

Creating Winning Webinars

COMMUNICATIONS
TEMPLATE SERIES

Disaster Risk Financing
& Insurance Program



Index

To Webinar or Not?

Plan: 10 Tips to Plan Successful Webinars

Implement: 10 Tips to Conduct Successful Webinars

Operationalize: 5 Tips on Learning Design for Webinars

CLICK ON SECTIONS TO READ



01

**To Webinar
Or Not?**



Is a webinar the right format to present your content?

Some ideas are better suited to the webinar format than others. Below are a few examples of content that would be suitable for a webinar:

- An in-depth discussion or detailed examination of a technical topic from a fresh angle—e.g., using disaster risk financing (DRF) best practices to protect public assets
- A panel discussion of a timely, news-based issue related to your area of work— e.g., DRF during the COVID-19 pandemic
- A thorough, process-driven “how-to” tutorial—e.g., a demonstration of DRF analytics tools
- An adaptation of a well-received conference presentation—e.g., fundamentals of DRF training or introduction to DRF
- A candid interview with an industry thought leader—e.g., a one-on-one interview with current or former ministers of finance or leaders in fintech and insurance
- Highly interactive training sessions with a small group—e.g., training in story-telling techniques to promote DRF



Below are examples of content that will **NOT** make a compelling webinar:

- ✗ A minor update to a World Bank project
- ✗ A broad, “content-thin” general topic
- ✗ A tired idea or concept without a specific angle—e.g., “DRF is important”
- ✗ A sales pitch or project pitch
- ✗ A long technical lecture (running 30–45 minutes) with no defined takeaways

Remember that your participants are taking time from their day to connect with you virtually, so it is your responsibility as host to ensure that the webinar is genuinely interesting and useful.

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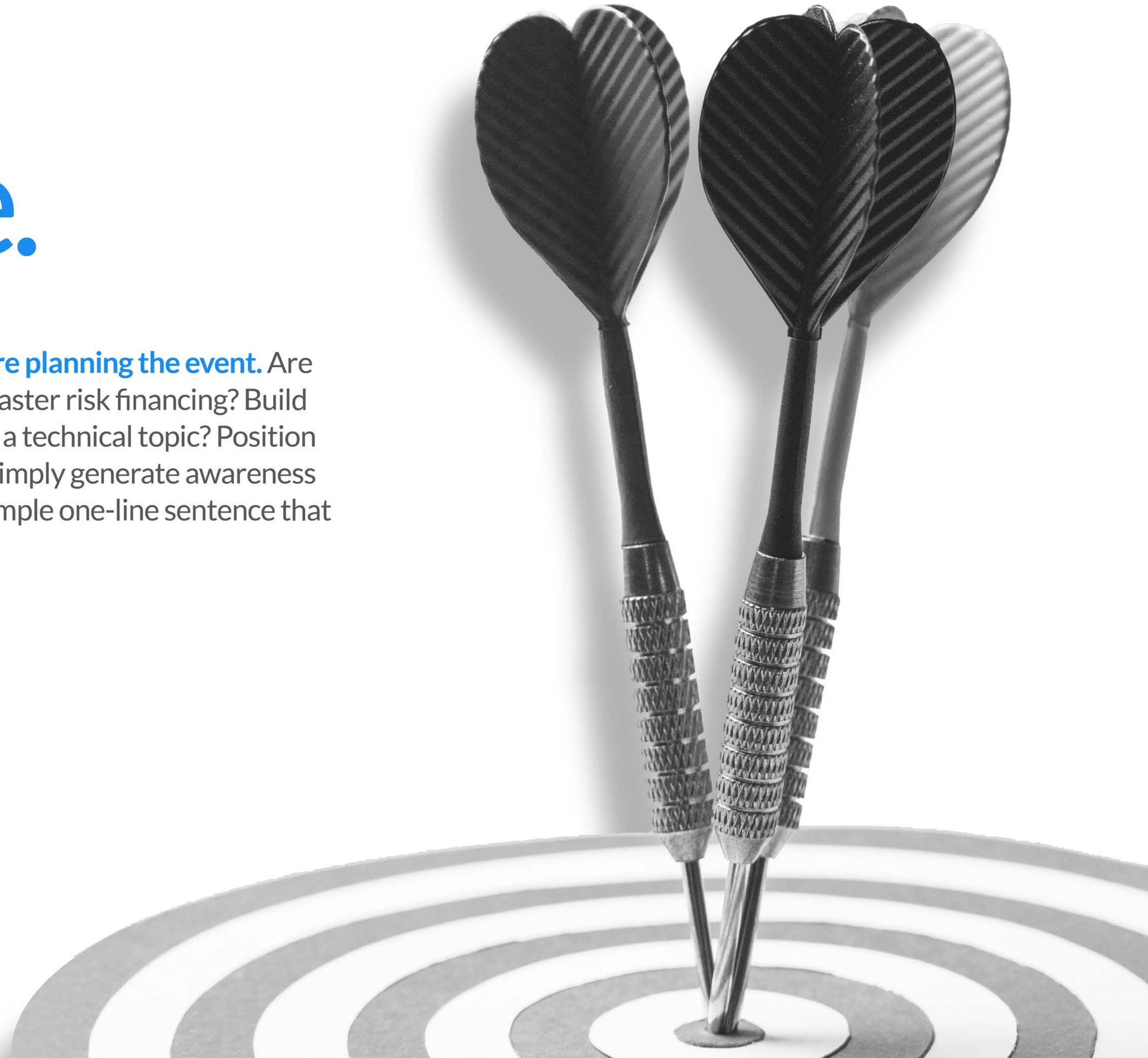
Plan: 10 Tips For Planning Successful Webinars



01. Decide on your objective.

Before you begin designing your webinar, ask yourself **why you are planning the event**. Are you trying to showcase a project or idea? Inform people about disaster risk financing? Build professional relationships with stakeholders? Do a deep dive into a technical topic? Position yourself or the webinar team as experts on a technical topic? Or simply generate awareness about your work? You should be able to state the objective as a simple one-line sentence that clearly defines what you hope to achieve through your webinar.

