

Town Hall Roundtable



A word about the session notes:

The information shared below is a synopsis of the discussion during five Zoom-based Town Hall Roundtable sessions held during May, June and July 2020 in response to COVID-19.

• Membership

Sub-Topic · Engagement

Your members want to stay involved... and may have a bit more time to do so

- Don't abandon programming, whether educational, social or networking!
- Plan small focus group sessions related to planning for next season
- Plan an all-council "Town Hall" where members can receive updates, meet and/or hear from leaders, and share feedback
- If the council is not offering a compelling social media presence on LinkedIn or Facebook, create a task force to discuss starting them (NAEPC is available to assist with best practices)
- Encourage members to actively participate in existing social media groups
- Host creative and compelling virtual networking and fun events like:
 - "Brown bag" luncheons
 - Wine / beer tasting
 - Happy Hour
 - Stress-management events
 - Monthly "game night"
 - "Antique Roadshow"-like event
 - "Speed networking" using online breakout rooms with 4 – 6 people in each, provide feeder questions to get the conversation started
 - Museum tours

Sub-Topic · Retention

Things your council can do now to aid in retention through the next season -

- Stay in constant communication, including video messaging
- Focus on engagement now and through the typically dormant summer months by hosting educational, social, and networking events
- Set the council apart through service and community outreach events (example: foodbank)
- Recognize that members have different needs and be flexible when necessary
- Be gentle with dues collections; recognize that members may need more time due to cutbacks or simply not being in the office
- Allow for online renewals to avoid the need for a firm to cut a check and mail it
- Communicate via email and paper mail
- Reiterate benefits of membership regularly
- Survey members – what types of topics are you interested in seeing the council offer?
- Consider setting up virtual study groups

Sub-Topic · Growth

Don't pause your growth goals

- Communicate with non-members, the council's response to COVID-19, share your plans for next season along with today's activities and community support
- Use webinars as a way to show value to non-members; allow these individuals to experience the council on a complimentary basis with these low-cost programs
- Personal outreach
- Develop relationships with allied professional organizations such as local community foundation and consider joint events, virtual or otherwise, with other councils in your area

· Meetings

Sub-Topic · Annual Meetings

Your council can still have its annual meeting

- Review council's bylaw sections related to annual meetings, voting rights, quorums, etc.
 - Interpret with flexibility
 - Look for words like "in person" and guidance with regard to dates
 - Scan for probations against online meetings
 - Check with state to find out whether there are any legal requirements with regard to an annual meeting for a non-profit
 - Ask NAEPC for a brief, non-legal review
- Consider hosting the annual meeting in conjunction with an educational webinar to increase attendance
- Use the event as an opportunity to update your members
- Vote using a ballot or by having members vote via email (recommended as a last resort)

Sub-Topic · Virtual Educational Meetings

Like it or not, virtual meetings are here to stay

- It's easier than you think!
- Registration is often higher
- Day-of attendance is strong
- Members want to see one another and interact
- Don't make assumptions about the membership's level of tech-savviness; may want to offer a trial run or "how to do" a Zoom/virtual meeting
- Use a "chat" window to get attendees talking to one another
- Platforms available that range from self-service (example: Zoom/GoToMeeting/WebEx) to full-service (example: ConferTel) with levels in between, some which incorporate continuing education tracking (ConferenceAduit)
- Your chosen delivery platform will not accommodate all members or their needs – make sure to communicate alternative methods to join the event (example: telephone or using a personal computer instead of a firm-supplied computer)
- Rehearse with speakers, if necessary
- Consider the NAEPC "no charge" speaker program, but rather than have that person live, have them in a virtual call (benefit of cost-effectiveness)
- Consider webinars as an alternative to live speakers
 - NAEPC can offer every council one complimentary group showing each year to rebroadcast via Zoom or other platform
- Plan pre- and/or post-event networking
- Treat it like a regular meeting – welcome, opening remarks, sponsor recognition, presentation, Q&A, closing remarks, etc.
- Does the meeting time need to change to be more accommodating? Now is not the time to stand on history!
- Consider a special event as the virtual kick-off – scripted ethics panel (somewhat like a play, reference: Philadelphia EPC)

Sub-Topic · Continuing Education

Don't assume things are "business as usual" with regard to continuing education credit

