

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

**Conducting Effective Meetings in CDER:
Remote Access Considerations**

Table of Contents

PURPOSE.....1
POLICY.....1
RESPONSIBILITIES.....2
PROCEDURES.....4
REFERENCES.....6
DEFINITIONS.....6
EFFECTIVE DATE.....7
CHANGE CONTROL TABLE.....7

PURPOSE

As off-site work options increase, CDER staff members need the tools and technology to retain productivity, efficiency, and access to information from any location.

This MAPP establishes best practices for conducting effective web-based meetings in CDER. The focus is on remote access considerations. This MAPP applies only to internal CDER meetings for which hosts and participants are remotely connected.

This MAPP outlines responsibilities of meeting hosts and participants, as well as more detailed procedures to ensure CDER meetings are effective when participants are working at multiple locations.

Available tools and technology should be tailored to match the meeting’s structure and objectives. Meeting hosts may obtain support from FDA’s Office of Information Management (OIM).

POLICY

Meeting organizers (hosts) will make all internal meetings accessible to staff members who may be working from alternate locations. CDER employees who have a Flexible Workplace Arrangements Program (FWAP) agreement should be proficient in the tools that allow them to connect to meetings from any location, and they should take advantage

of training and use these tools. This policy does not apply to meetings for which a manager or supervisor determines that in-person attendance is required.

NOTES

- CDER has selected Adobe Connect as its preferred tool, and Cisco WebEx as the alternative web conferencing tool. Users may select either tool based on their preference or meeting needs.
 - All references to web conferencing will be interpreted as references to Adobe Connect or Cisco WebEx.
 - On September 25, 2015 CDER is expected to no longer support Adobe Connect. Cisco WebEx will be the only conferencing tool in CDER.
 - Details on obtaining web conferencing accounts, training, setting up web conferences, and requesting technical support are provided in the attachments to this MAPP, posted on the Communications Tips & Resources page in the Office of Communications section of CDER's intranet.
-

RESPONSIBILITIES

CDER Managers and Supervisors will–

- Become familiar with FDA's web conferencing, technical support, and training options.
- Ensure that staff members are trained in web conferencing tools.
- Ensure meeting hosts have accounts allowing them to create virtual meeting rooms.
- Ensure that staff members actively use web conferencing to facilitate meetings.
- Encourage staff members to participate actively when attending a meeting from an off-site or alternate location.

Meeting Hosts will –

- Obtain an individual web conferencing account and attend relevant training. (See Attachment 1, posted on the Communications Tips & Resources page in the Office of Communications section of CDER's intranet.)
- Become familiar with FDA's web conferencing, technical support, and training options. (See Attachment 1.)
- Become familiar with telephone conferencing, technical support, and training options for FDA's tele-conferencing platforms.

- Use a dial-in phone number and web conferencing for meetings involving remote participants. Web conferencing allows off-site meeting participants to view slides and meeting documents in real time.
- Ensure that the dial-in number and web conference can accommodate the number of people participating in the call. Participant limits are as follows:
 - Adobe Connect: 99 participants.
 - Cisco WebEx: 1000 participants.
- Make every effort to connect to the web conference on time. Activate the web conference before the start of the meeting so the meeting begins at the scheduled time.
- Use the attendance feature of the web conferencing system to determine attendance.
- If a meeting involves the discussion of sensitive or confidential information, ensure that only registered users and accepted guests join the conference. Verify the identity of all meeting participants.
- Distribute the agenda, handouts, web conferencing link, teleconference number, and supporting information at least one day in advance of the meeting.
- Ensure that equipment is set up and functioning properly in advance of the meeting. Test audibility and visibility of materials for all participants, and correct any audio or visual problems, if possible.
- Delegate responsibility for complex elements of managing meetings that involve remote attendees to an expert technician, if appropriate. (See Attachment 2.)
- Ensure meeting participants can participate fully and effectively.
- If any participants have disabilities that limit their ability to participate, use existing technological tools such as the closed captioning capability of the web conferencing tool or request interpreting services. (See Attachment 1.)
- Ensure that telephone and auxiliary microphones are optimally placed to maximize their effectiveness, and minimize the impact of other sound sources, such as projector fans.
- At the start of the meeting, announce the following:
 - Participants should mute their telephones.
 - Speakers should speak clearly and audibly into microphones.
 - Meeting participants should state their names when offering comments or questions.
 - Instruct remote participants how to submit questions or comments.
 - Speakers should restate questions, to ensure remote attendees can hear the entire question.

- Discourage sidebar conversations by meeting participants.