REMEMBER:
DEFINING YOUR OBJECTIVE WILL
HELP SET THE TOPIC, TONE, AND
LEARNING DESIGN FOR THE
WEBINAR AND THUS FACILITATE
A SMOOTH AND SEAMLESS FLOW
OF INFORMATION.

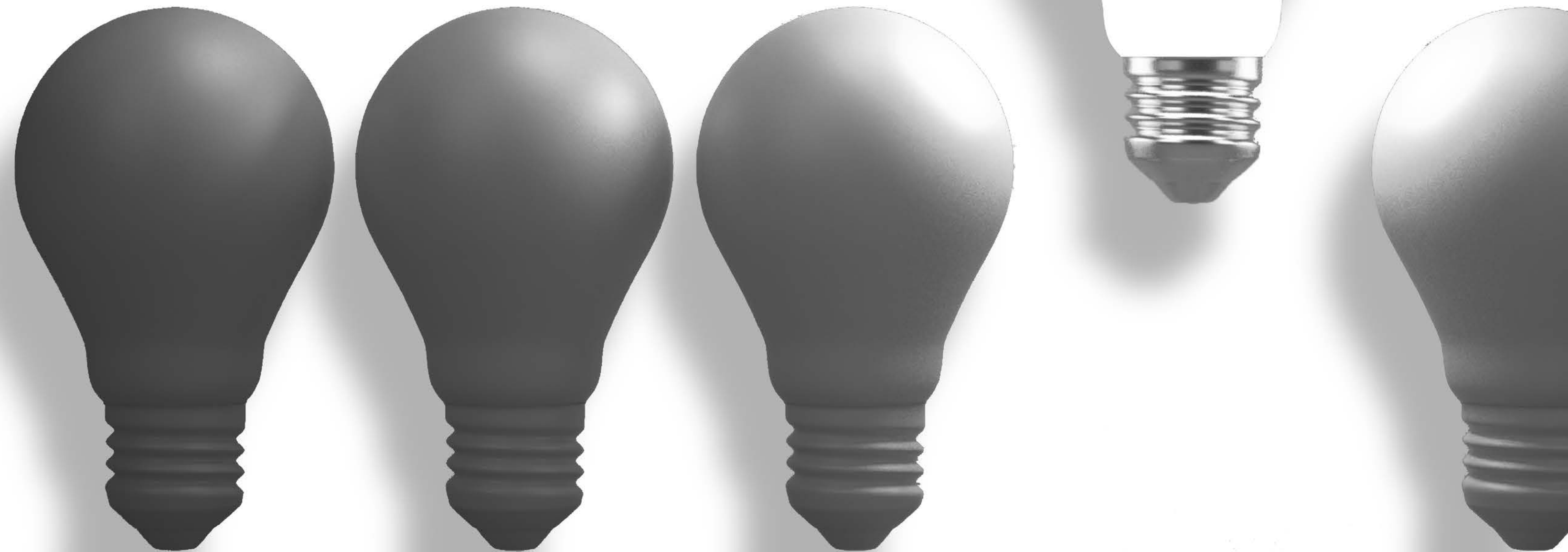


02. Select the right topic.

Once you have decided on the objective, spend time defining the webinar topic. While the objective can be broad (e.g., informing stakeholders about DRF), the topic should be narrow and specific (e.g., a deep dive on using best practices in public financial management).

Once you have narrowed down the topic, you must work in a disciplined manner to develop your content strictly around it and avoid any digression from the chosen topic. This is especially important in a webinar format, given how easy it is to lose direction in an online medium. A webinar that lacks direction and fails to offer value to the audience is unlikely to achieve its purpose. The idea is to cover a limited topic to ensure that the audience and the presenters do not lose focus.

REMEMBER:
IT MAY BE NECESSARY
TO CONDUCT MULTIPLE
WEBINARS TO ACHIEVE
YOUR OBJECTIVE.



03. Identify your primary audience

As you determine your objective and topic, you should also be considering the stakeholders who would benefit most from the webinar. For a webinar to be engaging, it must be demand-driven and bring value to stakeholders. The webinar's primary audience is the audience you most wish to reach, and it will guide how content is tailored.



REMEMBER:
THE CONTENT OF THE WEBINAR SHOULD BE CLEARLY ALIGNED TO YOUR PRIMARY AUDIENCE. THE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION AND THE INTERACTIVE PORTION OF THE WEBINAR CAN BE TAILORED FOR SECONDARY AND TERTIARY AUDIENCES.

04. Choose the right webinar software

Once you have settled on your primary audience, do a quick analysis of their available technology, including its limitations. Not all webinar platforms offer the same features. Make a checklist of the top five features you will require and then do a comparative analysis to see which one suits your budget and requirements the best.

Ideally, pick webinar software with multiple engagement tools (polls, whiteboards, breakout grouping, messaging, etc.), customizable landing pages, a dedicated help line, and an easy registration process.

