan

Depending on the event duration, consider having a designated person for documentation, or a team of documenters during your event. The documenters are in charge of note-taking, graphic/visual recording and transcription, with outputs such as highlights of the day, summaries, illustrations, etc. Make sure you communicate with them in advance some of the key issues as you want them to be able to navigate spaces and content with ease. Here is a suggestion for a core template of some elements in the event documentation plan that you might find useful when designing your own:

- Roles, workload distribution, timeline and goals of documentation
- Contract points (terms of reference and deliverables), if applicable
- Program and schedule
- Sessions and objectives, bearing in mind:
  - languages and terminology used
  - optional attendance sessions
  - type of content shared and what should not be documented
- Communications and meeting spaces
  - Spaces that will be used for backend communication and future agreements
  - Workspaces and technology tools used
  - Spaces where the event will take place
  - Dedicated focal point for communication (questions, clarifications, scheduling changes)?
- Important links with relevant credentials (access/login details) provided
  - Links to working and meeting spaces
  - Links to folders for preparatory material
  - Links to folders for documentation outputs, including internal schedule of documentation
- Relevant policies, principles and practices of participation
- Next steps

Using wikis to plan online events and publish supporting documentation

Wikis can be useful, as they allow users to easily edit and change content and engage in discussions around the content, without the need for specific software. You can think of them as something between a webpage, and an online collaborative document such as pads, onlyoffice, or Google Docs.

The advantage of using wiki for your meeting documentation is that while your preparatory team can collaborate on editing the content you can establish different levels of permissions for different participants. These can range from just reading the content and downloading linked attachments, to editing certain pages of your wiki, for example participants' profiles, or the agenda. Different types of wikis are suitable for different purposes. For example, TikiWiki has a complex user permissions system allowing you to fine-tune access permissions of participants. At the same time it is more complex and less user friendly than MediaWiki where you can achieve a nicely organised layout without much formatting work.

Wikis are handy for meeting preparations because they give you an option to publish a page with all details about the event, and yet you have a possibility to update some documents or make last minutes changes with few clicks, if necessary. Replacing uploaded documents with updated versions is easy and you don't even need to touch the content of the main pages itself. So excellent for publishing preparatory documents or agendas where you foresee some possible last-minute changes.

Wikis are not that good for collaborative note taking, although it is a good practice to publish the final notes (or recording) from your event there along with other documents related to your meeting. However, for real-time collaborative note-taking you need a tool that is easy to access and allows real time editing by various users without them over-writing each other's contributions. Pads are ideal for that.



"From APC Member Convening 2020: Wikis as a map for our convening"

During our APC Member Convening 2020 - Closer than Ever we used wikis and designed five books that served as a map for our convening:

1. Welcome to the convening [in Spanish, French and English]

- Introduction
- Member convening orientation guide
- Read me

2. Tech guide for the convening [answers to tech questions so participants can focus on the sessions, ideas and the people at the convening]

- Access and passwords
- How to get tech support
- Space(s) and platforms
- Manual for event organisers and facilitators
- Manual for interpreters and captioners

3. Dish of the day [daily highlights of the sessions and an overview of the next day]
4. Book of participants [member profiles - information on participants who were grouped in time zones so that they could reach out and get to know each other with information they had provided with consent]
5. Tech choices [notes on some technological choices in relation this convening and APC's position and commitment to FLOSS technologies]



Using pads for documenting online events

Pads work well even for low bandwidth situations, and have low latency (time delay) and CPU (energy/consumption) demands on computers of users who are contributing to them. They can be completely open so anyone with the link can see them and contribute to editing/note taking. They can also be password protected. Enabling authorship colors can help you track who is making which changes when number of people are working on the text (notes, in this case) simultaneously.

Open pads can be very easily created at https://pad.riseup.net and https://etherpad.org.

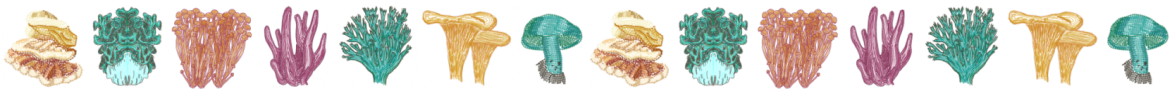
Using pads for note-taking from your meeting can be useful even if you don't have several contributors but only one note-taker. Participants can watch the notes 'feed' building in real life. This can be useful for those participants for whom written text complements voice in important way, for example people with hearing impairment or participants for whom the language used at your meeting is not their first language. Similarly, live notes can be a life-savor for people who have issues with audio on their computer and who are still able to participate and follow conversation through the pad.

