



Organizing a Virtual Inn Meeting

Quick Tips

The American Inns of Court is pleased to offer you tips and advice on creating a Virtual Inn Meeting. This is a confusing and chaotic time, but we are here to support you!

Please review these tips and suggestions for organizing your own virtual Inn meeting experience. If you have questions about any of this information, please email [Libby Bingham](#), director of education and mentoring programs, or your friendly [Chapter Relations Director](#).

Why hold virtual Inn meetings at all?

When colleagues and friends cannot interact in person, the mission of the American Inns of Courts to promote ethics, civility, and professionalism in the practice of law becomes more important than ever.

Virtual meetings are great solution for continuing to build a collegial legal community during this time of social distancing.

A virtual Inn meeting is an important tool in the sharing of information, exploring new ways to handle the work that must continue, and ensuring that people's health and wellness remains top of mind.

Virtual Inn Meeting Step-by-Step Overview

- Step 1: Determine the title/theme of your meeting.
- Step 2: Choose possible days and times for your meeting.
- Step 3: Choose the kind of content you will be using.
- Step 4: Choose the way you'd like everyone to engage.
- Step 5: Determine the platform you'll use and the various meeting "features" you'd like to include.
- Step 6: Pick the registration method (IMS or the meeting platform).
- Step 7: Hold your Inn meeting!

GETTING STARTED – INFORMATION

Before you jump in, it is helpful to gather data and get a sense of what is involved and who at your Inn can assist. Here are some basic things you should think about at the outset:

- **Who does what:**
 - Content lead
 - Technology
 - Discussion facilitator
 - "Experience" guru
- **Attendees:**
 - Our Inn members only
 - Any American Inns of Court member
 - Members of another specific Inn (a "joint" Inn meeting)

- **Scheduling:**
 - What month will you hold your Virtual Inn Meeting (VIM)?
 - What are your top three dates/times to hold it?
 - What is the agenda for your meeting?
 - Does it include a social/networking component?
 - Is there pre-work for your attendees?
 - How long is the presentation?
 - How long for Q&A?
- **Content:**
 - What is the theme or title for the meeting?
 - What is the description of the program content?
- **Logistics:**
 - What type of meeting are you holding?
 - Live webinar only
 - A recorded presentation AND a live webinar – if this, will the recording be:
 - Something your Inn created and/or recorded on their own
 - A program from the [Program Library](#)
 - An existing [INNnovation Education program](#)
 - Choose a "watch" option:
 - On your members' own time (pre-recorded information)
 - Together during a webinar (can either be a live presentation or pre-recorded)
 - Choose an "engagement" option:
 - A conference call
 - A webinar
 - Use of the discussion feature group thread
 - Choose your "item" features (see examples below):
 - Handouts or other documentation
 - An "assignment" – have them do something on their own, in pairs, small groups, Pupillage Teams, etc.
 - An assessment (may be required for CLE in your jurisdiction)
 - An evaluation:
 - Of the program content
 - Of the virtual meeting itself (can be used to solicit ideas, improvements and volunteers for future virtual gatherings)
 - A certificate of participation (may be required for CLE in your jurisdiction)

SAMPLE AGENDA

Adult learning effective practice is that virtual meetings should not last longer than one hour; however, if you want to provide CLE credit, the content portion of the meeting probably needs to be one hour – some jurisdictions allow that hour to include Q&A/discussion some do not. And, if you want to build in Inn engagement (which we encourage!), you will probably need to add another 15 – 20 minutes. Here’s an example of what a virtual Inn meeting agenda might look like:

- Meeting “space” will be open (0:00pm)
- Virtual Networking (15 – 30 minutes)
 - People could attend for the entire time or join as they please.
 - If you are asking for a roll call or engagement from every person, build in enough time so that it doesn’t cut into your educational content.
- Program: This should be built to suit your Inn’s needs and satisfy your jurisdiction’s CLE requirements.
 - 50 - 60 minutes if you need CLE; 30 – 45 minutes if you don’t need CLE
 - View by 00:00pm on [DATE] (if using a pre-recorded session)

- Live Discussion (15 – 30 minutes)
 - Best to include Q&A throughout.
 - Can utilize the chat or question feature during the program, as well.
 - This may be incorporated into your 50 - 60 minutes of content if your jurisdiction allows.
- Meeting “space” closes (0:00pm)

VIRTUAL NETWORKING

While nothing can duplicate the experience of face-to-face collegial networking and interaction, there are many ways to stay connected in the time of social distancing season. By setting out expectations for participation and creating pre-program discussion opportunities by posting questions and instructions in advance, you are laying the groundwork for interaction.

We have created a separate document with a wide variety of virtual networking ideas, but some general thoughts are:

- Find out what your platform is capable of – some allow for breakout groups, separate chat rooms, or incorporate a discussion thread feature.
- Organize conference calls by different groups for 30 minutes prior to the meeting, and then have the groups join the program at the appointed time.
- Ask everyone to share what you have assigned them in advance of the meeting (such as a short video, audio clip, or photo); show highlights at the designated networking time.

You can do any or all of these things before, during, or after the presentation.

