

LOGGING IN WITH COMMUNITY

SAFE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR INDIANAPOLIS
NEIGHBORHOODS DURING COVID-19 & BEYOND



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We are also grateful for the neighborhood leaders who provided invaluable input on their experiences in community engagement. Our work would not be possible without their support.



ABOUT US

Indy V.I.C.E. stands for Indy Virtual Innovative Community Engagement. It is a Team Service Project and part of the AmeriCorps program, Public Allies. Public Allies is a national movement committed to advancing social justice and equity by engaging and activating the leadership of all young people. Indy V.I.C.E. is made up of 7 Public Allies:

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Indy V.I.C.E. investigated how COVID 19 has affected neighborhood engagement and then created some resources to help neighbors stay engaged with each other while maintaining social distancing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to adapt many in-person meetings to virtual meetings. This has brought up unprecedented and pressing challenges to organizers who are seeking to maintain or increase community engagement in their neighborhoods.



In its statement of the problem, the INRC wanted to better understand these community engagement challenges affecting neighborhoods. The INRC expected some were conducting neighborhood business in a virtual format, but we wondered how well that was working. The INRC also expected some neighborhoods may have minimized meetings, because they couldn't be in person.

These sudden and novel challenges led our team of Public Allies to focus on learning and researching how neighborhoods are adapting in this challenging time and what practices have worked out best for community engagement. We have been tasked to research virtual meeting capabilities/potential for community engagement, interview residents who have participated in virtual community/neighborhood activities to learn effective practices, and ultimately recommend improvements to the virtual meeting formats and other socially distanced community engagement activities.

While this may seem like the most difficult time to continue community engagement efforts, it is also crucial for it to continue. Now more than ever neighborhoods need to band together, even if we are far apart. Our presentation will cover how to use and improve on virtual meetings for community engagement and what best practices organizers can use to keep neighborhoods informed and supported in this unique time.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COVID-19

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

COVID-19 forced us to rethink just about everything in our lives and community engagement is no different. Neighbors must work together to get through difficult times, but being “together” isn’t as simple as it used to be.

The purpose of this handbook is to give neighborhood associations and neighborhood leaders in Indianapolis tools to facilitate community engagement. Included in the handbook you will find virtual and safe non-virtual strategies for engagement, community resources, and more relevant information. While information is specifically made for engagement during COVID-19, much of it is relevant for neighborhoods looking to increase engagement in general.

What is community engagement?

According to the Center of Disease Control, community engagement is “the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the wellbeing of those people.” This covers a broad range of activities from gathering neighborhood members to discuss the future of the community, to working with local government, community focused organizations, and local businesses for the betterment of the city. It could be virtual or in person, a one time event or recurring meeting, and anything else that calls people and groups to work together.

How COVID-19 has impacted our neighborhoods

Low residential attendance at monthly meetings was already a concern for some neighborhood associations. Some of community leaders believe that a divide among homeowners and renters in their neighborhoods accounted for some disconnect; renters might have the impression that their opinions are of lesser value just because they don't own a parcel of the neighborhood.

Other factors such as generational differences and ineffective communication between organizers and residents have been attributed to certain Indianapolis neighborhood leaders feeling a sense of burn-out and stagnancy in their community mobilization efforts.

Accessibility to neighborhood meetings was another issue that certain associations were aware of prior to the pandemic. Residents who do not have traditional work schedules may be unable to attend neighborhood meetings, as well as single parents and residents who have mobility issues.

During the research process, Indy VICE also learned about community leaders' concerns for residents who do not have access to the internet, laptops, or specifically the neighborhood's social media pages; due to these barriers, some residents may be left in the dark about community meetings and events.

Considering these existing challenges in neighborhood engagement, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of them, it is increasingly important that neighborhood leaders learn new, virtual techniques to enhance their association's efforts to stay engaged with their residents during these unprecedented times.

Choose the right tool for the level of community engagement:



INFORM

INFORM TOOLS...

- ☐ SOCIAL MEDIA
- ☐ PAID DIGITAL/SOCIAL ADVERTISING
- ☐ PESO WEB CONTENT
- ☐ WEBINARS

(FACEBOOK/IG, GOOGLE/BING, TWITTER, LINKEDIN)



CONSULT

INFORM TOOLS AND...

- ☐ ONLINE SURVEYS
- ☐ PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH
- ☐ FOCUS GROUPS
- ☐ FACEBOOK/TWITTER POLL FUNCTIONS
- ☐ SUBMISSIONS
- ☐ TELEPHONE TOWN HALLS
- ☐ SOCIAL LISTENING
- ☐ TRENDS RESEARCH

(SURVEYMONKEY, SLIDO, WEB-PANELS)



INVOLVE

INFORM + CONSULT TOOLS AND...

- ☐ FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM LIVE
- ☐ TWITTER (PERISCOPE)
- ☐ VIDEO CONFERENCES
- ☐ ENGAGEMENT HUB
- ☐ WORKBOOKS
- ☐ SMS/E-MAIL

(MAILCHIMP, ZOOM, SKYPE, ENGAGEMENTHQ, HUSTLE)



COLLABORATE

INFORM, CONSULT + INVOLVE TOOLS AND...

- ☐ DOCUMENT SHARING
- ☐ DISCUSSION THREADS
- ☐ CHAT
- ☐ WORKING SESSIONS
- ☐ 1-ON-1 CONVERSATIONS

(MAILCHIMP, SLACK, GOOGLE, ADOBE CONNECT)

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

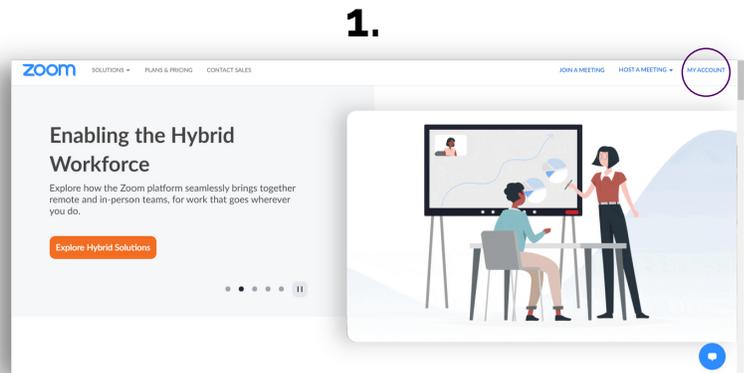
TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS - OPTIMIZING YOUR ZOOM ROOM

Zoom is an amazing resource for connecting with your community, and it offers many great options to make your meetings or webinars more accessible and secure, but its settings are extensive and can be confusing. In this section, we highlighted a few helpful settings that can optimize your Zoom meetings or webinars.

Where to Find Zoom's Settings

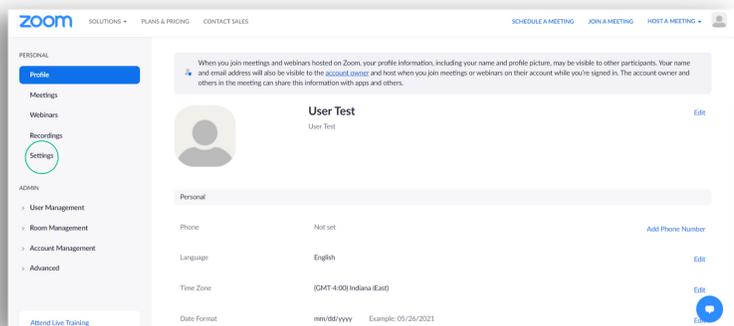
The next few screenshots will show you how to find Zoom's settings as well as how to find the specific settings mentioned later on in this handbook.

1. Start off by going to zoom.us and log in or sign up. Next, click the text in the top right of the page that says "My Account."



1.

