Technology

Audio Descriptive Text

Title: Professional Development 201: From Basic to Dynamic. Before the Webinar - Preparations; Technology. Image of PD practices: Sustain, Design, Promote, Deliver, Follow Up, and Evaluate. CDC logo.

Video Summary

Many webinar technology platforms are available; most have interactive features to help with participant engagement.

Audio Script

While the technology used to deliver a webinar is not as important as the content itself, ineffective technology can distract participants from learning,

Webinars can be telephone only, using a simple conference call bridge line, or they can utilize Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) and allow participants to listen using computer headsets. Synchronous webinars can also incorporate webcams to allow learners to see one another.

Many platform options are available. Regardless of platform, make sure it has these tools to help with engagement:

- **Application sharing** is also called remote desktop sharing. This feature allows the participants to watch as you demonstrate a program or navigate to a website.
- **Breakout rooms** are a more advanced feature. They are great for breaking up large audiences into smaller working groups for interactivities.
- **Polling** is a basic feature that allows you to gather data or feedback from participants in real-time. Polls can be built into the agenda as activities or added later as needs arise.
- **Text chat** allows participants to communicate with you when they may not be able or want to speak over the audio line. Text chat can be used for asking questions, addressing technical issues, or capturing participants' ideas or thoughts throughout the webinar.
- **Two-way audio** allows participants to use VOIP to communicate during the webinar and precludes the need for an additional conference bridge line. Two-way audio can also simplify audio recording for archiving purposes.
- **Video streaming** allows you to not only share video with your audience, but also to incorporate webcams into the event. Video steaming can be one-way (only the facilitator is on camera) or two-way (each participant is also on a webcam). Video streaming is helpful for facilitators because it allows them to constantly gauge audience engagement levels. However, not all participants may have webcams, know how to work them, or feel comfortable being on camera.

- The **whiteboard** is perhaps the most key feature. This tool allows you to share your content, (e.g., slides or images), and it can serve as a literal whiteboard to let you or your participants write, draw, or otherwise share ideas.

Current webinar platforms will have most, if not all, of these features. After the event is designed, find the platform with the right features and price structure to fit the needs of the webinar.

Various options exist for online web conferencing software or platforms that can be used to host your webinar, such as:

- Adobe® Connect™
- GoToWebinar®
- WebEx®, and
- Skype® for Business

Disclaimer: CDC does not endorse any particular company, product, or platform. These are listed as examples of webinar platforms only.

Each platform has its own strengths and weaknesses, including the number of participants allowed, features (such as interactivity options, customization, and analytics), and costs. Most of these platforms have tiered pricing structures, and many offer a free version. Conduct research to determine which platform best suits the needs of the webinar.