REMEMBER:
THE SOFTWARE YOU CHOOSE WILL
ULTIMATELY DETERMINE THE QUALITY
OF YOUR WEBINAR, SO WHEREVER
POSSIBLE USE THE ENTERPRISE VERSION.
THE WORLD BANK GROUP RECOMMENDS
WEBEX.

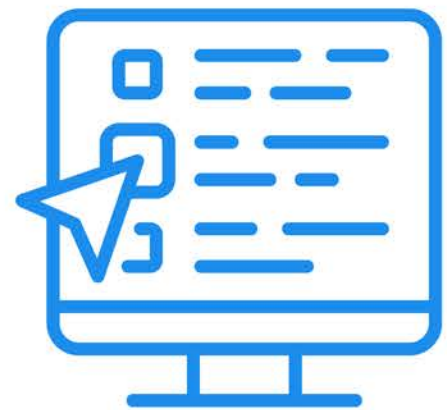


Understand what your webinar platform can (and can't) do.

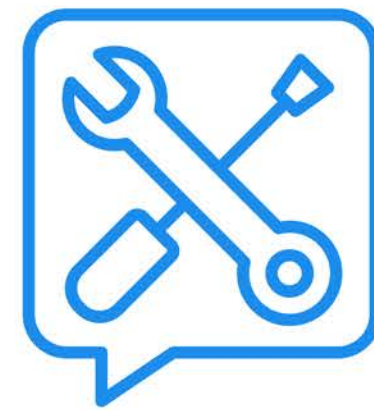
Almost all webinar platforms allow you to share online visuals like PowerPoint presentations, and most provide audio feeds via an integrated Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) or over a separate phone line. **Please ensure that audio is available through direct dial-in as well as through internet, so that stakeholders with different speeds and internet bandwidths can connect.**

Some webinar platforms also allow you to broadcast a live video feed of the presenters, and perhaps even video of the learners.

Your webinar platform should be equipped to allow the following:



01. Use of on-screen collaborative tools like whiteboards, chat boxes, and polling tools



02. Installation of third-party apps to incorporate additional features, such as interactive maps, word clouds, quizzes, social media feeds, and external web pages



03. Assignment of participants to breakout groups (when relevant) with their own video and audio feeds (optimal for small group work)



04. Private chat conversations between host and panelists



05. Running of a practice session on the platform

05. Pick the right webinar team and speakers.

Your objective and topic will determine the ideal format for your webinar. Whether you choose host and presenter, single presenter, dual presenter, or a panel, ensure that presenters are confident and articulate and are comfortable speaking in front of a screen. Energetic and enthusiastic presenters can enliven the virtual format.

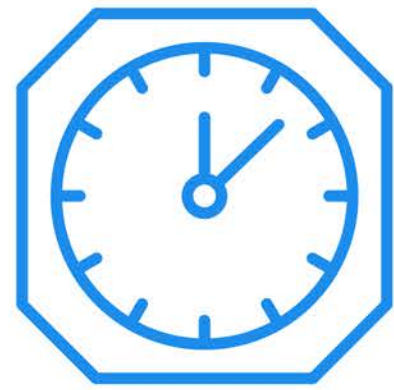


There is a “we” in “webinar.”

Every webinar should at best have a moderator, facilitator, and at least one presenter on the call.



The moderator will focus on the technology.



The facilitator will focus on the flow, time, questions, etc.



The presenter will focus on the content.

Ensure that you meet as a team before the webinar to discuss your expectations for these key issues:

- The amount of content (number of slides; number of minutes or seconds per slide)
- Duration of the presentations (generally not longer than 10–12 minutes per speaker)
- Transitions between sections (ideally with audience interaction)
- Participant interaction (three to five audience interactions per hour)
- Slide quality (at least 50 percent visual), etc .
- Comfort in using the platform features and technology



REMEMBER:
PRACTICE PRESENTATIONS AHEAD
OF TIME ON THE WEBINAR
PLATFORM TO ENSURE THAT
TRANSITIONS BETWEEN
PRESENTERS ARE SMOOTH.

06. Create engaging content.

People are far more likely to tune out a webinar presentation than a presentation given in person. A webinar is not the place to be spontaneous with your content.

- Ensure that your session is structured into short (e.g., 10-minute) blocks, with enduring content that has explicit value for the audience.
- Make an outline of your key point in each slide and then add further notes.
- Use humor (as culturally appropriate), and ask questions or share an anecdote in between slides to help lighten the mood or break the monotony. However, this nonessential material should contribute not more than 10 percent of your content.
- Pair your copy with visually compelling slides or even videos to add more variety.
- Share handouts with the audience in advance, where possible.



REMEMBER:
AN AUDIENCE WILL TAKE THE
TIME TO SIT THROUGH A WEBINAR
ONLY WHEN HIGH-QUALITY
CONTENT IS BEING SHARED.

07. Have a strong promotional plan and send multiple reminders.

Start promoting your webinar at least two weeks in advance. Decide on a promotional plan. In addition to sending information on the webinar to targeted mailing lists, such as the DRF Community of Practice, notify key stakeholders by email, and promote the session on your personal and corporate social media pages.

REMEMBER:
A BEST PRACTICE IS TO SEND
ANNOUNCEMENTS 14 DAYS BEFORE THE
WEBINAR, AND THEN AGAIN A WEEK
BEFORE, A DAY BEFORE, AND AN HOUR
BEFORE.