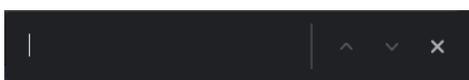
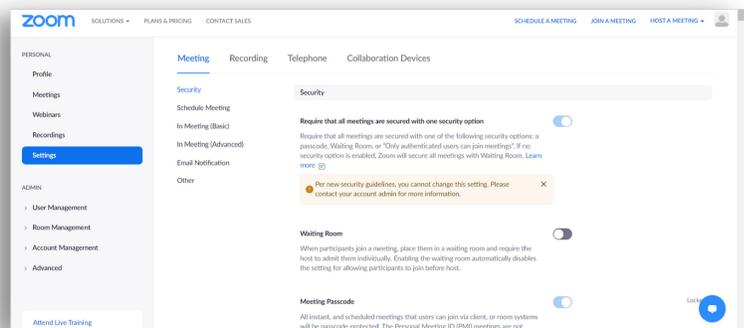
2.



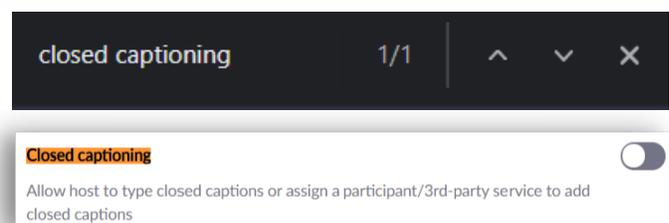
2. Next click the text on the left-hand side that says "Settings." This page is where the zoom's settings are located. The page will look like what is shown below.

3.

3. From the settings page press CTRL + F, or Command + F for Mac, and a text box (like shown below) will pop up on the top right of the browser. This can be used to search for the settings mentioned later in the handbook,



Example: To turn on the closed captioning setting: type "closed captioning" in the text box and the text for the setting should become highlighted. See the example on the right.



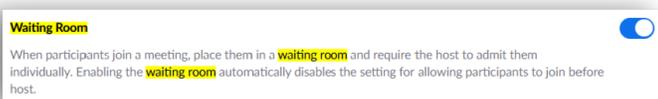
TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS - OPTIMIZING YOUR ZOOM ROOM CONTINUED

Security

Security is important on Zoom, especially when sharing the link to Zoom calls publicly. These are a couple of settings that can be used to make your meetings or webinars more secure.

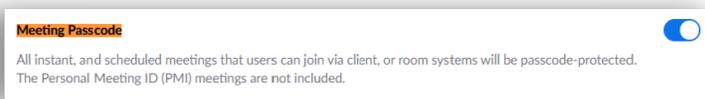
Waiting Room

The waiting room setting allows for the host to know who exactly is coming into the Zoom room and allow them or deny them entry. It does not require the people who are joining the meeting or webinar to do anything other than clicking the link to join.



Passcode

Requiring a passcode is one way to make meetings or webinars more secure. It requires the attendee/participant to type in a provided passcode before joining.



Search Zoom's settings for the highlighted words to enable waiting rooms and passcodes. Check page 6 for instructions on how to do this.

Both of these settings are great for security, but below are a few settings that may help in case of a possible "Zoom bombing," or when someone disrupts your Zoom room by playing loud music, saying inappropriate things, annotating inappropriate things on the screen, or showing inappropriate things on their camera.

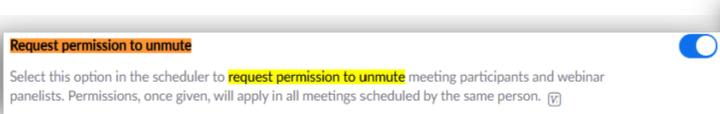
The "Allow removed participants to rejoin" Setting

Make sure this is turned off. That way, once someone is removed from a meeting for being inappropriate they cannot join back.



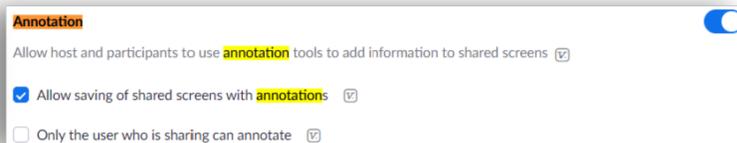
The "Request permission to unmute" Setting

This setting prevents someone from unmuting themselves without permission from the host or co-host. Once the permission is given, it will allow them to unmute whenever they want throughout the meeting and any subsequent meeting afterwards if they are on the same account.



The "Annotation" Setting

Annotation is a great tool to use in meetings or webinars to help guide the people through whatever you are showing them. When turning on the annotation feature click the option that says "Only the user who is sharing can annotate" to prevent anyone from being able to annotate inappropriate things on the screen.



Search Zoom's settings for the highlighted words to enable these settings. Check page 6 for instructions on how to do this.

ALT+M Shortcut

This shortcut is accessed by the host pressing the Alt key and the M key at the same time. This mutes audio for everyone in the room, except the host.

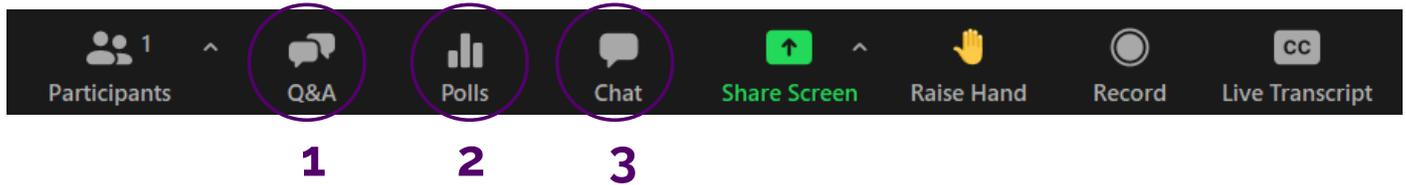
Remove the Participant/Attendee

Most importantly when dealing with "Zoom bombing", you can remove the person by hovering over their name in the participant list, clicking the more option, and then clicking the option to remove them from the room.

TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS - OPTIMIZING YOUR ZOOM ROOM CONTINUED

Communication in a Zoom Room

There are several great and accessible ways to communicate digitally in your zoom room that you may not have had during in-person interactions. Here are a few of them highlighted with some settings you can change while using them.



1. Q&A

The Q&A feature is only for webinars and is great for allowing people to ask questions anonymously and without interrupting the webinar.

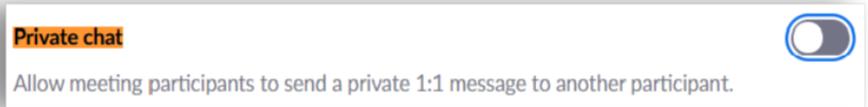
2. Polls

The poll feature allows hosts to use mini surveys in meetings. Hosts can add polls before or during a meeting.

3. Chat

The chat feature is great for communicating with participants. With this feature, you can also turn off the "private chat" setting to prevent any unnecessary inappropriate messages to be sent between people in the zoom room.

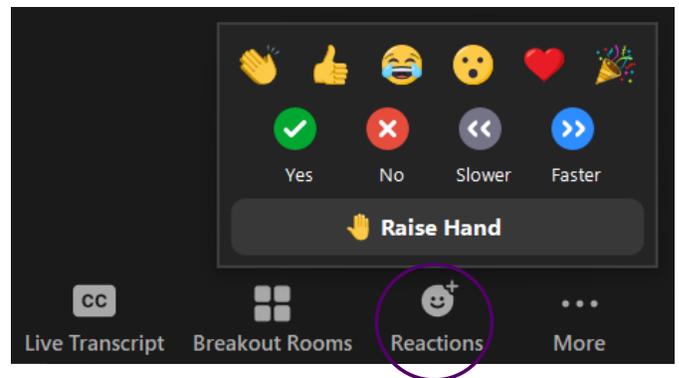
See the setting below:



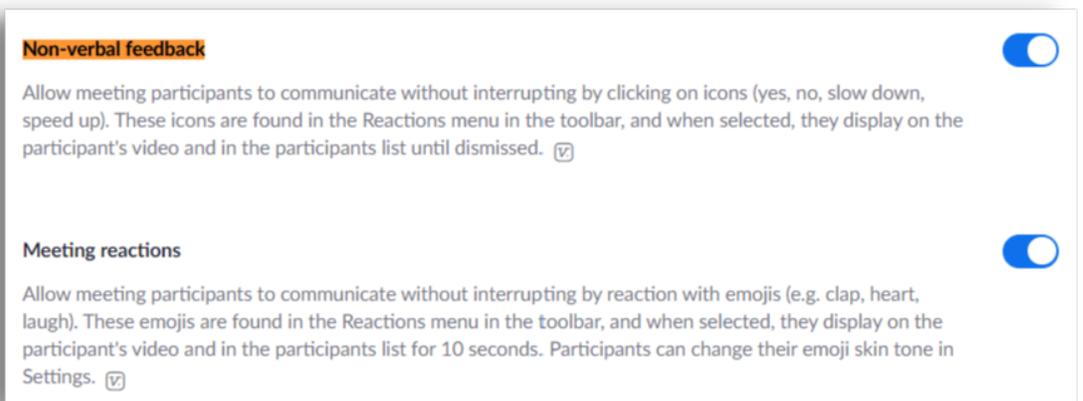
Search Zoom's settings for the highlighted words to turn off private chat. Check page 6 for instructions on how to do this.

