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Some Tips for Effective Virtual Meetings

Boards of Directors may find that they need to conduct a board meeting by phone or using some variation of video conferencing technology. As you consider how to make these virtual meetings as effective and enjoyable as possible, you can build on the same good practices that make for productive face-to-face meetings. You can find some good guidance in [A Recipe for Good Board Meetings](#) and [Your Best Meeting Ever](#). In addition, here are some specific tips to keep in mind when planning or participating in virtual meetings.

- ☆ Keep the agenda shorter and more focused than a typical board meeting. Conference calls tend not to work as well for wide-ranging, nuanced topics. If you need to deal with a "big" topic, you may need to limit (or eliminate) lots of other "small" topics.
 - If possible, allow time for check-ins so that participants can create a sense of connection that may be lost because they aren't in the same room together.
 - Avoid lengthy verbal reports. Include written reports in the advance materials. The meeting is a time to build a shared understanding of, or make decisions about, the information.
 - Schedule breaks – and stick to them. Participants need and will appreciate the chance to get up and stretch, or to attend to the people or tasks around them that will be calling for attention.
- ☆ Consider how you will let your co-op's member-owners or other guests know how they can participate and/or listen in on the meeting.
- ☆ The meeting packet or cover memo can include the following instructions for participants:
 - Join the call at least 5 minutes early so that you can start on time without lots of interruptions from folks jumping into the call. If this is the first time the group is using a particular conference call or video technology, it might be better to have people join 10-15 minutes early so they have time to work out any kinks in the connection.
 - Call in from a quiet place with few distractions. Mute your phone or computer mic, and then make sure to unmute when you want to speak. If you are using video technology, be careful about who or what may show up.
 - If you aren't using video, identify yourself each time you speak. (With 10 or so people on the line, it can be hard to keep track of which voice belongs to which person.)
 - Try not to multitask, even though the temptation will be great. Please wait until the breaks to attend to whatever else needs attention.
 - Be conscientious about speaking up when you have something to offer -- and about speaking concisely when you do.
- ☆ The meeting facilitator may want to...
 - occasionally ask each person by name if they have something to offer, especially if the group is connected only by phone.
 - be a bit more explicit each time you introduce an agenda item. For example, "We're moving on to the Approval of the 2020 Calendar. You should be looking at the calendar now."

If you are new at this, the conversation may be awkward now and then. Be kind and forgiving of each other! Your board *can* master the skills of virtual meetings.

Questions? Contact MichaelHealy@columinte.coop or your CBLD consultant
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