If the webinar is part of a series, announcements should include the following:



- Recordings and slides from the previous webinars as relevant links



- Quotes from previous participants on the usefulness of the past webinars



- A calendar of all webinars in the series

REMEMBER:
ALWAYS PROVIDE A REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE WEBINAR. THIS ADDS CREDIBILITY TO THE EVENT AND PROVIDES VALUABLE DATA ON PARTICIPANTS THAT CAN INFORM THE DESIGN OF YOUR CONTENT. CLOSE REGISTRATION (WHEN POSSIBLE) AT LEAST 24 HOURS PRIOR TO THE EVENT.



08. Prepare clear technology instructions.

The need to manage the technology is part of what makes a webinar very different from a face-to-face event. Every webinar should have a moderator whose primary focus is to ensure that the technology works optimally. Too often, time is wasted trying to resolve one person's audio or computer problems while other participants are forced to wait.



A few preparation tips:

- Test the technology ahead of time to make sure that it is working well. However, please be aware that the same webinar platform can work quite differently on different occasions and with different internet connections.
- Before the webinar, email the participants and presenters with clear instructions on
 - Testing their computer for compatibility (most webinar platforms provide this capability)
 - Using the webinar technology
 - Downloading the right add-ons and versions for the technology
 - Contacting the technology lead/moderator through a separate phone line or text message
 - Logging in again if they get disconnected for some reason
- Ensure the facilitator and moderator are on the platform at least 15 minutes in advance to make sure it works, and to greet those participants who come online early.
- Include a series of preliminary slides with instructions on how to set the sound, how to frame questions, and whether any other programs need to run. These slides can run in the background while early participants wait for the webinar to begin.



REMEMBER:
POOR HANDLING OF WEBINAR SOFTWARE CAN CAUSE INTERRUPTIONS AND DELAYS THAT RESULT IN DISTRACTED CONTENT DELIVERY. THIS CAN IMPACT THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE WEBINAR AND CAUSE MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE TO DROP OUT.



09. Do a test run and rehearse your content.

Like any other presentation, a webinar requires practice and rehearsal beforehand:

- Ensure your internet connection is reliable and all your equipment is fully functioning.
- Earmark a location in your house or office where you can hold the webinar uninterrupted.
- Check the video and audio settings on your device.
- Test all the functionalities in the software to ensure that it is free of glitches.
- Always do a full rehearsal of the content with the webinar team. While this may seem time-consuming and unnecessary, it helps speakers master content and feel more confident about presenting, and it allows another check on the delivery time. It also helps identify any gaps in slides and other visual content.
- Always practice in front of the webcam with your video switched on. See how you appear in the video and make sure your voice is clear and audible.
- Have the team record a snippet of your voice to check tone and inflection.



REMEMBER:

A WEBINAR OFFERS LIMITED LIVE FEEDBACK IN THE FORM OF AUDIENCE REACTION OR BODY LANGUAGE. THEREFORE, PRACTICE IS KEY.

10. Follow up (and follow through) on the event.

A webinar does not end when the last person disconnects. Always think about what you can do afterward to support your audience and continue the learning, information flow, and conversation. Follow up with individuals who asked questions that were not answered during the webinar.

As soon as possible after the webinar (ideally within 48 hours), send participants an email with supplemental materials, the recordings, and slides.

Whenever relevant, assign a follow-up task or issue a follow-up invitation. For example: You can invite participants to join a follow-up forum discussion after the webinar. Use an asynchronous platform like Yammer or SharePoint for this purpose.

Type your message here...

SEND



REMEMBER:
SEND PARTICIPANTS A REMINDER ABOUT THE NEXT WEBINAR YOU ARE CONDUCTING
AND ALLOW THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO SIGN UP FOR FUTURE EVENTS.