Note that live pads are integrated into some online conferencing systems, such as Jitsi or BigBlueButton.

Language(s): Translation, interpretation, closed captioning

When it comes to translation, interpretation, closed captioning and global online convenings and events held in multiple languages with hundreds of participants in different time zones, here are some lessons learned from APC experience:

- Consider having your translators and interpreters on board as soon as you design your program and have most of the documents ready. The purpose of this is to introduce them to the event, goals, terminology, acronyms, etc. in advance.
- Some material will have to be translated in advance (schedule, Read me, consent forms, etc.). Make sure you compile and deliver the material as early as possible to your translators.
- Send your interpreters and captioners a manual that guides them through the technical side of the process on the chosen platform, as well as the main contact information on requesting tech support in general and during the session in particular, and lastly, the main synchronous, real time, communication channel of the tech support team.
- Your choice of platform will determine if automatic and/or manual closed captioning is possible during your online event. Bear in mind that many tools have automatic option of closed captioning, however, it is not adjusted to multiple languages and accent diversity.
- If your online event will be conducted in 2 or more languages, your choice of platform will also decide if consecutive or simultaneous interpretation is possible in one or different audio and/or video channels.
- The pace of your session will determine the speed of translation, interpretation and close-caption delivery. Consider adjusting the pace of the conversations given the languages used and your participant's needs. A slightly slower pace of the session would suit your participants better if 2-3 languages are spoken. This particularly applies if the language used in not a shared native language for all participants. Also consider that some of your participants might have difficulties with hearing, vision or focus and everyone would benefit from a slower pace of the session.



"From APC Member convening 2020: Walk the talk, from privilege and power to solidarity - languages"

Members and staff in the APC network speak and use many languages and whenever it is possible we try to ensure that together with the "default" English, we have interpretation at least for

Spanish and French – occasionally we have been able to include Arabic. We are aware that the use of “bridge” languages such as English, Spanish and French are inherently rooted in colonialism and in modern world imperialism. This is a fact.

We know that as such they are also a barrier to participation and engagement for anyone that does not feel confident or comfortable in expressing her/him/themselves in one of these languages. We recognise also the technical constraints and costs related to interpretation, and as a global organisation we are more and more invested in advocacy with funders to make them aware and understanding of the critical relevance to include interpretation as a way to expand participation and move away from a model that makes languages a barrier to participation.

To walk the talk, we provided interpretation in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese for plenaries as well as captioning so that reading the text can support hearing the voice.



Self and collective care: How do we nurture, rest and play?

We've learned from our histories and lived realities within the oppressive and exploitative ableist systems and gender norms that precarity, poverty, structural discrimination and exclusion perpetuate and deepen the red flags of our vulnerability. Those red flags are harder to pinpoint in the shared digital reality, unless we clearly communicate them in advance and/or as they happen.

Care is central to our work, meaning that we focus on people and decisions that protect, support and facilitate the development of connection and relationships. At APC we are still building our model of care that is based in justice, and this is an ongoing process and something we are still learning about. However, here are some of our insights and reflections gained so far:

Consider having permanent spaces dedicated to self and collective care. Dedicated virtual rooms can be set up during your event to share the skills and rituals people use to practice care. This will open an informal space of sharing where participants will be able to share their own ways of caring and learn new ones. At APC we have started doing this weekly with dedicated time and virtual rooms where people can come together to do collages, to meditate, to journal, to create their personal emojis and explore care.

Time management is an act of care. Go back to your event duration considerations and program design. Be gentle with yourself and your team, as you will need more time for planning than anticipated. The way in which you implement your online events can increase your participants digital fatigue and stress. Be mindful that 4 hours online can be as tiring as much as a full day of physical meeting. Also keep the schedule and boundaries around time firm.

We should be reminded that our work is a complementary part of our being, but not the defining core. Time is the most valuable currency we have in this life and it is a limited resource. Plan ahead for all of your personal time-off after the event ends so you all have time to recharge and rest.

Organise "red flags" group activity for your team. What are your red flags when working online? What makes you feel better? Make a list of your red flags and needs and assign each other a care bear or a care buddy in your team, so you can check up on each other.

Connect to what nourishes. Identify simple activities you can do alone or together. You can also use those activities during your events, either in spaces for care or as suggestions for breaks. Consider yoga, journaling, meditation, stretching, drawing, creative writing, dancing. If your breaks are designed for physical moving away from the screen - add music, avoid timers on the shared screen of your platform, and use inspiring images or videos.