Remote Meeting Participants will–

- Participate in web conferencing training to ensure their ability to fully participate in remote meetings, including making visual and audio connections, using tools such as Cisco IP Communicator, chat feature, mute button, headsets, and cameras.
- Be proficient in connecting to web conferencing meetings.
- Connect to the web conference on time.
- State their names when asking or answering questions, or offering comments.
- Notify the host if meeting participation availability changes.
- Use the mute button on the telephone or softphone when participating by phone to cut down on feedback or static, and to minimize disruption to other meeting participants.
- If using a softphone, consider using a telephone headset equipped with a mouthpiece to improve sound quality. Speak clearly at all times.
- Notify the meeting host of any connectivity, audio, or visual problems.

On-site Meeting Participants will—

- Limit noise generated in the conference rooms. This includes limiting sidebar conversations, movement of papers, and use of personal electronics.
- When speaking, asking questions, or commenting, direct your voice into a microphone, as appropriate.
- Remember to include the remote participants in discussions.

PROCEDURES

Setting Up a Meeting

- Meeting hosts will obtain an individual web conferencing account. (See Attachment 1.)
- Whenever possible, meeting hosts will make the dial-in phone number, web conference link, meeting agenda, and other meeting documents available in advance of the meeting. Every effort should be made to send all materials to participants one day in advance of the meeting.
- When meetings containing sensitive information are made available through a web conference, access will be controlled by the meeting host. Participants will have a login and password. Participants will not be able to log in as “Guest.”

-
- If sensitive information will be presented during the meeting, it is highly recommended the meeting not be recorded. Meetings with industry cannot be recorded.
 - Meeting hosts will become familiar with FDA resources for technical support.
 - CDER managers, project managers, and others who routinely host web conferences should be trained in web conference tools.
 - Meeting hosts will reserve a physical meeting room, if appropriate.
 - Meeting hosts who are managing the meeting remotely, especially from an off-campus location, will consider having a back-up plan for meeting management in the event of transient connectivity issues. A back-up plan may involve identifying additional hosts when the meeting is established. Meeting hosts who are off-campus will make appropriate arrangements for meeting set-up on site, when appropriate, and provide this information to the team.
 - To use web conferencing, meeting hosts need a web conferencing account, allowing them to create a virtual meeting room. Ideally, hosts will open the virtual room up to 15 minutes before the start of the meeting. For large meetings, meeting hosts may reserve the conference room for 30 minutes in advance of the meeting to set up and test the connection and microphones and to ensure the meeting starts on time.
 - Meeting hosts will let participants know whether the meeting requires a user name and password.

Running a Meeting

- When appropriate, meeting hosts should consider doing a roll call at the beginning of the meeting so that participants can indicate their presence.
- Meeting hosts will compensate for any disadvantages the audience may experience in terms of ability to hear and see the meeting's events. This includes:
 - Ensuring proper positioning of phones and microphones in the conference rooms to ensure that staff in the room are heard.
 - Encouraging all participants to speak clearly and audibly in close proximity to microphones at all times.
 - Minimizing background noise.
 - Discouraging sidebar conversations by meeting participants.
 - Reminding participants to mute their phones when participating remotely.
 - Repeating questions for remote participants as needed.
 - Reminding all meeting participants to state their names when offering comments or questions during the meeting.
 - Reading questions that are sent from participants through the web conferencing system.

- Meeting hosts will monitor and facilitate discussions so all individual contributions will be heard and considered.
 - When appropriate, meeting hosts will summarize key points of the meeting prior to disconnecting the call.
-

REFERENCES

1. OPM, 2011, Guide to Telework in the Federal Government.
 2. GSA, 2007, Information Technology and Telecommunications Guidelines for Federal Telework and Other Alternative Workplace Arrangement Programs.
-

DEFINITIONS

Web conferencing tools – Tools that allow conferencing events to be attended from remote locations.

Web conference – A meeting in which participants remotely connect to other participants over the Internet. Participants can access the meeting and be connected to other participants via the Internet from their alternate worksite.

Sensitive – A meeting reviewing trade secrets or other confidential or commercial information. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) defines “sensitive information” as information that has a degree of confidentiality such that its loss, misuse, unauthorized access, or modification could compromise the element of confidentiality and thereby adversely affect national health, HHS programs, or the privacy of individuals under the Privacy Act or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. FDA employees are also responsible for observing the Trade Secret Act, which provides criminal penalties for unauthorized disclosure of trade secrets and confidential, commercial, or financial information.

Softphone – A virtual phone allowing employees to place and receive calls as if they were seated at their desk on campus. Cisco IP Communicator is a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) tool selected by FDA to provide this capability. It can be used through an FDA laptop and requires an Internet connection. Employees interested in this option should send a ticket to the IT Call Center (See Attachment 1.) Headsets are strongly recommended for increasing sound quality, comfort, and privacy during a call.

Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) – A capability that allows individuals to make phone calls from computers using the Internet, rather than traditional phone lines.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This MAPP is effective upon publication.

CHANGE CONTROL TABLE

Effective Date	Revision Number	Revisions
06/10/13	Initial	n/a.
5/20/15	Rev. 1	Included Cisco WebEx as an alternate tool.