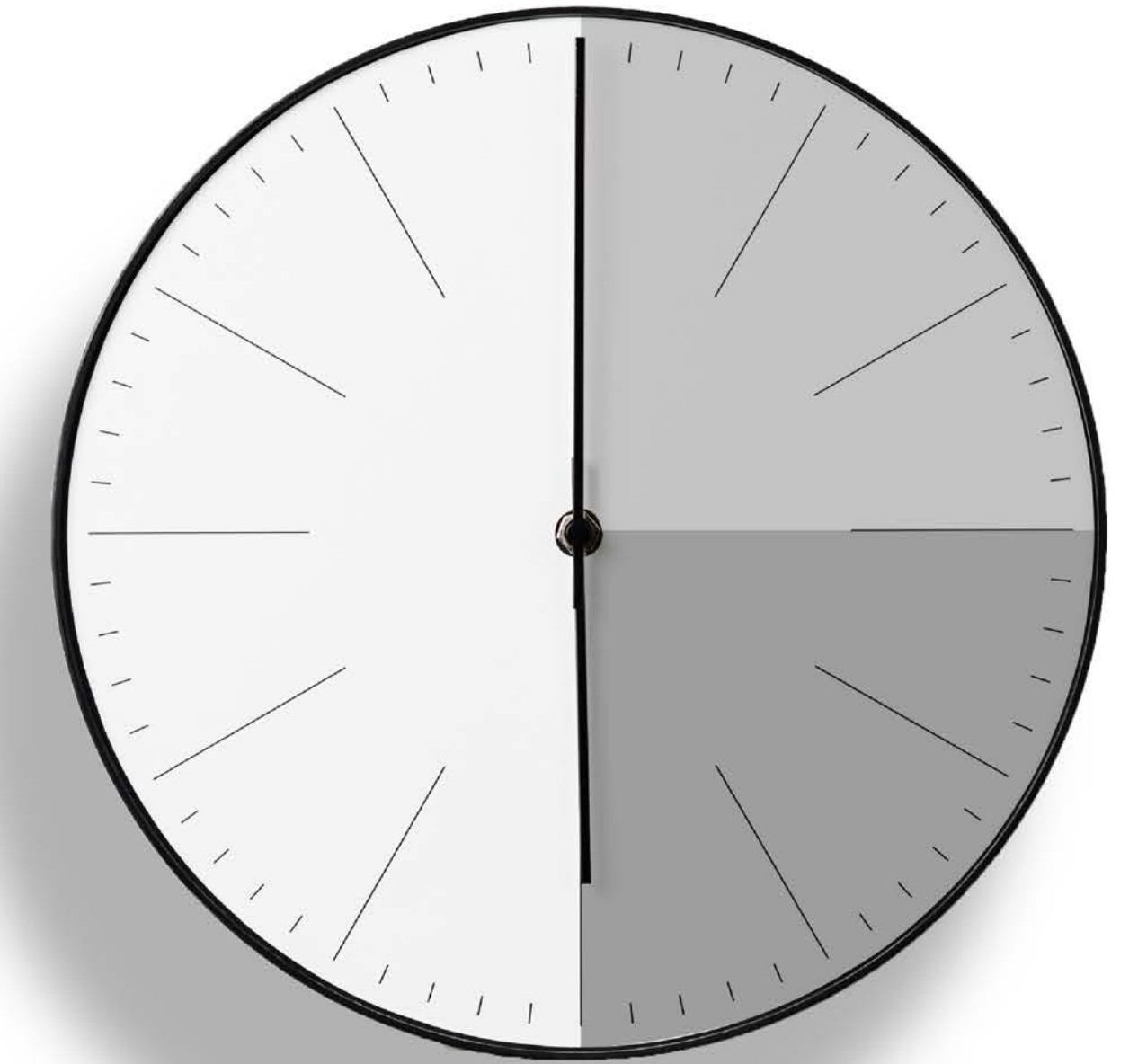
03

**Implement:
10 Tips For Conducting
A Successful Webinar**



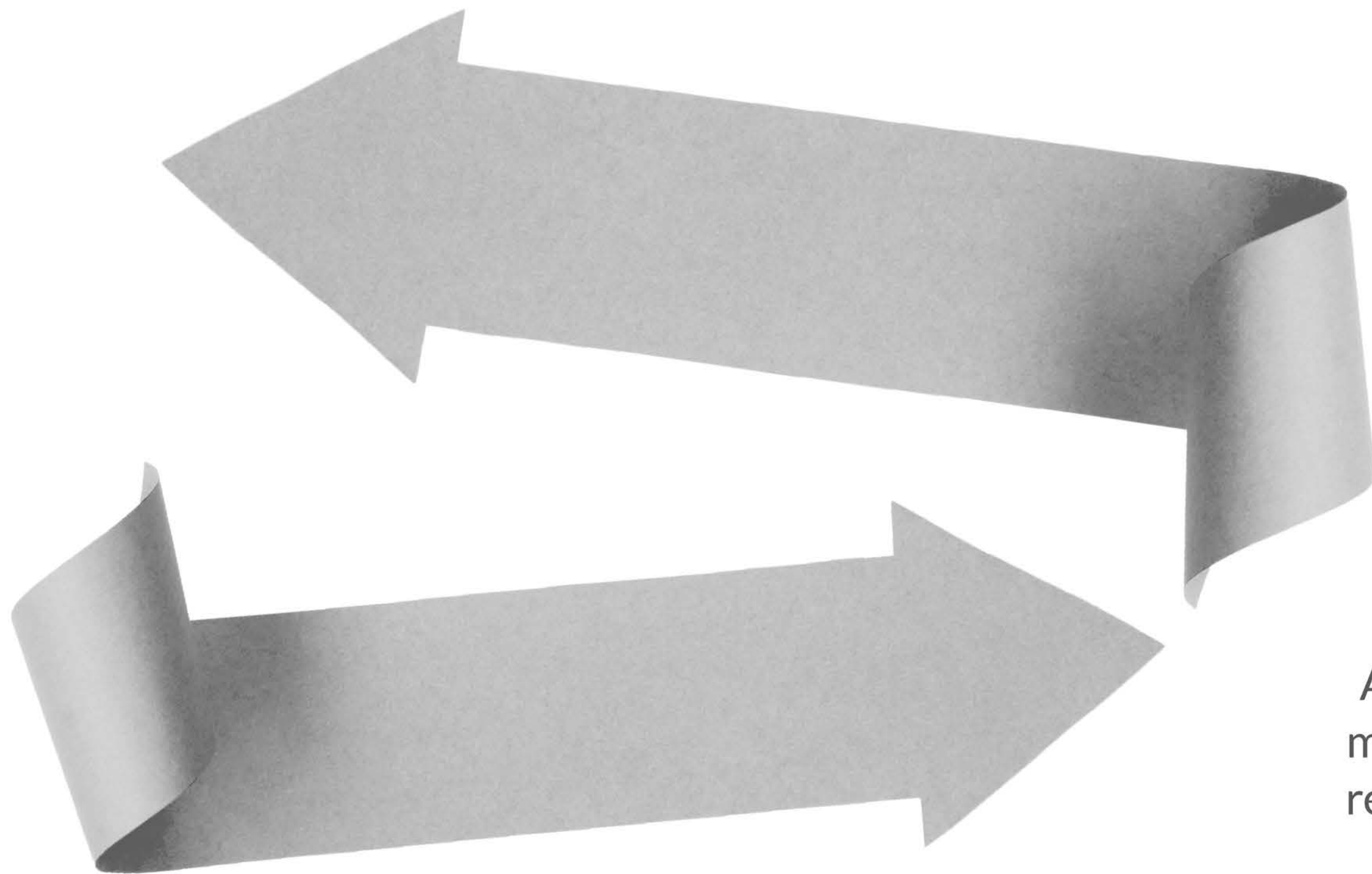
01. Be live early.