- Check with your state and governing bodies now for rules related to live and on-demand distance learning programs (often treated differently than one another and from in-person events)
- Investigate rules with regard to tracking attendance
- Communicate availability clearly with members
- Make sure all members understand their responsibilities and how to get credit and start the process of informing them with the event listing and a special pre-event email

Sub-Topic · Planning for Next Season

Start now and plan with flexibility

- There is no “right” answer
- Survey members with regard to their comfort level on attending an in-person event
- Plan small focus group sessions related to planning for next season
- Start now by choosing speakers that have the flexibility and comfort level to present in person, virtually, or both
- Consider a venue that provides the ability to stream the program for those who may wish to stay at home or avoid large gatherings (City Clubs, colleges, etc)
- Contract with venues carefully and with flexibility
- Consider meal vouchers to provide the meal members would have otherwise received (ex: GrubHub)
- Consider an expanded schedule for the 2020/2021 year
- If the council is one that prefers a formal plan, choose to host all events virtually through a pre-determined date
- Partner with “sister” organizations
- Venues should be large enough to accommodate a reduced number of guests at each table
- Plated meals will be preferred, if not required by your state
- Avoid “self-service” items like water, coffee, bread and butter

· Financial Considerations

Sub-Topic · Budgeting

Preparation is key

- Prepare a multi-scenario budget
- Consider preparing a contingency budget taking into account a certain percentage drop in membership
- Don't be afraid to make changes – just because something has been done one way for some time, doesn't mean it can't be changed

Sub-Topic · Dues

Membership dues support the council's activities

- Review the council's current cash position
- This is the perfect opportunity to review the council's dues structure
- Communicate with membership openly
- Delay dues collection slightly if the plan for membership season / year is not in place
- Contemplate personal outreach
- Be flexible and gentle with dues collections; recognize that members may need more time due to cutbacks or simply not being in the office
- Accept credit cards as payment to make it easier on the member and council
- Options with regard to dues:
 - Consider financial reductions for members who didn't receive all of the benefits of membership during the prior year (make sure this policy is clearly communicated)
 - Consider changing from an all-inclusive to pay-for-events-as-you-go system
 - Reduce dues*
 - Eliminate dues*
 - Reduce dues slightly and charge in a "pay-as-you-go" system when meetings begin again mid-season

** Recognize that in both of these circumstances, it may be hard to return to "normal" when it's time to do so.*

Sub-Topic · Sponsorship

Creativity is a must

- Don't assume all is lost - sponsors generally want to have an ongoing presence, even during difficult times
- Communicate with prior year supporters
- Transfer prior year support if necessary
- Reconsider your program as a whole and/or levels of support
- Make it easy for sponsors to participate
- Benefits are likely to be different for virtual vs in person events, plan for both and communicate options
- Host networking events where sponsors have breakout rooms and can talk directly with interested members; share an attendee list post-event
- Use logos and links rather than a firm name wherever possible
- Update the council's website and add placements where desirable
- Watch the NAEPC website tutorial: "Leveraging your NAEPC-hosted Website to Maximize Your Council's Sponsorship Income"
- Get creative with regard to benefits
 - Microphone time at online events
 - Video introductions for meetings and posting on website
 - Logo placements
 - Link to website in chat window with thank you message
 - PowerPoint template with sponsor logo
 - More online placement
 - Change the meeting host photo to the sponsor's logo

• Resources

Technology Platforms

Zoom	https://zoom.us/
GoToMeeting/Webinar	https://www.gotomeeting.com/
ConferTel (NAEPCs webinar provider)	https://confertel.net/
ConferenceAduit (incorporate of CE tracking)	https://conferenceadit.com/
Mentimeter	https://www.mentimeter.com/

Fun Games

Kahoot	https://kahoot.com/
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NAEPC Website Tutorial

“Leveraging your NAEPC-hosted Website to Maximize Your Council’s Sponsorship Income”

<https://vimeo.com/424180727/028224cd01>

**Contact NAEPC for other tutorials or find them in the administrative hub of a website hosted by NAEPC.*

Sample Budget

<http://www.naepc.org/assets/national/files/Sample%20EPC%20Budget.xlsx>

NAEPCs Programming Resources

<http://www.naepc.org/affiliated-councils/speakers-bureau>

Council Section of NAEPC Website

<http://www.naepc.org/affiliated-councils>

**Use left panel navigation to read all pages related to councils.*