Non-Verbal Feedback and Meeting Reactions

Both of these features allow people to give feedback during the zoom meeting or webinar with symbols or emojis instead of typing or having to unmute which is great and more accessible. They can both be found in a meeting by pressing the "Reactions" button shown on the right.



Search Zoom's settings for the highlighted words in order to turn on non-verbal feedback and meeting reactions. Check out page 6 for more instructions on how to do this.



TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS - OPTIMIZING YOUR ZOOM ROOM CONTINUED

Post-Zoom Feedback Options

These are two feedback options to gather post-Zoom feedback from attendees/participants.

End-Of-Meeting Experience Feedback Survey

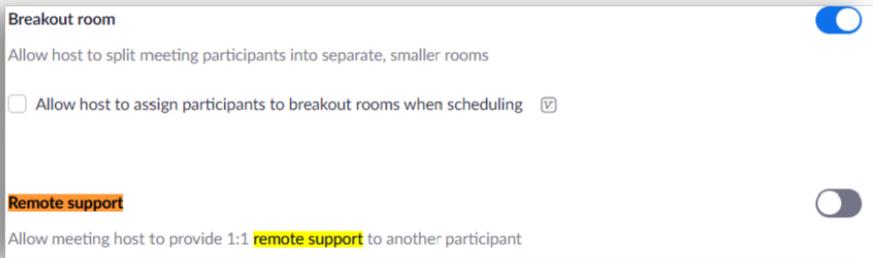
This feature displays a thumbs up/down survey at the end of each meeting. If participants respond with thumbs down, they can provide additional information about what went wrong.

Webinar Survey

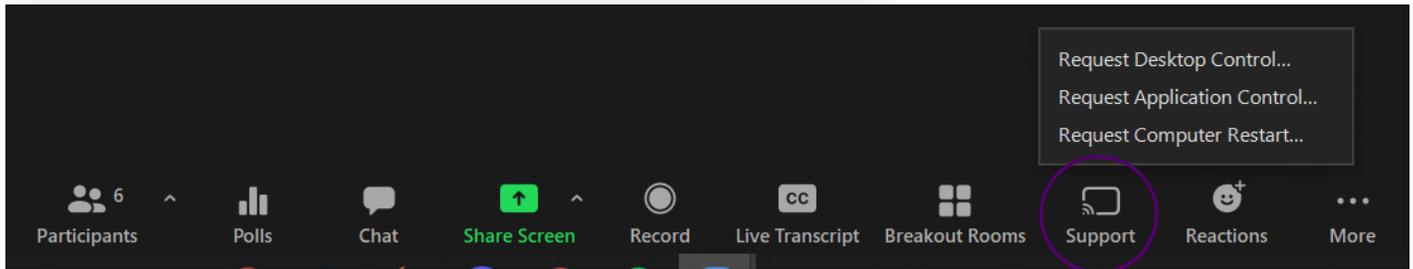
The webinar survey feature allows the host to present surveys to attendees once a webinar has ended.

Assist Participants With Technology

You can support someone who may be having trouble navigating their technology by using the "Remote Support" feature through Zoom. With this feature, the person receiving assistance will have to share their screen with the host. This could be a privacy issue if you were to do this in front of all meeting attendees. Instead, move that person and yourself into a separate breakout room in order to provide private support.



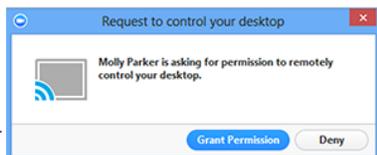
Search Zoom's settings for the highlighted words in order to turn on Breakout rooms and Remote support. Check out page 6 for more instructions on how to do this.



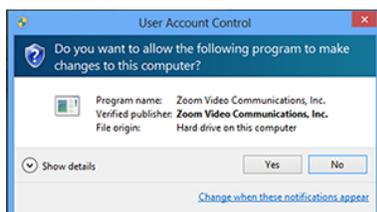
Desktop Control

The host can click "Request Desktop Control..." to request permission from a participant to remotely control their desktop. This means the host would have control over the participant's whole screen.

After the host requests desktop control, the participant will see the prompt shown on the right.



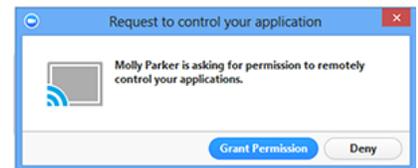
The participant may need to accept an additional administrator prompt (like shown on the right) to allow the host access to make changes.



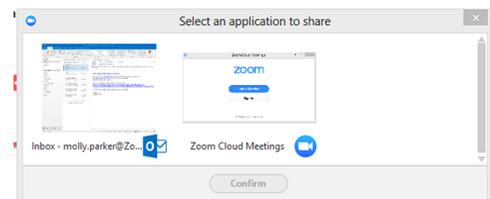
Application Control

The host can click "Request Application Control..." to request permission from a participant to remotely control a selected application. This means the host would have control over one specific application chosen by the participant.

After the host requests application control, the participant will see the prompt shown on the right.



The participant will be able to choose what exact location the host will be allowed access to control remotely. See the right for an example.



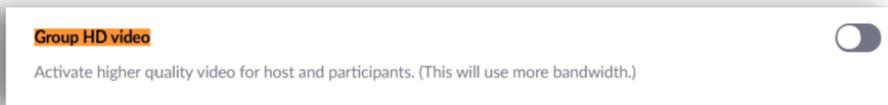
TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS - OPTIMIZING YOUR ZOOM ROOM CONTINUED

Make Your Zoom Room More Accessible

Here are a couple options to make your zoom room more accessible.

Help Zoom Run Easier on Less Stable Connections

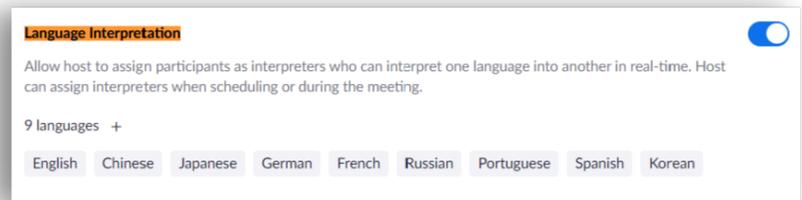
You can help zoom run easier on less stable connections by turning off the group HD video option, because it takes up more bandwidth. Another option is to provide a join from browser link, which allows people to join the Zoom meeting without having to download Zoom.



Search Zoom's settings for the highlighted words in order to find these settings. Check out page 6 for more instructions on how to do this.

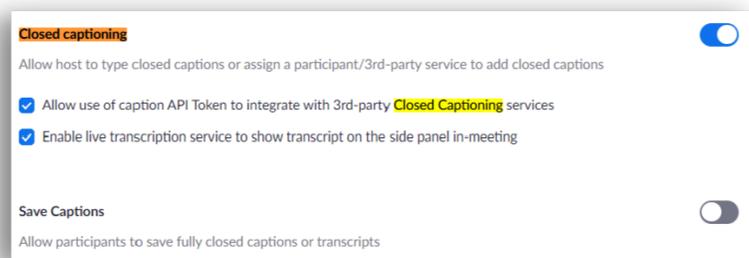
Assign an Interpreter

The assign an interpreter feature allows the host to assign interpreters who can translate languages live. This makes it so participants/attendees can choose from the provided languages and be provided with live translations.

