



EJUSA Digital Facilitation Toolkit

This toolkit provides resources and activities to our community partners and local organizations who have transitioned from facilitating meetings and support groups in-person to doing so via digital platforms like Zoom. The toolkit contains sample agendas, activities, and tech tips to ease the transition to digital facilitation and to allow organizations to continue building community in virtual spaces.

STRUCTURE & AGENDAS

While a lot of nonprofit organizations are working to ensure that they are meeting the outcomes they agreed to with certain funders, we've also noticed that the current time requires a restructuring of how we typically meet those objectives. Best practices that we've seen at this time involve keeping agendas loose, while still choosing activities and topics for discussion that align with the larger purpose and goals of the group (e.g., community healing, providing safe spaces, encouraging positive self-expression among participants, etc.).

The following sections on check-ins, topics for conversation, and activities provide some guidance on approaches that may be helpful to navigate new challenges that Zoom creates. A few key points to consider:

- Rather than create a full agenda for a meeting, come up with one or two topics that you'd like to cover during the call. These may not be the same objectives that you've promised to your funders, but they should give participants the chance to get adjusted to the new platform and operation of things and discover how to support one another through the current climate.
- Some topics may be too sensitive for participants to talk about right now, or dive into at the beginning of a meeting.
- Ask participants what *they* want and need to talk about.
- Allow the conversation to flow as it needs to. You might not get through the entire agenda on some days. Some participants will want to share more, and the conversation may drift based on where the group goes. You can keep people on track while also staying open to new breakthroughs that come from them connecting in different ways.

CHECKING IN

Meetings that start with check-ins help participants to find a common ground, get comfortable in the space, and learn something new about one another. Check-ins should be fairly quick and can be simple, light-hearted and/or playful questions that get people engaged. A few check-in questions and activities are below:

- What is your superpower?
- If you could have any superpower, what would it be?
- What color best describes how you're feeling today? Why?
- A few quick rounds of "would you rather?" (ex: would you rather eat ice cream for the rest of your life, or pizza?)
- If you had to shelter in place with one historical figure, who would it be and why?

Some simple questions like "**How are you?**" can be hard for participants to answer, or they may not know how to answer honestly. Here are some more specific examples of questions that can be asked as alternatives. They might open the door for you to ask follow-up questions that give you a greater idea of what is going on in their lives.

- What does home feel like right now? Choose 3 words to describe it.
- What are you doing to take care of yourself right now?
- Who are you receiving support from right now? Who are you giving support to? What does that look like?
- What does your day-to-day look like right now?
- How much have you been sleeping? What is your favorite thing to eat right now?

The feelings wheel: Tools like the [feelings wheel](#) can be helpful when participants are having a tough time identifying what they're feeling, or a good tool for discussion as a whole around identifying our emotions and coping styles. This can be used as a check-in or an activity during the group meeting. Questions can include asking participants what their 3 most prominent feelings are at the moment, and what they want their 3 most prominent feelings to be. Discussion can surround how to move from one emotional space to another.

Communal poem: A communal poem is a mindfulness and community-building activity that involves all participants. It can be used as a check-in activity but can also be used to end a meeting. It requires using Zoom's chat function, so participants should be relatively comfortable with Zoom.

Before the meeting, the facilitator compiles a list of words that may or may not be related. For example, "right now", "life", "healing", "family", "Hope", and "future". During the check-in, the facilitator reads the first word or phrase to the group. Using the chat function, participants respond with the first thing that comes to mind when they hear the word or phrase that the

facilitator presents. After a few seconds, the facilitator moves on to the next word/phrase, and exercise repeats until the facilitator gets to the end of the list. Once the list is complete and everyone is done typing, a participant can volunteer to read everyone’s responses — the communal poem — from the chat box. You can also [save the chat](#) and send it to participants after the meeting if they’d like to keep it.

TOPICS & CONVERSATIONS

These activities overlap with things that can also be used during check-in conversations, but are geared to encourage longer conversation and move the group toward shared goals and outcomes (building community, establishing a safe space for healing, encouraging self-expression and creativity among participants)

Self-Care Discussion & Activities: Dr. Dorothy mentioned that participants struggle to find the time for self-care, and that they often feel guilty for taking the time to do something good for themselves. A call could focus on the following quote by Black feminist poet Audre Lorde about self-care: **“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”**

- What does this quote bring up for you?
- How do you personally feel about self-care?
- What things bring you joy?
- What gets in the way of us taking care of ourselves, both internally and externally?
- What would you do if you could take one hour per day to practice self-care?
- How can we implement self-care in our lives more?
- How can we support one another in implementing more self-care?
- What would our lives be like if we practiced more self-care?

Some calls can be set aside as “self-care hour,” inviting participants to practice caring for themselves and one another, and supporting each other through any of the complicated feelings that arise around self-care.

Virtual Make & Sip: Modeled after a “paint and sip,” this virtual activity invites participants to bring their favorite non-alcoholic beverage to the call, as well as anything that they’d like to do to engage their creativity. This could be a coloring book or sheets, paints, a journal, or more. The host can play music during the call while participants casually chat and enjoy their activity. At the end of the call, participants can opt to share what they’ve created. If everyone has coloring materials, [free coloring sheets](#) can be found online and printed.

We’re not really strangers is a game that encourages players to learn more about one another by asking and answering questions that we may never really think about. The founders of the game

have made a free, [digital “quarantine edition”](#) with questions relevant to those who have to shelter at home. Participants can take turns “pulling cards” (reading off of the PDF) and asking questions of others.

Coffee and conversation: Activities that require participants to engage in an activity outside of the call—watching the same movie, reading the same article, etc.—and then discussing the topic together during the call. Materials can be relevant to healing, to things that participants are dealing with in their personal lives, and more.

TECH NEEDS & TROUBLESHOOTING

Below are some resources that may be useful for facilitators to use during calls to assist participants in getting more comfortable in the Zoom space. Instructions on how to set up each of the resources is hyperlinked.

Virtual Backgrounds

Setting up virtual backgrounds could be helpful for individuals who are concerned about sharing their living space on camera with other clients in the MIC community. Backgrounds can also be a way for participants to have more fun within the call and feel more relaxed. [Click here](#) for instructions on setting up virtual backgrounds.

Breakout Rooms

Breakout rooms are useful for having more intimate conversations between call participants and providing a safe space for participants to discuss topics further.

- Managing Breakout Rooms in Zoom: Login, go to My Account > Account Management from the menu on the left-hand side of the screen > Account Settings > On this page, scroll down to the *In Meeting (Advanced)* section, and click on *Breakout Room* so that the slider next to it lights up blue. If you want to be able to assign participants to breakout rooms before the meeting, click on *Allow host to assign participants to breakout rooms when scheduling*.
- [This video](#) has some really great instructions on how to manage breakout rooms once you are in the meeting. You may want to test this out with our team before the meeting.

Polls & Surveys

Taking polls of participants during meetings can be great conversation starters and can allow participants to anonymously share their feelings and opinions. [Click here](#) for instructions on how to set up polls and surveys in Zoom.

Facilitating through silences. If participants are very quiet or hesitant to share during check-ins

and conversations, facilitators can announce that they will call on people to share in the order that they appear on their computer screen. This allows the facilitator to engage everyone on the call without the discomfort of randomly calling on people.