

# Virtual Information Session Planning Guide

Virtual events are an effective way to cultivate a strong, diverse candidate pool. While many systems have returned to in-person events, we still recommend offering virtual options as they can expand your reach to non-local candidates and may be preferable to local candidates who prefer the flexibility (e.g., parents of young children) or anonymity (e.g., potential candidates who want to avoid seeing current colleagues) of virtual events. This guide shares a detailed timeline and next steps to help plan a successful remote event. Note that many of these suggestions are also applicable to in-person information sessions as well.

## Timeline

The following sections outline each activity in detail.

Suggested Timeline	Activity
4 Weeks in Advance	Begin Planning: Identify Audience Identify Date, Time, Platform
3 Weeks in Advance	Plan Content and Initial Communications
1 Week in Advance	Finalize Facilitation and Attendance
1-2 Days in Advance	Rehearse Information Session
Week Of	Hold Event and Follow Up with Candidates

## Plan Information Session (~4 weeks in advance)

**Identify your target audience.** Determine the audience for your information session. For instance, you may want to target candidates in certain subject areas or grade levels, new or veteran teachers, or candidates who have passed the initial screening and are preparing to interview with school leaders. Or it may make more sense to hold an information session open to all candidates but then split candidates into more focused virtual breakout rooms. Either way, determine who your audience will be, gather an initial list of candidates to invite, and begin to think about how you will tailor your content to their interests.

**Identify the date, time, and hosting platform.** Set a date and time for your event. It may be helpful to alternate times so that more candidates can join. For instance, if your last [information](#) session took place in the early evening, consider holding your next event in the late morning. Send a calendar invite to any staff who should attend.

Additionally, determine the video conference platform you'll use. We recommend Zoom (be sure to review [their security guidance](#)) for its breakout room, recording, and participant features like chat and join by multiple devices. [Google Hangouts](#) is another option. No matter the platform, ensure equitable access to information sessions. For instance, provide a join-by-phone call option, share the presentation afterwards, and have an extra team member available to help with technical difficulties.

## **Plan Logistics and Initial Communications** (~3 weeks in advance)

**Invite candidates.** Send targeted messaging to candidates and invite them to RSVP. Having candidates confirm their attendance in advance, for instance via a Google form, allows you to monitor attendance and follow up afterwards. Depending on the goals of your session, you may want to cap the number of individuals who can attend and give deadline for RSVPs. Track candidate RSVPs and follow up with non-responsive candidates about one week after the initial invitation to remind them to RSVP.

### **Plan session content.**

Outline your information session and then draft slides and talking points. Reach out to any other staff members, students, and/or families you would like to join your information session.

## **General best practices and ideas for an engaging virtual information session:**

- Give attendees opportunities to interact throughout the session. You can start with a discussion question or fun icebreaker, have participants engage via polls or games (like [Kahoot](#)), and invite questions.
- Solicit “live” interaction but also provide alternative ways to engage, like submitting questions or comments via chat, sharing anonymously via a tool like [Padlet](#), and/or submitting questions in advance on the session sign-up page.
- At the beginning of the session, share an agenda, session objectives, timeline, and norms for engaging.
- Give candidates a sense of your school culture and community. You could invite students, family members, teachers, and/or school leaders to join or share photos and videos from school or community events.
- If you're using Zoom, leverage the breakout room feature to engage candidates in smaller groups:
  - Manually set up breakout rooms to create the groups you want (i.e., facilitators with specific groups and/or grade-level groups). If you're going to do this, plan a time the facilitator can pause (where participants are working) to allow the facilitator time to get folks into groups.
  - Assign staff members to lead discussions in each breakout room.
  - Use the ‘broadcast’ feature to re-post the agenda or guidance in chat and/or give time warnings (e.g., “5 minutes until we return to the whole group”).
  - As the facilitator, you can join each breakout room to listen in the way you'd circulate during an in-person session.

## **Finalize Session and Attendance** (~1 week in advance)

**Finalize content and facilitation.** Ensure your information session content is complete, coordinating across all facilitators to check that their content, talking points, and timing are final. Send facilitators an invitation to rehearse the session a day or two before the event. Lastly, designate a non-presenting staff member who will join the session to manage technology and assist with troubleshooting as needed.

**Confirm candidate attendance.** After the deadline to RSVP, email all candidates to confirm their attendance and include all meeting logistics like when and how to join, as well as any links they'll need in

advance (e.g., if you plan to take questions on a Padlet, share that link). We also recommend sharing a simple overview of the video conference platform that candidates can reference.

## **Rehearse and Hold your Information Session** (~1-2 days in advance)

**Rehearse information session technology, content, and facilitation.** A couple of days before your event, have all facilitators, tech helpers, and possibly a demo audience of available staff join a rehearsal call to make sure you're prepared.

- Confirm all staff can successfully join the platform and use all necessary features.
- If you're using breakout rooms, are you able to assign groups in advance, split the group up, broadcast to groups, and bring the group back together?
- Is facilitation clear and compelling? Is hand-off across facilitators smooth? Are breakout group facilitators clear on their roles?
- Are you able to present all media (e.g., video, photos, audio recordings) smoothly? For instance, test out toggling between sharing different screens or applications.

Does your session timing feel right? Do you have enough flex time to account for transitions and minor tech issues?

### **Hold your information session.**

It's time to host your event! Here are some day-of suggestions for a smooth event:

- Join early. Join the meeting line early so that when participants start joining, you are there to welcome them.
- To create a more personal environment, have participating staff members join by video and encourage participants to do so as well.
- Use the chat feature to reiterate key messages, dates, and instructions.
- Record the event to share with candidates who can't join the live session.
- Close the session by thanking attendees for their participation and share any next steps (e.g., application links and deadlines, follow-up communication they can expect, and where to go if they have more questions).

### **Follow up with participants.**

Within a week of the event, email participants to thank them for their attendance, share the session materials (PDF of slides, session recording, etc.) as well as encouragement and instructions to apply.

Consider reaching out to high-potential candidates via individualized emails or phone calls, and/or having breakout room facilitators follow up with their small groups to provide more personalized communication. You may consider sending out a short survey to gather quick feedback with questions that ask if the event encouraged candidates to apply, provided helpful information, and to give candidates another opportunity to ask questions. Be sure to also send the session materials to any candidates who expressed interest but couldn't join the live session. Lastly, thank any staff members, students, and/or family members who joined the event.



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