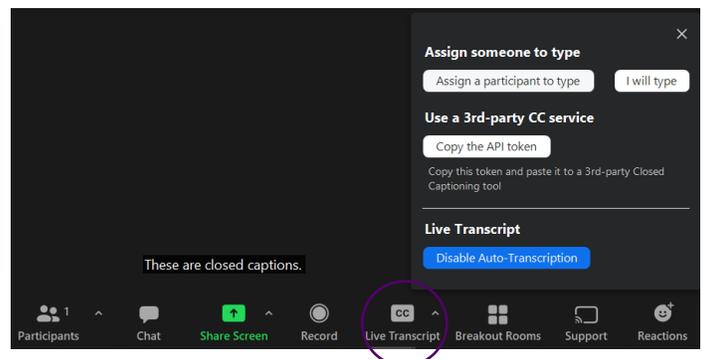


Auto-Captioning

The auto-captioning feature provides live subtitles during a meeting that are generally accurate. There is also an option to create captions through another program or to type captions manually. The captions can be saved for the recording or used later to make a transcript of the meeting or webinar.

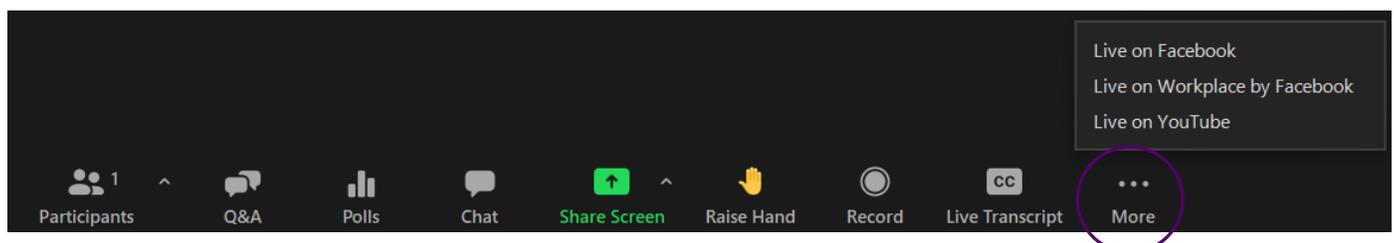


Search Zoom's settings for the highlighted words in order to find this setting. Check out page 6 for more instructions on how to do this.



Reach More People by Hosting Cross-Platform

By using this feature you can reach more people by hosting meetings or webinars across multiple platforms. Through zoom, a meeting or webinar can be hosted on Facebook live, YouTube Live, or a 3rd-party platform. This is especially helpful if your organization has its own Facebook or YouTube page, where it will give those who are subscribed or a part of the group a notification that the webinar or meeting is happening.



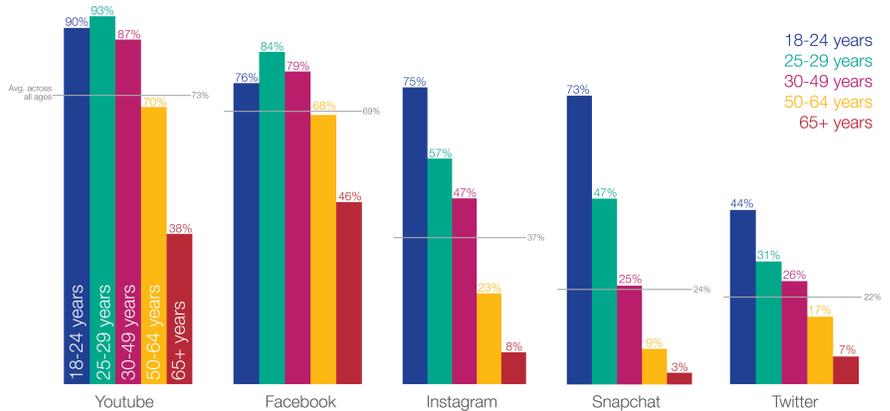
TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS - SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In Community Engagement we often hear the advice "Meet people where they're at." During the pandemic, that's online.

Facebook and YouTube have the greatest engagement across age groups. And many neighbors continue to engage with local groups, organizations, and businesses through Facebook.

Use of social media platforms by age group in the US

The share of adults in the United States who say they ever use the following online platforms or social media apps in 2019. This is shown by age group.



Data source: Pew Research Center (2019). This is a visualization from OurWorldInData.org, where you find data and research to make progress against the world's largest problems.

Licensed under CC-BY by the author: Esteban Ortiz-Ospina.

Create a Facebook Page for Your Neighborhood

Facebook Pages allow you to control the tone and content of the space by establishing who can post to the page.

When establishing your page make sure to:

- Fill out all of the background information on the page to help Facebook target your neighborhood audience.
- Create a social media code of conduct for neighborhood leadership, and community rules for commenting on the page. This will help neighborhood leaders avoid getting sucked into the mire of social media conflict, and create transparency about how the page is managed..
- Establish roles for the page. The administrator, editor, moderator, and analyst roles all have different capabilities.

Once you've established your page, grow your audience by:

- Inviting neighbors to like your page.
- Like neighborhood businesses and organizations' pages. This will boost the visibility of your page for neighbors who like the same business and organization pages.
- Join neighborhood groups as the page. Here you can share your neighborhoods events and updates. Also, this is a necessary step to set up "social media listening" using technology discussed later in this section.

Work the Algorithms to Increase Engagement with Your Neighborhood Page

- Facebook prioritizes what it deems to be "high quality content." Posts with **relevant high-quality pictures and videos, or that link to articles from established news sources** are considered high quality by Facebook.
- **Use hashtags and tag local businesses and organizations** to broaden your posts' reach.
- Establish your page as a trusted source of information by posting regularly. Recent activity shows that the information on your page is up-to-date. Try to **post at least once a week**, but not more than once a day.
- Make your page a centralized hub of information on what's happening in your neighborhood. **Share events and posts from other neighborhood businesses and organizations** in addition to your own posts.
- Boost your posts' visibility by interacting with them. Whenever your page posts, make sure all neighborhood leaders **like, share, comment, and reply**.

TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS - MANAGING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

Some useful applications that can help manage your neighborhood's online presence include:

HootSuite:

- Schedule social media posts. Reminders for meetings and events can be scheduled all at once. The free account allows for 30 scheduled posts.
- Monitor social media pages for keywords and mentions. Free accounts can monitor up to 3 social media pages or groups. Social media listening can help you stay on top of what is being said about your neighborhood online.

Google Alerts:

- Set-up alerts for keywords and phrases associated with your neighborhood. Names of community leaders, locations, businesses, and signature events make good keywords. You'll get emails whenever your neighborhood is in the news.

Slack:

- A virtual workspace that allows you to organize communications by project or topic, in designated channels.
- Saves documents and discussions in a searchable channel so you can easily find old project or topic materials.
- Non-profit organizations can get a standard account for free.

WhatsApp:

- A video, calling, and texting app with simple, phone-like controls.
- Up to four (4) people per group call.
- Reduced data needs and simple controls make it a great alternative for smaller meetings with those who may have difficulty accessing Zoom.

Engaging Younger Neighbors in Leadership Roles

Establishing these technical solutions is a great opportunity to engage younger neighbors who likely are already familiar with these technologies. Younger neighbors bring different assets and preferences to community engagement than older generations did.

Millennials

- Want to be involved in decision making
- Motivated by impact and personal connection.

