



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
EXTENSION



United States
Department of
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Getting Started

There are many different options for delivering online outreach – from social media and streaming video to web meetings, webinars, and multi-session online courses. Selecting the right platform and approach begins with thinking through outreach and educational objectives. Before planning an event, consider the following questions:

Goals

- What do you want the group to learn and/or accomplish?
- What is the overall change you are working toward?

Audience

- What cultural, regional, racial, ethnic considerations need to be taken into account?
- What motivates participants to attend? What takeaways do they want?
- What do they already know/believe?
- What are their barriers to participation?

Logistics

- What is the size of the group?
- How many sessions/how long will they stay together?
- Are there speakers who would normally be hard to get to an in-person event that the virtual model would enable you to engage?

Equity

- Does this virtual approach bias our content towards certain audiences over others? Are there ways we can overcome this?
- Is there a way that BIPOC women or communities might not feel welcome in the virtual space we are creating?

Inclusion

- Who might be left out by moving to a virtual platform?
- Who might a virtual event provide additional opportunity for?
- Will there be ways to bring folks into the planned event/experience if they don't have internet connectivity?



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The answers to these questions will help you decide both on the technology and the facilitation and instructional methods that are well-suited to meet your goals.

Challenges

When approaching online program design, there may be a tendency to assume that the Internet is a democratic public space where race or class or geography don't exist. Unfortunately, the Internet is not a racial utopia and many "utopian hopes for the Internet as a space that transcends racism" is largely a byproduct of early Web users being primarily White as there continues to be segregated uses of online spaces (and access issues as laid out in the limitations section above) by different racial groups based on where people feel safe or seen¹. Much as we are seeking to create safe spaces online for women in our outreach, we have to acknowledge that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) women may not feel safe in those same spaces unless organizers take a critical approach to thinking about how Whiteness informs their organizational approach. Indeed, Nakamura and Chow-White² argue that no matter "how digital we become, the continuing problem of social inequality along racial lines persists."

Further, those who lack access to broadband, which includes many rural farmers and ranchers, are also at a disadvantage in accessing online content, and therefore we acknowledge that there is "a digital divide in racially determined access to online spaces"² and more generally, broadband access is a space of growing inequality along intersecting lines of gender, race/ethnicity, rurality, income, education, and age³. In rural areas, according to the FCC, about 65% of residents have access to high-speed fixed service, compared to about 97% of Americans living in urban areas⁴. And on Tribal lands, fewer than 60% of residents have access⁴. Nationwide, racial minorities are less likely to have

¹ Kanjere, A. (2019). Defending race privilege on the Internet: how whiteness uses innocence discourse online. Published online: *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(14), 2156-2170. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1477972>

² Nakamura, L., & Chow-White, P. (2012). Introduction – race and digital technology: Code, the color-line, and the information society. In *Race after the internet* (pp. 1–18). New York, NY: Routledge. Retrieved from: <http://web.mit.edu/schock/www/docs/pubs/race-internet-newvoices-scc-ew.pdf>

³ Tolbert, C. J., & Mossberger, K. (2006). New inequality frontier: Broadband Internet access. *Economic Policy Institute Working Paper*, (275). Retrieved from: <https://www.epi.org/publication/wp275/>

⁴ Federal Communications Commission. (2020). *Bridging the Digital Divide for All Americans*. <https://www.fcc.gov/about-fcc/fcc-initiatives/bridging-digital-divide-all-americans>



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broadband service at home. For example, 67% of Black and 61% of Latinx households had broadband, compared to 79% of White households, according to the Pew Research Center.

While online offerings are an important way to continue farmer education and networking when in-person meetings are impossible, and they may provide access for some people who could not attend in-person gatherings, they may remain beyond the reach of underserved audiences for whom information, skill development, and networking could have critical impact. While our work here does not contend with these issues explicitly, we think it important to guide the way we think about putting on online events, particularly because mainstream agricultural and ranching spaces (and resources) are typically dominated by White people and infused by a culture of whiteness given the legacy of agricultural landownership⁵.

We encourage organizers to take an equity lens to their programmatic work, including their online work. To this end, you may need to think of additional issues when organizing your events, including whether you want to or can provide interpreting resources for participants whose language is not the dominant language to be used in the online event. This also might require organizers to seek out new partners who are embedded in communities you are trying to reach to be partners in the coproduction of your events so that they truly meet the needs of the target audience. We recommend engaging with this work with great humility and compassion, as well as earnest commitment.

"This spring, we had to make dramatic changes to our field day season to keep event attendees safe during the ongoing pandemic. The only path forward was to shift to a completely virtual format. Outreach during this time has also included virtual field day training, troubleshooting, and providing event assistance with other organizations, partners, and members. I've given six different trainings to a total of 220 participants and shared the training resources with numerous other organizations and individuals. It's been a really rewarding experience as a new employee and allowed me to build my network along the way."

-Maggie Norton, PFI

⁵ Horst, M., & Marion, A. (2019). Racial, ethnic and gender inequities in farmland ownership and farming in the US. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 36(1), 1-16. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328570754_Racial_ethnic_and_gender_inequities_in_farmland_ownership_and_farming_in_the_US



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Learning Objectives

We encourage you to take the time to develop learning objectives that identify specific and measurable ways to understand what learners will be able to do because of participating in your program. Many times, this is not an easy task, but it pays off in several important ways, especially in the virtual environment. It helps you focus the design of your program -- both in terms of format and content -- to achieve those core learning goals. Well-crafted learning goals include both the objective and an indicator that the goal has been met. Here are some example learning goals and indicators.

Learning Goal	Indicators
Participants will adopt approaches that other farm women have found successful for having family conversations about farm succession planning.	<p>End of Session Indicator: Participants identify at least one approach they heard about in the session that they plan to try in the next six months.</p> <p>Follow-up Indicator (at 6 months): Participants report using at least one approach they heard about in the Learning Circle.</p>
The learning circle will foster supportive connections between participants	<p>Post Event Indicator: Participants list 2 people from the Learning Circle with whom they plan to continue to communicate with over the next 12 months.</p> <p>Follow-up Indicator (at 12 months): Participants report ongoing contact via email, phone, social media, or face-to-face visits with at least one person from the Learning Circle.</p> <p>Follow-Up Indicator (at 12 months): Participants describe these interactions in positive language.</p>