Be live at least 15-30 minutes before the start time. It is never a good idea to let participants who join early stay in the webinar waiting room. Being live early provides an opportunity for the host and presenters to interact with participants before the session starts. It also helps weed out any technical or logistical issues so that the webinar can start on time.



02. Have a Plan B(ackup).

Anticipate that things may go wrong. Wi-Fi may get patchy, computers or devices may malfunction, microphones or webcams may stop working, etc. Have a backup ready for the critical infrastructure required to conduct the webinar. This step will ensure a quick reconnection so that the webinar can continue as planned.



03. Start with a prepared icebreaker.

In webinars as in face-to-face presentations, icebreakers are an effective way to engage the audience and increase their attention. Start the webinar with an open-ended question, a bit of trivia, a quiz, a poll, or other icebreaker. This approach also allows for a bit of humor and helps start the webinar on the right note.

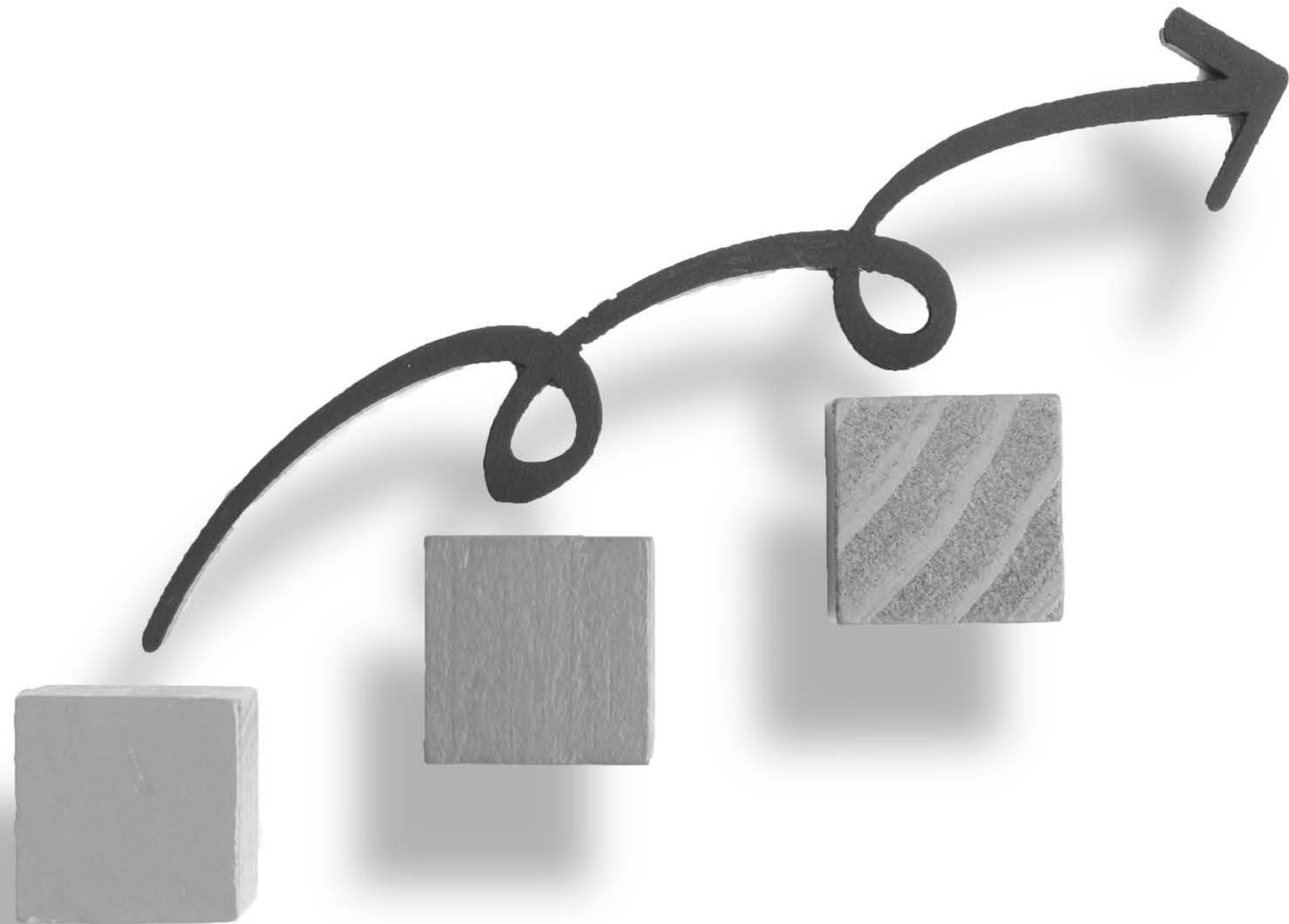


04. Plan for recap time.

If the webinar is a part of a series, spend some time recapping the earlier sessions. Keeping a list of milestones or a roadmap is often useful. The same roadmap can be referenced across the different sessions to recap the already covered content.