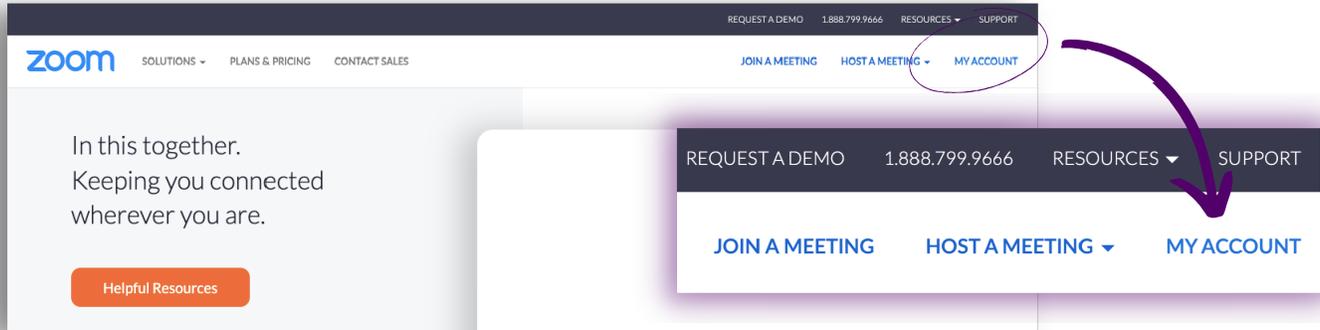
Gen Z

- Highly Entrepreneurial
- Prefer independent work/ownership of a project.
- Motivated by desire to develop Social Capital

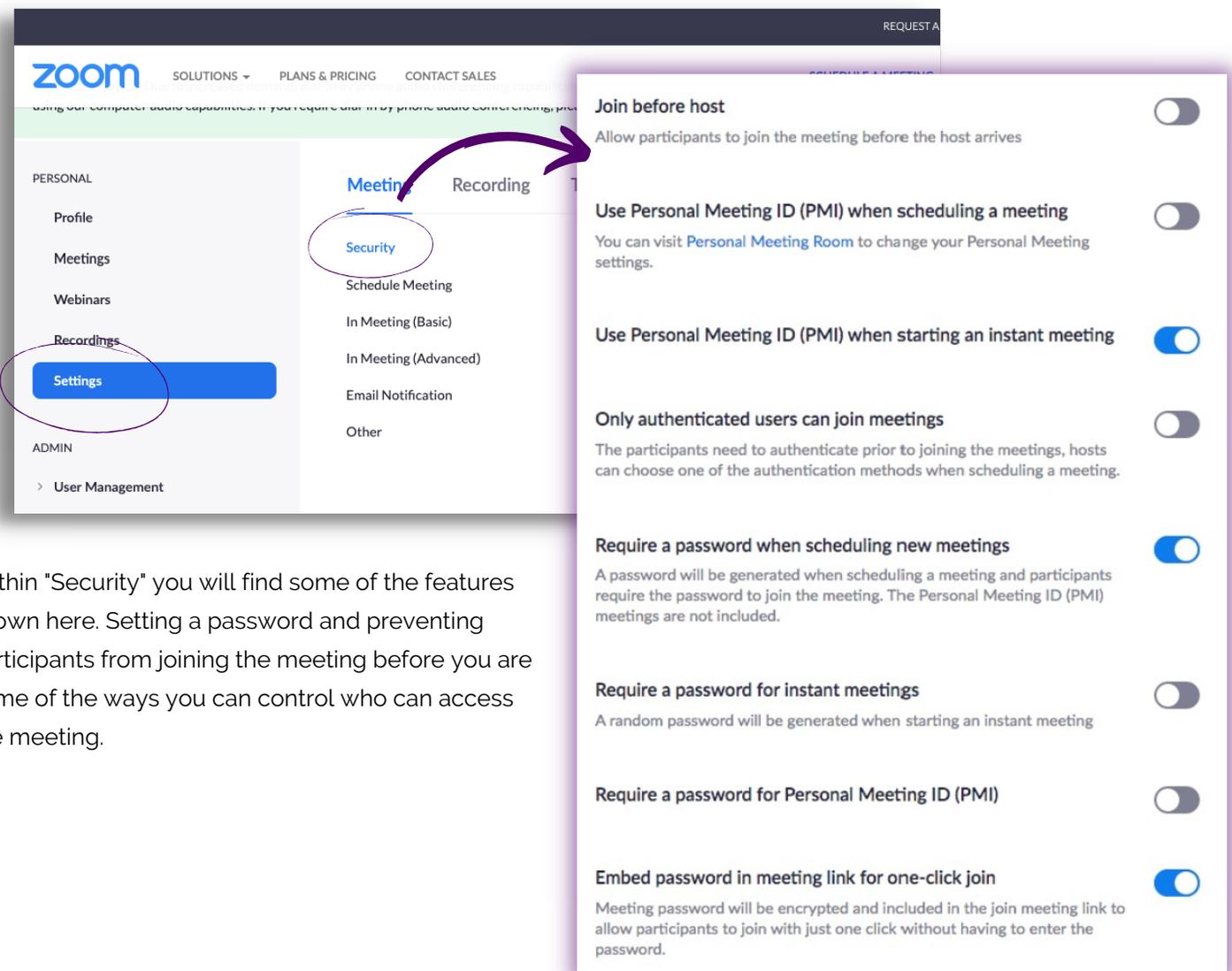
Privacy in Live Meetings

Zoom Privacy Settings

Go to Zoom.us and select "My Account"



On the right-hand menu, select "Settings" and then "Security"



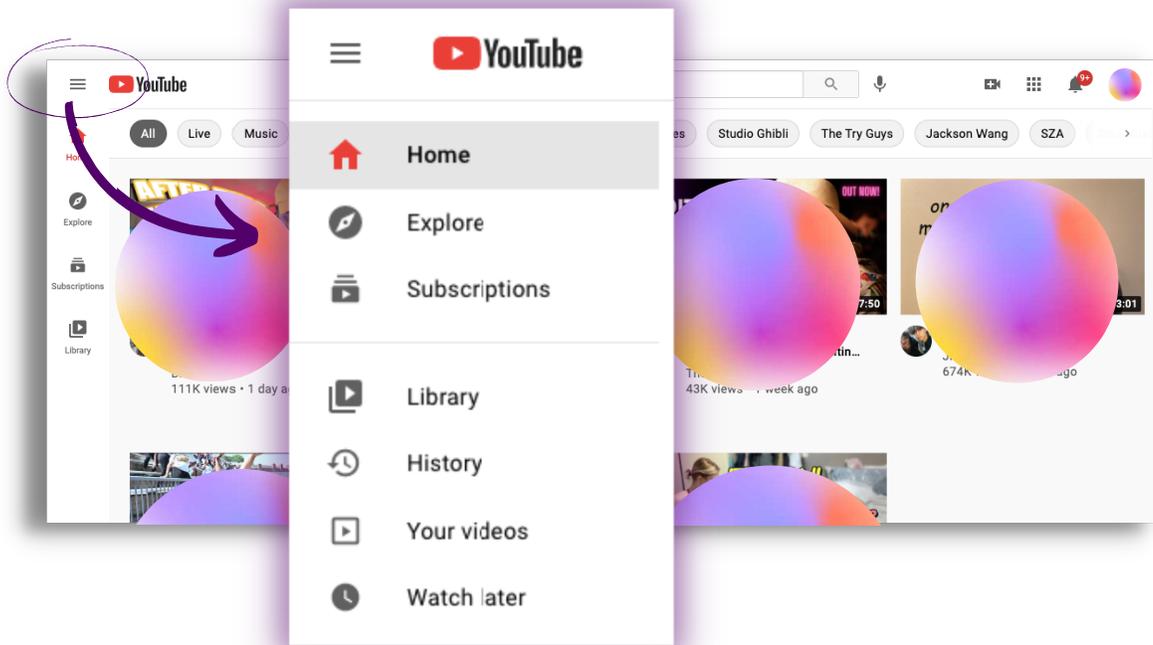
Within "Security" you will find some of the features shown here. Setting a password and preventing participants from joining the meeting before you are some of the ways you can control who can access the meeting.