PROGRAM CONTENT AND DISCUSSION

There are many ways to deliver the educational substance of an Inn meeting. Since many Inns or Pupillage Teams have already developed the content for their upcoming meetings, it can be relatively easy to share it with the rest of the Inn.

First determine what kind of content you’re going to share:

- Live presentation
 - One to two experts at any given time
 - Webcams
 - Talking over a PowerPoint presentation
- A recorded presentation
 - Something your Inn created on its own
 - Self-recorded, shorter presentations by multiple people that can be put into a PowerPoint or spliced together into one cohesive program
 - A program from the [Program Library](#)
 - An existing [INNnovation Education program](#)
- A recorded presentation AND a live webinar:
 - A recording that can be stopped periodically to allow for discussion or Q&A
 - A recording that can be watched together with live discussion to follow
 - A recording that can be watched on their own time with a specific time for live discussion or Q&A

If using a recorded program:

- Instruct members to watch it ahead of time (deadlines are helpful) and use virtual program time for discussion only.
- Watch it together as part of the online experience. This might be better with multiple presenters. And rather than everyone watching and commenting for a full hour, you could watch for 15 minutes, make comments/discuss, then watch again, pause, discuss, etc.

If holding a live webinar:

- We recommend keeping it to only two presenters speaking at any given time (otherwise it can be confusing for participants).
- You could allow for Q&A throughout or hold a discussion forum at the end of the program.

Most webinar platforms allow for recording of the program as it is happening. This means that you can then make it available to members who could not join the live meeting.

PLATFORMS

There are myriad options when it comes to choosing a platform, which means finding one to meet your Inn's needs is more than feasible. However, it is paramount to define your Inn's criteria for a virtual meeting platform ahead of time. Here are some considerations:

- **Price:** Many free options have limitations (on time, the number of people, or engagement features), but they are certainly budget-friendly. Sometimes law firms have a virtual meeting platform subscription; will anyone's firm or organization allow the Inn to use their account?
- **Purpose:** Some platforms are better suited for small group meetings, such as mentoring groups or pupillage team discussions, but cannot accommodate a full Inn meeting.
- **Usability:** Does anyone in your Inn already have experience with a virtual meeting platform?
- **Versatility:** What features will the Inn need most? For example, will it be more important to have a chat feature than to be able to record the meeting? Will the ability to mute everyone automatically trump a "raised hand" option?
- **Support:** Some platforms come with the option to hire a meeting facilitator who manages the "technical" components. Regardless, it is advisable to designate someone to monitor a chat box or provide back-up support to the main presenter.

LOGISTICS

Not all members will be comfortable with new forms of technology, so having clear instructions is critical:

- In your pre-program communications, be sure to include detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to access the recording and resources or how to join the live program.
- Designate one member as the technology point-of-contact for the meeting who will be online and available to troubleshoot any problems members might have.
- During the program ask a member to act as the MC or facilitator and designate another to help manage the chat or question feature.

THINGS TO ADD TO YOUR MEETING CONFIRMATION EMAIL

- **Be considerate:** Make sure you're in a quiet space – background noise (music, traffic, wind, co-workers, children, dogs, etc.) not only makes it harder for you to hear but really has a negative impact on all the other participants. When you are not speaking, mute yourself to avoid any audio feedback, echo, or background noise.
- **Be prepared:** Please make sure to watch/read/think about the material in advance of the program. Think of at least one question you'd like to be sure is answered on this topic and be ready to ask it.
- **Be tech savvy:** Log-in and test your connectivity and audio at least ten minutes before the program starts to make sure you don't miss any of the action.
- **Be relaxed:** We all feel a little silly and awkward – that's okay! This is something new and we're not used to it, but it's more important than ever to connect and maintain these professional and collegial relationships. Let's just try to have some fun with it.

CREATING A FULL CLE EXPERIENCE

Most jurisdictions will offer credit for online education, although the requirements may differ than those for face-to-face – make sure you research the requirements prior to planning your meeting so that you can incorporate everything that is required. Some common elements are:

Discussion

The discussion does not necessarily need to be a Q&A segment (though that is certainly doable in a virtual environment). Other options include using a discussion thread to capture comments during and after the meeting or reviewing assignments members completed prior to the program. A live Q&A segment could be conducted over conference call, or—if members are comfortable with it—over webcam.

Assessment

Many jurisdictions will require some way to ensure that learning happened. Some platforms offer quiz options, or you can create an assignment for them to complete. Definitely check with your jurisdiction to see what they require in this area.

Evaluation

It is important to evaluate every program, but especially virtual programs so the next planning team knows what worked, what did not work, and how to meet members' needs better in the future. The American Inns of Court has developed a sample virtual program evaluation that the Inn can copy and paste for its own use; it is also available in SurveyMonkey. If your Inn would like to use the SurveyMonkey version, contact your [Chapter Relations Director](#).

Hosting Framework

Because the American Inns of Court regularly creates online education at the national level, we are poised to offer a streamlined way for you to “host” a virtual Inn meeting during these times of social distancing. We have created a template that is easily replicable and should allow any jurisdiction to approve your efforts for CLE credit, perhaps with a few adjustments. If your Inn is interested, please contact your [Chapter Relations Director](#).

Questions? Email [Libby Bingham](#), director of education and mentoring programs and [Chapter Relations Director](#).