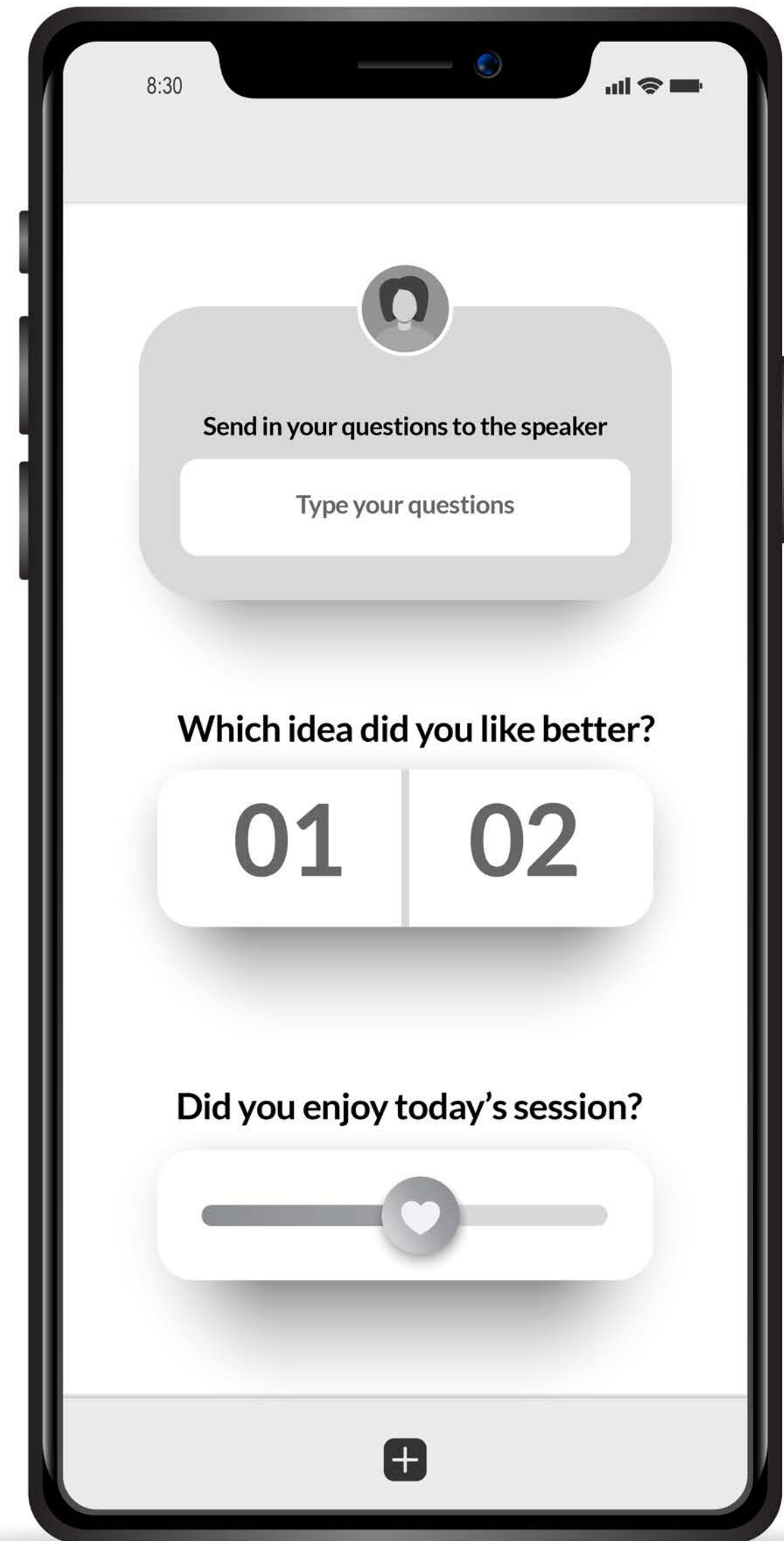
05. Craft an effective speaker introduction.

The introduction of the speaker(s) sets the overall mood and tone of the webinar. An introduction that highlights the speaker's most important achievements in a short, crisp manner encourages the audience to listen attentively and to take the speaker seriously.



06. Provide for adequate audience interaction.

Ensure adequate audience interaction throughout the webinar by using polls, quizzes, chat prompts, etc. This step is especially important in sessions with substantial technical content or long speaker sessions. It may be tempting to cut the time set aside for audience interaction if speakers go over the stipulated time, but remember that interaction is essential to keep the audience engaged. Have a backup plan to adjust the time in other topics if speakers go on too long; do not cut back on planned interactive activities.



07. Set the stage.

A webinar is a performance—a one-to-many presentation interspersed with interactions and questions. Setting the stage is important:

- **Find a quiet place.** Noise in the environment will not only distract the audience, but also distract the speaker.
- **Avoid a distracting background.** A bright backlight, rotating fan, visual clutter, bright painting, shiny display piece, moving elements, and the like can be highly distracting in the video. If you feel the background is not optimal, opt for the simple virtual background that most webinar software offers.
- **Keep a bottle of water handy.** Speaking at length can compromise the quality of the voice. Sipping a bit of water is definitely advisable for longer speaking sessions.
- **Keep your video on.** It is highly recommended that hosts, presenters, and moderators keep their video on throughout the session. It indicates to the audience that the speakers are listening to one another and are not just there to present their individual pieces.