Sharing Videos and Privacy

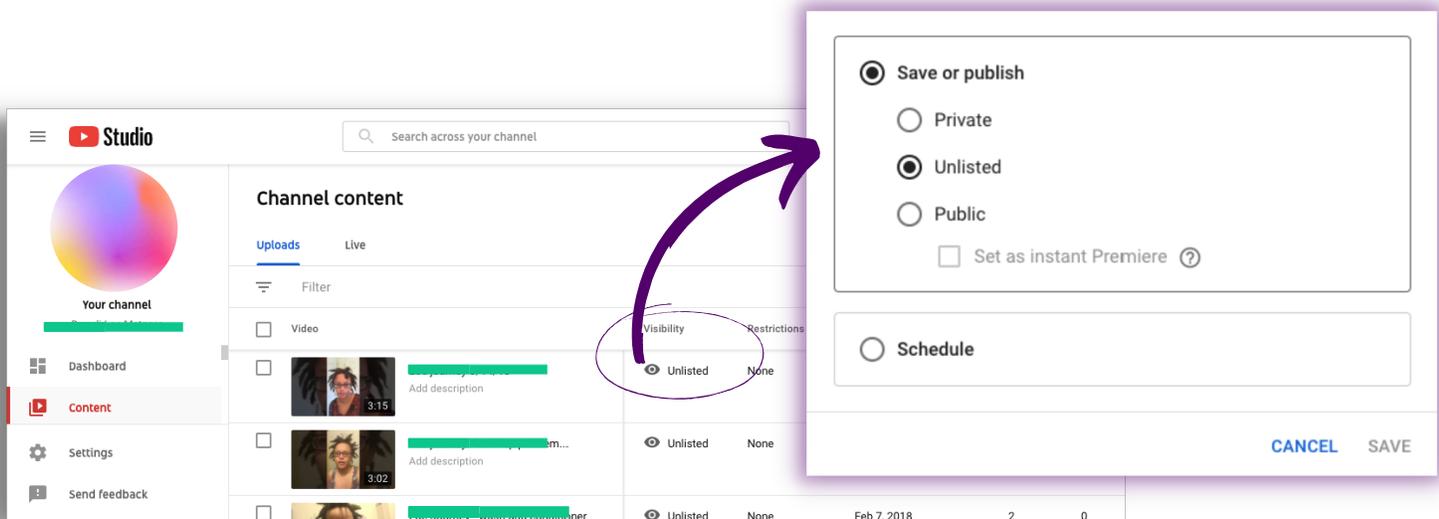
Sharing recordings of community meetings on social media can help engage a broader range of neighbors. By viewing the videos people who can't make it to live meetings can get involved and stay up-to-date. But you should protect the privacy of those who attend your meetings, by limiting the accessibility to your video online.

YouTube Privacy Settings

In the top left corner of the homepage (www.youtube.com), select the menu icon to make the full menu appear. Select **"Your Videos"**.



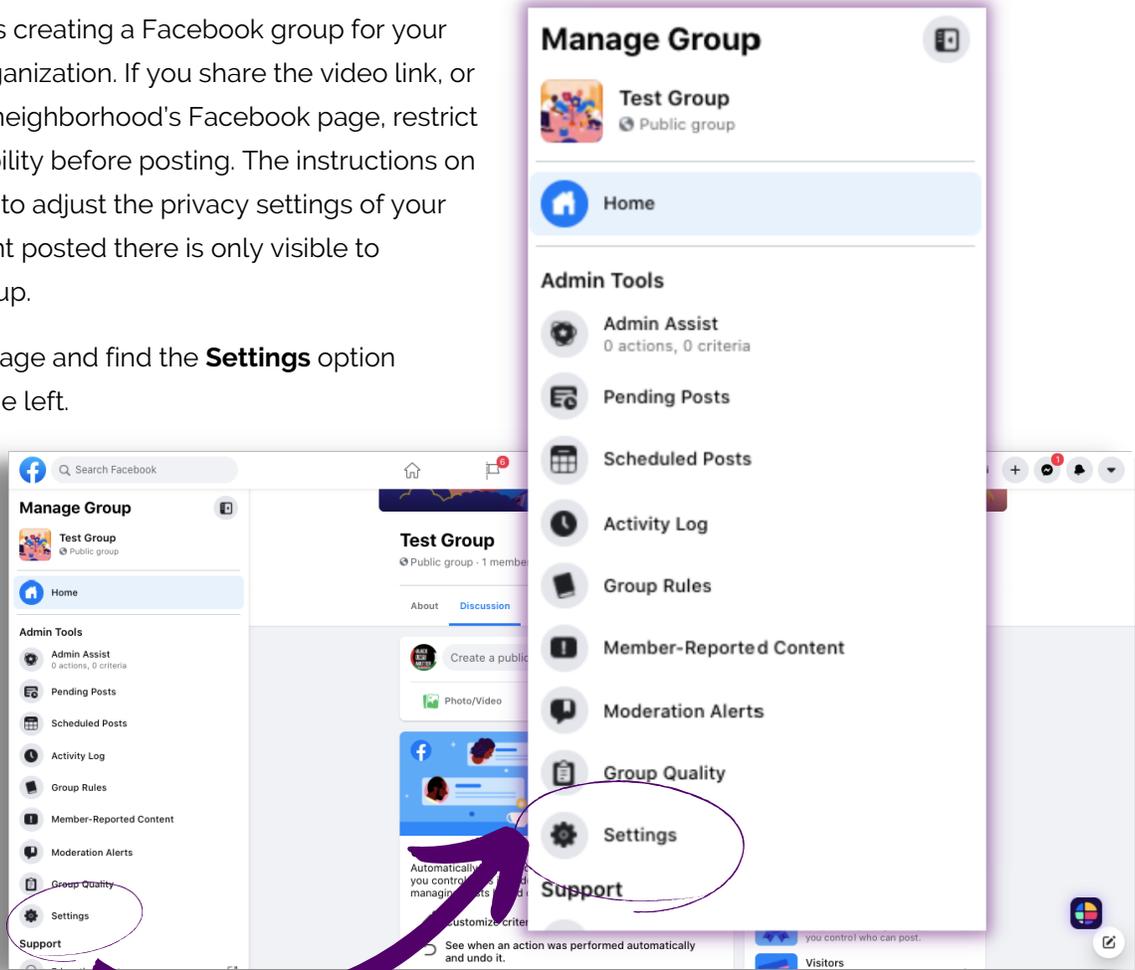
The "YouTube Studio" page will appear. You can find all your uploaded videos here. To the right of each video, you have the option of changing the **"visibility"** setting. IndyVICE recommends setting the visibility to **"unlisted."** The same can be done to your Channels. This will ensure that only those with the video/channel link can find it.



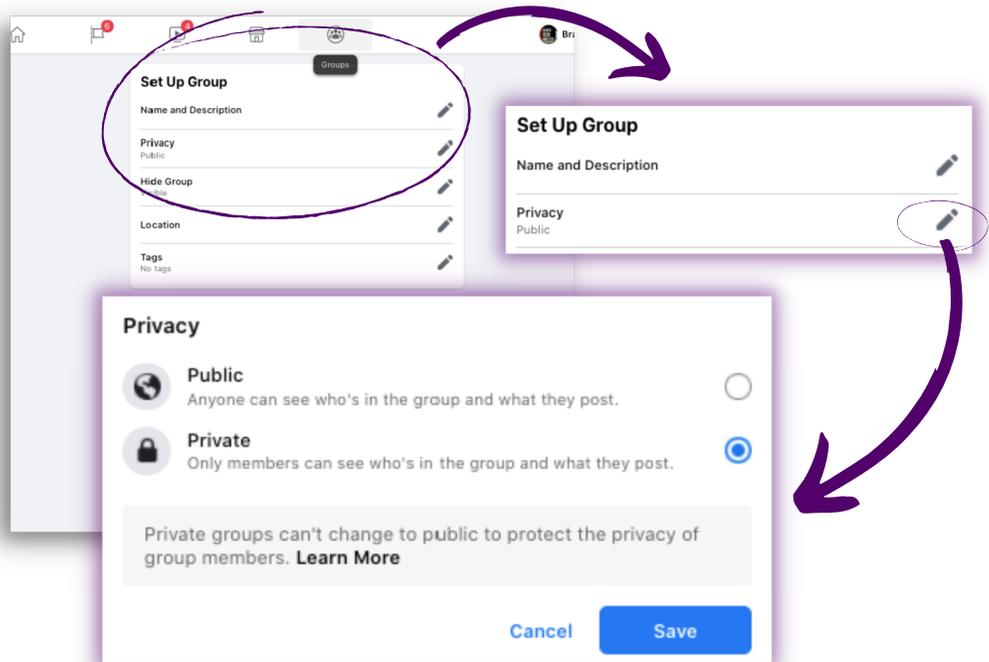
Facebook Group Privacy Settings

Indy V.I.C.E. suggests creating a Facebook group for your neighborhood or organization. If you share the video link, or video itself on your neighborhood's Facebook page, restrict the group's accessibility before posting. The instructions on this page show how to adjust the privacy settings of your group so that content posted there is only visible to members of the group.

