

Guide to Designing RSA Online Events

We are a global community of proactive problem solvers, sharing powerful ideas and building networks and opportunities for people to collaborate, influence and demonstrate practical solutions to realise change.

While we strongly believe in the irreplaceable power of dynamic in-person events, we're making a shift to 'digital first' thinking to help widen participation, increase access for our 30,000 global Fellows, and deepen our impact. Thank you for considering making your event digital!

We have chosen to use the Zoom platform for our interactive online RSA events because it is simple to use and offers the required functionality for an engaging online event. Attendees will need to register for a free account and download the software (see [Zoom's Privacy Policy](#)).

There are many video tutorials and explanations on how to use all of Zoom's features, such as [joining a Zoom event](#), [host controls](#) (e.g. muting; polling; managing participants), [changing the video layout](#), and [creating breakout rooms](#); we encourage you to make use of them.

This guide will help you design and facilitate impactful and participatory RSA online events, through the two core phases of **organising** and **designing** for an online environment.

Organising

As a first step, discuss your idea with your Area or Global Manager. You will receive individual guidance and support to develop a purposeful and engaging event, discuss the practicalities behind running it smoothly, think through managing potential risks (e.g. poor wifi; challenging behaviours; Zoom bombers). More guidance can also be found on our [Fellowship Resources](#) page.

Area and Global Managers curate a cohesive and diverse programme of RSA Fellowship events and ensure a basic level of consistency and accessibility. They will help identify synergies and suggest connections between your event and the RSA's wider programme (see: "[Our Work](#)" and "[Our Values](#)").

The RSA provides technical and promotional support, and we can:

- Set up the event from our pro Zoom account
- Promote attendance through our usual channels (email, social media) depending on the intended audience. We recommend sharing with your own networks as well
- Support participants with bespoke links and clear joining instructions

You can be assigned hosting powers:

- If a staff member is joining the call, we can hand over the host control
- Or, provide you in advance with a [host key that enables you to claim control](#)
- If you are not comfortable with using host powers, we can offer you support and practice

Designing

In good event design, form follows function and centres **people’s experiences**. From the very start, be clear about the purpose of your event and who will be participating. This will help you understand what format the event should take, and what support you will need.

Clarify the purpose

- What will this event help achieve? For example: do you hope the event will lead to action or collaboration? Or is it a chance to share resources?
- Share the purpose and as much agenda as possible ahead of time. For collaborative events, consider having a shared, accessible agenda that participants can directly input to and track updates in real time.
- What happens after the event? Refine any calls to actions at the initial design stages in order to build smooth transitions into your event.

Design with people’s experience at heart

- Invite and prepare for a diversity of perspectives to enrich conversation. RSA events are open and free to all, not just Fellows, and present great opportunities to invite new people into our community. Deliberately seek out people and organisations with different perspectives for a well-rounded, engaging discussion that actively interrogates blind spots.
- Maximize accessibility for broadest participation. Some Zoom features (i.e. whiteboard annotation) are difficult if not impossible to use for participants joining by mobile phone and using screen readers. As best practice, read aloud any highlight comments from the chat.
- Think global, energized by the local. Our most successful events were generously hosted by local RSA groups leveraging their specificity, identity, local speakers and audiences, but opening the door to global participation on universal themes.
- Use small breakout room discussions to stimulate connections and conversations. For speaker input, less is more.
- Choose the right time and duration for your intended audience. For a general RSA Fellowship audience, we find that 50-90 minutes works well. Plan breaks for longer events.

Some basic facilitation tools

- Checking in. This could range from a simple “please share your name and where you’re calling in from,” or include a short prompt or icebreaker. Offer the opportunity to ‘pass’.

Silent Gallery (Gallery View)	Invite people to update their name labels, give participants a few minutes to silently browse. Much shorter than spoken check-ins.
Typed Check-Ins (Chat box)	Invite people to type a short intro or respond to a prompt in the chat. Can happen in the background while moving on with the agenda.
Go-Around (Active Speaker View)	Invite people to unmute themselves in turn and speak a short intro. Can be very time-consuming for large or talkative groups.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go down the participant list, calling out the next person. • An interfaith dialogue strategy is to allow participants to speak for as long as they wish... as long as they can do it in one breath!
Small Breakouts (Breakout Rooms)	Randomly allocate breakout rooms of 2-4 people for a more casual and connective check-in with a set time limit.

- Movement breaks. Encourage people to move their bodies at suitable points during the event (around halfway point is useful). Zoom shake!
- Checking out. If suitable, a check out where people share something they are taking away or one word that summarises their experience of the call. Thank everyone for attending and clarify next steps

Breakout group tips

- Determine the structure of your breakouts.
 - Will they be randomly allocated, or chosen by participants? If chosen, how will participants indicate their preference? Consider including this in the registration for your event.
 - For multiple breakouts, do you want them to work in the same group (continuity for deep engagement) or rotate (variation for networking)?
- Clearly explain instructions and prompts, and post them in the chat *before opening breakout groups.*
 - Keep discussion prompts focused and creative.
 - Explain how they should organise (self-organise or a facilitator) and whether they will need to feedback to the group.
 - Consider offering time for silent individual reflection before breaking out.

Define roles and ensure you have enough support. Once you've decided on the purpose and format, decide who is doing what. Your Area or Global Manager can help talk this through with you.

