

Appendix B

Platforms

Our next step was to research and compare online platforms. We reviewed the following programs Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Go-To-Meeting. We obtained information on the following subjects:

1. Cost
 - Most of the platforms offer free basic plans. However, the enhancements to the Zoom platform on free and paid tiers give it a slight edge.
2. Ease of use and general use by our members
 - While many people use a variety of online platforms, we have noted that most of our members have already learned to use Zoom.
3. The platform selected must be easy to use and not require a high level of technical skill by participants.
 - **Our recommendation is to continue using Zoom, this way our members do not need to learn a new software.**
4. Cost of the online platform and equipment should be reasonable.
5. Supported functions. We were looking for a platform that would:
 - Provide a registration process
 - Allow all participants voice and where appropriate vote

Here are the lists of Pros & Cons we reviewed:

Zoom - Pros & Cons

Pros

- Reasonable cost: \$20/month for up to 100 online participants (extra \$67 for one month when up to 500 required)
- Ease of use – many members are now familiar with using Zoom
- No need for participants to download app
- Screen share feature for visual reports
- Allows registration for identifying participants - Group Records will benefit
- Increased security using password, setting options to limit screen sharing/chat/recording as well as participant identification through registration
- Voting/polling options
- Breakout room options for smaller group discussions
- Chat available to everyone or between individuals – host can turn off chat when not needed
- Can record to desktop (a feature useful to the secretary)
- Compatible with projector to have screen for in-person participants
- Co-hosts can be assigned to assist in managing participants and tech support
- Live transcription available at no extra cost

Cons

- Audio/video quality can be problematic for participants with low bandwidth
- May require additional cameras, mics, and mixer to accommodate all our needs.
- Unstable Wi-Fi could pose connection problems for any host or participant

Microsoft Teams – Pros & Cons

Pros

- It looks like for our purposes; regular members can use the free version without many restrictions. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-ca/microsoft-teams/free>
- If a Teams user is already using Microsoft 365, it is easier to share files and work within that ecosystem. BC/Yukon Area already has a Microsoft Office subscription.
- Teams is more secure than Zoom.
- Teams is far less expensive than the Zoom service we would need.

Cons

- Full integration with Microsoft Office, if you do not have Office and/or we will not be using Office features, this benefit is useless to us because to get these benefits, all users would have to be using Teams.
- Teams is less well known (thus, fewer know how to use it) than Zoom and virtually any other platform but Skype.
- Would need a subscription upgrade to use it for a virtual or hybrid event.
- Teams is not as user friendly as Zoom.

Skype – Pros & Cons

Pros

- Easy to deploy; you can be up and running within minutes.
- User friendly.
- Free.
- Screen sharing options available through Skype.

Cons

- Skype does not work well for multi-party calling. Skype works well person-to-person but once they start to add more parties into either an audio or video call it loses reliability.
- Skype is not easy to connect to a meeting room Audio/Video system.
- Skype is not as secure as other software for video conferencing solutions. Which means that the information that is transmitted over Skype could be intercepted. Because it's free and you can cancel it anytime, you don't need to sign a service agreement. Unfortunately, this may also mean that Skype isn't responsible for meeting all expectations. It works only on its "best effort" guarantee.
- Background noises are picked up rather easily. There are no environmental dampening features included with this program.

Google Go-to-Meeting – Pros and Cons

Up to 10 participants - Free

150 participants \$19 monthly

250 participants \$26 monthly

Pros

- Best protection in the classes of Data Traffic and Identity in test.
- Professional focus.
- Well laid-out user interface.
- Separate windows for participants and shared contents supported.
- It allows users to have full control over the equipment of a participant.
- Recording of chats and meetings.

Cons

- Authentication/Access Control is lacking.
- Simple chat without file transfers.
- It requires a stable internet connection. If the ISP likes to ping the modem frequently, then GoToMeeting won't work as well.
- GoToMeeting also requires users and attendees to have current IT equipment or mobile devices.
- No chat room capabilities.

6. Supported functions. We were looking for a platform that would:

- Provide a registration process
- Allow all participants voice and where appropriate vote
- Audio/video quality can be problematic for participants with low bandwidth
- May require additional cameras, mics, and mixer to accommodate all our needs.
- Unstable Wi-Fi could pose connection problems for any host or participant