Go to your group's page and find the **Settings** option from the menu on the left.



Towards the top of the settings page, find the Privacy option and select the Edit (pencil) icon.



Here you have the option to set your group to **"Private."**

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE VIRTUALLY

Excerpts from Youth Collaboratory Resources

Know your options

- Video calls (e.g. Zoom, Google Hangout)
- Email
- Text messaging
- Phone (video call, or audio only)
- Social Media
 - Live broadcast (e.g. "going live" on Instagram)
 - Create private group
 - Direct messaging (create policy to ensure boundaries and safety!)
- App-based communication (e.g. WhatsApp, Marco Polo)

Pro Tip

Combine virtual and non-virtual engagement methods - send activity packets, self-care items, or other items that the youth can use during the virtual session. Or, send them letters and cards!

Remember the basics

- Ask the youth how they prefer to communicate (e.g. format, frequency): "Is there anything you want me to know about communicating online?"
 - Adjust to ensure the young person is comfortable
- Support youth in getting online access
- Connect and post consistently over time
- Prioritize predictability and developing trust
- Practice confidentiality
- Time of day for virtual events is important
- Use different resources such as short video clips
- Capture your audience with your message within the first minute
- Pay attention to what young people are frequently commenting about. Follow up on that topic and provide a platform for discussion
- During group sessions, make space for hearing from everyone (when possible)

Seek youth input, preference, and leadership

- Youth preferences and ease of access in communication platforms are priorities
- Provide an opportunity for youth to develop a virtual engagement strategy for individuals and groups
- Utilize youth expertise in training others to navigate online platforms
- Create opportunities/platforms for young people to connect with each other (e.g. small group support on Zoom, private-invitation only social media groups)

Virtual Safety Considerations for Adults Engaging Young People

Any means of engagement has its own set of safety challenges. Identify and consider how safety challenges that are specific to virtual engagement might be addressed. Develop and maintain "community agreements" with young people that address holistic safety.

Physical

- Is there a history of abuse or exploitation in the home? Is there an unsafe person present?
- Are valuables or personal identifying information displayed when the camera is on?
- Is the young person aware of privacy options? (camera, audio, etc.)
- Identify a code or safe word so a young person can discreetly seek help in a crisis.

Emotional

- What can and cannot be discussed in a virtual format?
- What is the goal and purpose of the meeting? (planning and predictability build trust)
- Be mindful of possible triggers in a virtual format.
- Begin with a check in question that builds self-acceptance and self-compassion.

Social

- Set clear boundaries. (e.g. acceptable times for calls, preferences on leaving messages, boundaries regarding commenting on social media posts). When is it best to have a third party involved?
- Be transparent around recording & information-sharing.
- Be mindful of what you are wearing and what items can be viewed by participants.
- Identify when to use full name vs. preferred name. (what do youth need/prefer in different situations)
- Be aware of language barriers and social norms around virtual communication.

LOW-TECH SOLUTIONS

"Neighbors helping neighbors. We printed HELP/OK signs and placed them in the windows of our entire block. Now we know and can help the most vulnerable among us with non-emergency tasks like getting groceries or medicine. #COVID19 #Seattle"

Sergio Zamora, @sapz96, Tweeted about his neighborhood in Seattle, where they implemented a low-tech way to ensure all neighbors can get connected with the help they need. He links to a document outlining steps for implementing the system in Seattle. We've adapted their steps below.

Help/OK Sign Method

Neighborhood Support System

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Get Ready Today!



Step 1: Establish your block's communication channel, if you don't have one already

- An email listserv or public bulletin board could work if social media platforms are not accessible.

Step 2: Print double-sided HELP/OK signs and distribute them to neighbors in your block

Step 3: Identify 2 to 5 volunteers in your neighborhood that will walk the block daily looking for "HELP" signs

- If they see a "HELP" sign, they should call the number on it, ask the neighbor what support is needed, and post the need to your block's communication channel.
- Remember: neighbors may prefer to remain anonymous; before posting the need, the volunteer should ask the neighbor if they want to be named or not.

Step 4: Email Notify all your neighbors, including an overview of this support system.

- Sample email/social media message below:

Hi Neighbors,

We've been brainstorming how we can help each other during this time of need. We came up with a simple two-sided sign for any of us to put in our windows to communicate if you need help or not.

If you are ok, put the "OK" side facing out. If you need help (e.g. groceries, medicine) put the "HELP" side instead (don't forget your phone number!). Our volunteers will walk through the neighborhood at [insert a daily schedule] checking for HELP signs.

VOLUNTEERS: if you see a "HELP" sign, please 1) call the neighbor in need, and 2) add a post to [insert neighborhood group] with the help needed. Together, we can take care of all the members of our neighborhood!

We've attached the OK and HELP signs below. Print them on your own, or pick one up at [insert location].

Care for each other!

#coronavirus #socialdistancing #maskupindy

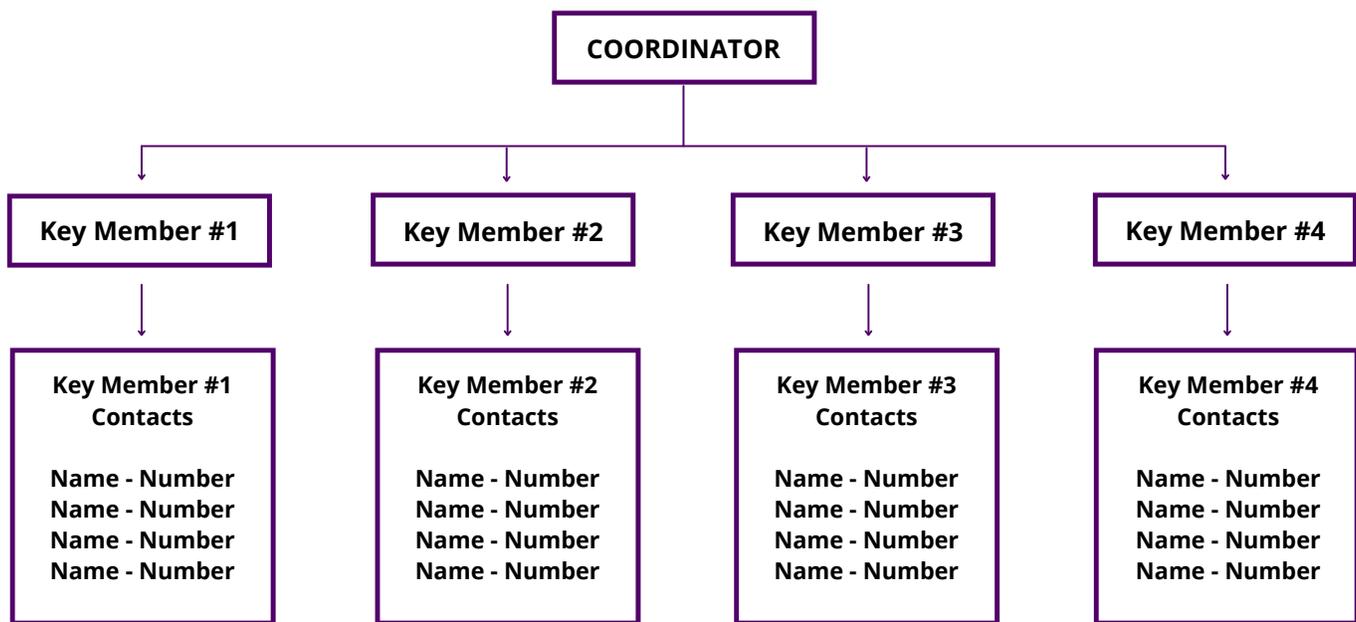
LOW-TECH SOLUTIONS

Phone Trees

When seeking a quick and effective form of communication that is accessible, it's hard to find something better than a phone tree. A phone tree consists of a group of people that are ready to personally contact individual community members to spread a consistent message using a preset structure.