The Facilitator (upfront presence)	Focuses on <u>guiding conversation</u> (managing dominant voices; encouraging quieter people; checking any harmful behaviour; interacting with speaker; moderating participant Q&A). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you wish to fully participate in the conversation, consider finding someone else to hold this role.
The Producer (behind the scenes)	Focuses on the <u>technical running of the event</u> (ensuring everyone can use the tech; moderating the chat; posting links and prompts; ensuring audio quality; setting up screen-share and presentations; organising breakout rooms; timekeeping). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it is a technically demanding event (e.g. high number of attendees to organise into chosen

	<p>break-out rooms) you may need additional producer support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify unmuted participants at the top of the participants list to mute with host powers. • Ensure Facilitator and Producer have a shared checklist/facilitation plan.
Guest Speaker (limited input)	<p>Focus on stimulating conversation through <u>short, energizing inputs</u> and participating in the conversation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may need to brief and familiarise speakers with Zoom in advance.

Following up – what could happen next?

- Clearly share any next steps and calls to action. Some popular follow-ups: directly follow up with other participants after this call; write a blog; consider what you learned today and commit to a very small self-identified action; contact the organisers.
- RSA will follow up with a standardised feedback survey. We can share results with **event you, if you're interested.**
- Optionally, organise a debrief with your Area or Global Manager to reflect whether you achieved your purpose, what went well and what you would change next time.

Frequently Asked Questions

What's the best way for participants to share contact details and information?

Please encourage participants to pro-actively use the Zoom chat to share contact details and information with each other and take individual responsibility to save relevant notes and actions.

It is possible to message 'Everyone' to share with the whole group publicly, or only specific individuals by selecting their name from the drop-down list. Participants can [save the chat](#) by clicking the bottom of the chat window.

Can you record and host a video of our event?

We don't upload full recordings of events that are participatory in nature, as editing is resource intensive and generally get very low engagement. If you believe a recording of your event will be of significant, ongoing interest, please explore this with your staff point of contact.

Additional resources for online gatherings

- [Campaign Bootcamp Resources for Running Online Training](#)
- [Example of shifting international conference online](#)
- [Network Weaver – transformational power of online meetings](#)
- [Coronavirus Tech Handbook – online events](#)
- [Guide to Zoom if you are visually impaired](#)

Facilitator's Intro Checklist

Essential (5 min or less)	
Shared purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Recap objectives and format of the event • Brief intro to the RSA for new audience members • Link to a shared accessible agenda, if you are using one
Zoom Tech	<p>Explain key features of Zoom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Mute during plenary</u> to avoid distracting background noise (Ctrl+A keyboard shortcut/ hold spacebar to temporarily unmute) • <u>Gallery view</u> to see all participants at once (up to 20 people per screen); <u>Speaker view</u> to see one speaker at a time • <u>Chat bar</u> to contribute comments, questions and resources. • <u>Editable name labels</u>. Suggest at minimum first name (and last initial if multiple people share). Can include optional details (e.g. location, preferred gender pronouns). <p>Explain your roles (i.e. 'facilitator', 'producer', 'guest speaker'):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Differentiate between content and technical questions</u>, and the correct people to contact for each. • <u>Establish the best methods of getting your attention</u>, such as sending a private message to the 'Producer', or physically or digitally raising a hand to signal to the 'Facilitator'.
Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you wish to record, reconfirm consent (this is included as part of sign-up to RSA events as well). • The chat is a public space that may be saved by participants. • Please pro-actively share contact details with each other directly.

Optional	
Social norms and non-verbal cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Assume good intention</u> – tone is sometimes lost online • <u>Encourage non-verbal feedback</u> – physical gestures such as smiling and nodding, or typed reactions in the chatbox, can be helpful feedback for speakers. • <u>That said, prolonged eye contact can be intense</u>, so give explicit permission for participants to engage in ways that work for them.
Group agreements or principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some conversations will work better if the group generates and agrees to certain principles (e.g. listen to difference with curiosity) • <u>Provide suggestions or crowdsource together</u>, depending on time available.

Sample Facilitator's Intro Script

Shared Purpose

- Hi everyone. Thank you for joining us this evening for **TITLE OF EVENT**
- The purpose of the session today is to....
- Introduce the RSA
- The event tonight will be **split into two sections – each with a small breakout discussion and then a plenary feedback session.**
- **We'll wrap up briefly at the end and explain next steps. I'll do my best to keep us to time. We're aiming to finish by 6pm British Summer Time.**

Zoom Guidance:

- **Just before we get started properly. I thought I'd run through some tips to using Zoom.**
- The event is **designed to be interactive** – we will be breaking into small groups to make discussion easier – please do **turn on your camera and make sure your name is listed clearly** so we understand **who we're talking to.**
- We recommend using the **Gallery view during plenary so you can see everyone.** You can toggle between Gallery and Speaker view via the top right corner.
- **When we're in plenary (like this) it's best if you mute you microphone when you're not speaking** to minimise background noise. If we notice pick-up noise, we may use our administrative powers to put you on mute to support everyone's **listening experience.**
- **When we're calling on people for comments, if you would like to speak you can raise your hand and move forwards to give a visual signal.** Or post the question into the chat.
- We encourage you to **use the chat bar through the event for any comments, questions, resources and to share your contact details with each other.** It is possible to message 'Everyone' to share with the whole group publicly, or specific individuals by selecting their name from the drop-down list.
- If you need tech support, then please reach out to **Producer** on chat.

Consent:

- This **event will be recorded** for internal reflection so we can continuously learn and improve our online events, but we will not share it publicly.