Make a clear communications protocol with your team. Discuss your different approaches to work time. What time is big-no-time for synchonous exchange of communication (audio/video calls)? Are there exceptions? When and why?

Make a clear protocol on how staff conflicts are addressed. This can make a safeguarding framework for your team if the level of frustration comes to the tipping point and a conflict breaks out.

Dance and sing! Make sure you celebrate your event given all the hard work and commitment both by your team and your participants. Add music, singing and dancing to the sessions, breaks or where you find fit. Invite participants to add their songs to DJ lists and discover new mixtapes!

How to plan your budget and costs

Planning and carrying out an online event also has cost implications both for you as an organiser and for your participants. Connecting remotely opens up different variables related to the infrastructure around your event, event planning and implementation, as well as participation and access.

Based on our experience, cost components of your budget can include:

- People (documentation team, interpretation and captioning team, program moderators, staff)
- Technology and software (bandwidth, software licensing, secure resource holders and repository
- Digital (remote) participation grants (food, internet access, materials, equipment rent, e-voucher giveaways for games)
- Fun and entertainment (live performances, supporting local arts and culture)
- Evaluation and learning

When approaching your budget design, go back to the size and scope of your event, your participants's needs, your resources and what you want to achieve and then decide what are the key elements that will help you in achieving your goal. Here are some examples:

- If it is a learning experience make sure all resources are easily accessible. Information should be available in ways that do not penalize participants with low connectivity.
- If your participants are from different language and needs background, value interpretation, translation and accessibility as opportunities for direct exchange among participants during some key moment of the online event, both real time or asynchronously.
- If your focus is to reach a decision on important issues within your wider network, consider prioritizing documentation as a valuable resource.
- If your event poses a high or medium risk for your participants, or there are people with different needs and access barriers, consider allocating funds for digital participation grants and designing your criteria based on your participants' survey and risk assessment.

Access becomes even more layered in online spaces, and not only in terms of connectivity. Moving from face-to-face events to remote ones brings many novelties, including finding sustainable, effective ways to support participation and access. Your participants' survey answers and risk assessment will guide you in this. Go back to them and realign your priorities. If possible, budget or plan for affordable allowance / per diem to provide upon request for anyone that will participate and attend your event, especially if the duration of the event is more than one session.

Check in
There are different ways to think about supporting meaningful participation and access. Below you will find our recent learnings, highlights and existing practices around supporting participation in APC-hosted events, including digital participation grants but also considerations when the costs of meaningful digital participation are not affordable.

Access justice practices: from APC Notes on digital participation grants

One of the most essential elements when planning our events is based on ensuring participation of a wider spectrum of voices with the acknowledgment that access is hindered by structural discrimination and that participation to events implies labour from both organizers and participants. Being in a space where needs are addressed and resolved and everyone is taken care of - makes meaningful and dedicated participation possible.

For the above listed reasons we have been designing our own guidelines and set of practices on supporting digital participation for APC-hosted events. Some additional thinking around this was also prompted by our experience of organising online events during COVID-19 pandemic which has amplified the existing structural inequalities, discrimination and exclusion also in the digital realm.

The intention of digital participation grants is to respond to strategic needs shared by all or most participants, in a way that is affordable, accountable and transparently addressed. Based on our experience and learning process so far, here are the types of costs that we cover in our digital participation grants:

- **digital participation grants – standard / essential** - Data and connectivity: various data packages responding to event requirements, and small items such as microphones and cable/wire for better connectivity and experience are also included.
- **per diem for meals and/or snacks and local costs** - Cost of meals on meeting days when cooking may not be feasible, transportation to/from a quiet space, similar to physical events.
- **creative material** - When convenings require participants to create tangible outputs requiring purchase of stationery, pens, markers, stickers – the kinds of materials often provided by the host during a face to face meeting
- **digital participation grants – addressing structural discrimination and exclusion** - Renting of room/space for safety reasons; ensuring family members receive care for the duration of the meeting (family as defined by the participant); renting devices such as laptop/desktop to ensure the maximum possibility to engage and interact – mobile devices are very common but don’t always offer the best experience and access to features of a convening.

When structural discrimination hinders access to digital participation in ways the host is not able to address, this is acknowledged. Meaningful participation should then be reviewed by the participant(s) in a way that makes them feel seen and heard in terms of meeting duration, contribution to the convening, safety and privacy.

When the costs of meaningful digital participation are not affordable by the host, alternative means should be imagined and offered/provided to the participant(s). This could include providing audio or video recordings and graphic illustrations in real, or near real-time. In these cases the host commits to share with the participants - reactions, responses and any other requests intended for all participants.