To start this off, you compile a list of phone numbers of the people that you are looking to reach out to. Next, you need to recruit a small group of responsible neighbors to be your key group of communicators. Once your key group of communicators is set, you divide the list of phone numbers into groups so that each communicator is responsible for one group. That way, when a message needs to be spread throughout the neighborhood, the key group will personally contact neighbors and be able to report back in a timely fashion. This strategy could be used for mobilizing or notifying neighbors, increasing turnout in meetings, or simply saving on printing and postage.

An example of a basic phone tree structure:



The Baltimore Neighbors Network (BNN) is an example of a highly-organized phone tree system.



Baltimore Neighbors Network

"The Baltimore Neighbors Network (an initiative of Healing City Baltimore) provides a virtual community of trained volunteers to offer hope, comfort and social solidarity. We also enlist pro bono clinicians to help address the looming epidemic of loneliness and isolation that COVID-19 will create. Baltimore's greatest asset is our people. We are the medicine." (baltimoreneighborsnetwork.org)

How it works:

1. Trained volunteers make calls* to neighbors to offer support, assess well-being and create critical connections.
2. These neighbors are then invited to join the Neighbors Network, fostering a cycle of peer-to-peer support.
3. Neighbors that need additional support are connected to mental health ambassadors and pro bono clinicians.

WORKING WITH MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Black, Immigrant, and Other Communities of Color

COVID-19 has taken a toll on marginalized communities in greater numbers than most due to socioeconomic and environmental vulnerabilities that existed long before the pandemic. Immigrant, black, and communities with people of color are just some examples.

One of the first things to do when reaching out to these communities is to listen. Get to know what the neighbors are talking about: their priorities, their goals, and their concerns. Communities vary in communication preferences, like preferring WhatsApp over Facebook, so if you have information you'd like to share with them, try to utilize the technologies that are already working for them.

Sometimes it's necessary to consider the language some neighbors prefer. For example, if people in a community are more comfortable in Burmese but all the messaging they are receiving from neighborhood organizations is in English, they may ignore those messages. Translating messages, even if you can only make short and simple translations, can make all the difference in catching the eye of a neighbor.



Rely on already made and trusted networks including faith-based leaders and community-based organizations, who have the added benefit of already being familiar with the needs of the community. Many times these organizations are already doing good work, so consider supporting their efforts and starting your work with them.

Working with marginalized communities is impossible without prioritizing their agency in the planning and decision making process. Keep in mind that racial and xenophobic systems of oppression have plagued BIPOC and immigrant communities long before the pandemic. Often organizers are discouraged when initial communication is unsuccessful. Keep reaching out and be creative in your approach while being respectful of their decisions.

Accommodating Persons with Disabilities

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented neighborhood meetings from happening in person, the virtual age has created more accessible ways of engaging with residents who are living with disabilities. It is increasingly important that neighborhood associations ensure meeting accessibility for all residents; if possible, neighborhood leaders should find out accessibility needs and accommodations of residents prior to meetings.

If residents need assistance in attending community events or meetings, consider contacting local agencies or organizations that can assist them in doing so. Focus on creating perceivable information that is available in multiple formats to suit residents' requirements and possible limitations.

To guarantee meeting access to visually impaired residents, consider converting meeting documents to Plaintext, which is a format that can be translated to Braille. Microsoft Office allows users to save a Plaintext version of their original document.

Neighborhood leaders can also prepare text-friendly explanations of any graphics or complex visuals presented in meetings, so residents who may have visual impairments can still understand the information clearly. Virtual platforms used to host meetings should be compatible with other technologies like screen readers to ensure full accessibility for all residents.

CONCLUSION

Although conducting virtual community engagement may seem intimidating, it is increasingly important that neighbors are able to stay connected and rely on each other for support; especially during times of great hardship. Indy VICE hopes that this handbook serves as a comprehensive guide for communities to remain engaged during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an additional resource, we've compiled a short list of local services that may be particularly useful during the pandemic and in other times of unexpected need.

You can download this guide for free from the INRC'S website (insert link here).

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

GENERAL AND COVID-19 SUPPORT

COVID-19 Community Resources | <https://www.indy.gov/topic/covid>

COVID-19 Resources | <https://www.in.gov/ocra/additional-resources/covid-19-resources/>

COVID-19 (Coronavirus Pandemic Information and Resources) |

<https://in211.communityos.org/COVID-19>

Public Resources | <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/2400.htm>

Pandemic Community Resource Bank | <https://kheprw.org/pandemic/>

CICO Organizations Here to Help | <https://www.cicpindiana.com/organizations-here-to-help/>

CICF Resources to Navigate the COVID-19 Crisis | <https://www.cicf.org/covid-resources/>

Aunt Bertha, Find Help | <https://www.findhelp.org/>

DVN Resources | <https://dvnconnect.org/resources/support-resources-central-indiana-service-providers/>

Lyft COVID-19 Vaccination Rides | <https://www.lyft.com/blog/posts/lyft-family-rides-for-others>

Uber COVID-19 Vaccination Rides | <https://www.uber.com/us/en/coronavirus/>

FOOD PANTRIES

Brookside Community Development Corporation - Food Pantry |

<https://www.brooksidecdc.org/emergencyfund>

No Questions Asked Food Pantry | <https://www.facebook.com/NoQuestionsAskedFoodPantry/>

Edna Martin Christian Center | <https://ednamartincc.org/>

Circle City Relief | <http://www.circlecityrelief.com/>

Healthy Harvest Market | <https://www.facebook.com/Healthy-Harvest-Market-175238596434471/>

Brandywine Creek Farms | <https://www.facebook.com/brandywinecreekfarms/>

The Sharing Place Food Pantry | <https://www.lutheranfamily.org/what-we-do/>

Community Cupboard of Lawrence | <https://www.ecommunity.com/locations/community-cupboard-lawrence>

Mid-North Food Pantry | <https://www.midnorthfoodpantry.org/>

Billie's Food Pantry | <https://www.facebook.com/BilliesFoodPantry/>

St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry | <http://www.svdpindy.org/i-need-help/#need-food>

Indy Community Pantry | <https://www.facebook.com/indycommunitypantry/>

Fresh Bucks with SNAP | <https://freshbucksindy.org/>

Lyft Grocery Access Program | <https://www.lyft.com/lyftup/grocery-access/indianapolis-in>

HOUSING

Rental Assistance Portal and Resources | <https://www.indianahousingnow.org/Resources.html>

Rental Help: Indiana | <https://www.hud.gov/states/indiana/renting>

IN Government Rental Assistance Portal | <https://www.in.gov/ihcda/>

Help with Housing Needs | <https://housing4hoosiers.org/links-resources/help-with-housing-needs/>

AES Power of Change | <https://www.aesindiana.com/power-change>

Seed Library | <https://www.indypl.org/services/seed-library>

Marion County Energy Assistance Program | <http://indyep.org/>

COMMUNITY CENTERS

Concord Neighborhood Center 1310 South Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46225 | 317.637.4376 | info@concordindy.org | <https://www.concordindy.org/>

Fay Biccard Glick Neighborhood Center 2990 West 71st Street, Indianapolis, IN 46268 (317) 293-2600 | (317) 293-2600 | info@fbgncenter.org | <https://www.faybiccardglickcenter.org/>

Hawthorne Community Center, 70 North Mount Street, Indianapolis, IN 46222 | (317) 637-4312 | hawthorne@hawthornecenter.org | <https://hawthornecenter.org/>

John H. Boner Community Center, 2236 East 10th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46201 | (317) 264-1379 | <https://jhbcc.org/>

Martin Luther King Community Center, 40 West 40th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46208 | (317) 923-4581 | <https://mlkcenterindy.org/>

Flanner House 2424 Martin Luther King Jr. Street. Indianapolis, Indiana 46208 | (317) 925-4231 ext. 256. | <https://mlkcenterindy.org/>

Southeast Community Services 901 South Shelby Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46203 | (317) 236-7400 | <https://www.southeastindy.org/>

Community Action of Greater Indianapolis Inc. 3266 N Meridian St, Indianapolis, IN 46208 | (317) 396-1800 | askcagi@cagi-in.org | <https://www.cagi-in.org/>

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Logging in With Community:

Safe Community Engagement for Indianapolis Neighborhoods During and After COVID-19

A FREE resource provided by the Indianapolis Neighborhood Resource Center, in collaboration with Public Allies-Indianapolis.



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