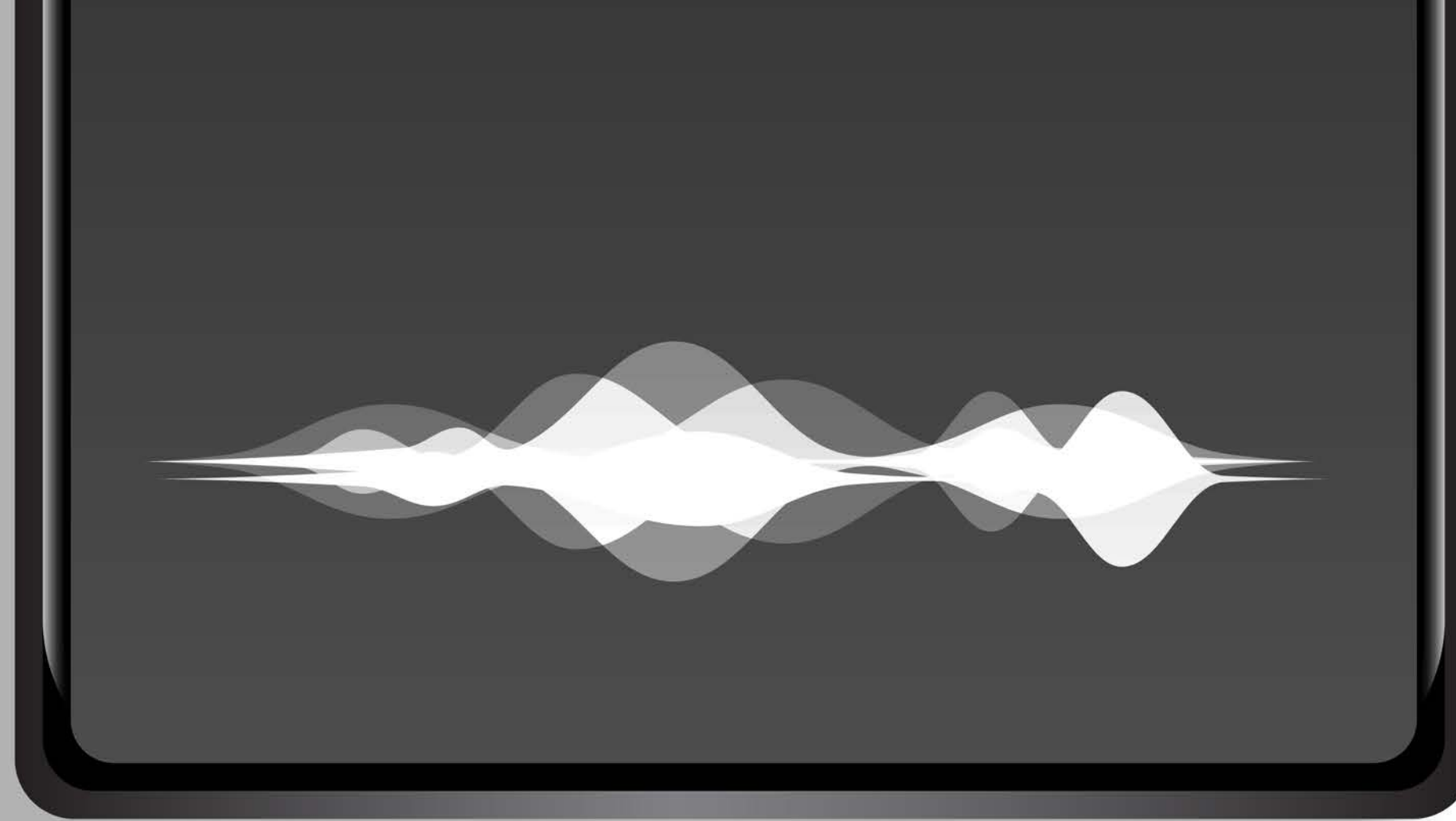


08. Remember “sound” advice.

A webinar is all about the voice:

- Vary your tone of voice and enunciate your remarks a bit more than you might in a face-to-face situation. Remember, your voice carries the webinar.
- Show enthusiasm and emotion, punch out key words, pause for effect, create variety in vocal quality and speed, and use optimum voice modulation.
- Always check with the audience to make sure your voice is clear and comprehensible.
- Avoid using filler words such as “umm,” “like,” or “you know,” which are both noticeable and annoying in the online format. Similarly, while it is important to modulate your voice, please pay attention to vocal inflections—avoid mumbling, speaking too quickly, and raising your voice volume and pitch without reason. Listening to a recording of yourself during a practice session is helpful (if sometimes unnerving).





09. Don't read your content word for word; present a clear paraphrase.

Do not read your slides verbatim. Because people read faster than you can speak, the audience will get ahead of you and lose track of what you are saying. There are several exceptions to this rule, however:

- Read a definition or a quote for effect.
- Read verbal instructions closely related to any text on the screen so as not to confuse the participants.
- Read housekeeping rules.
- Read announcements (such as invitations to join the DRF Community of Practice)

10. Establish rules ahead of time.

It is essential that you set your housekeeping rules for the webinar team and your audience ahead of time. Below are a few standard rules applicable to all webinars:

- Encourage participants to use a headset to prevent their microphones from capturing ambient noise (e.g., keyboard clatter, ticking clocks, Farmville chickens clucking).
- Ask speakers and the moderator to mute their microphones or phone lines when not speaking. The same applies to participants who are expected to speak.
- As a standard practice, mute all participants and inform them that all participants are muted by default.
- Inform participants that the webinar is being recorded.
- Explain that participants should raise their hand or send a chat message to indicate that they wish to ask a questions.



04

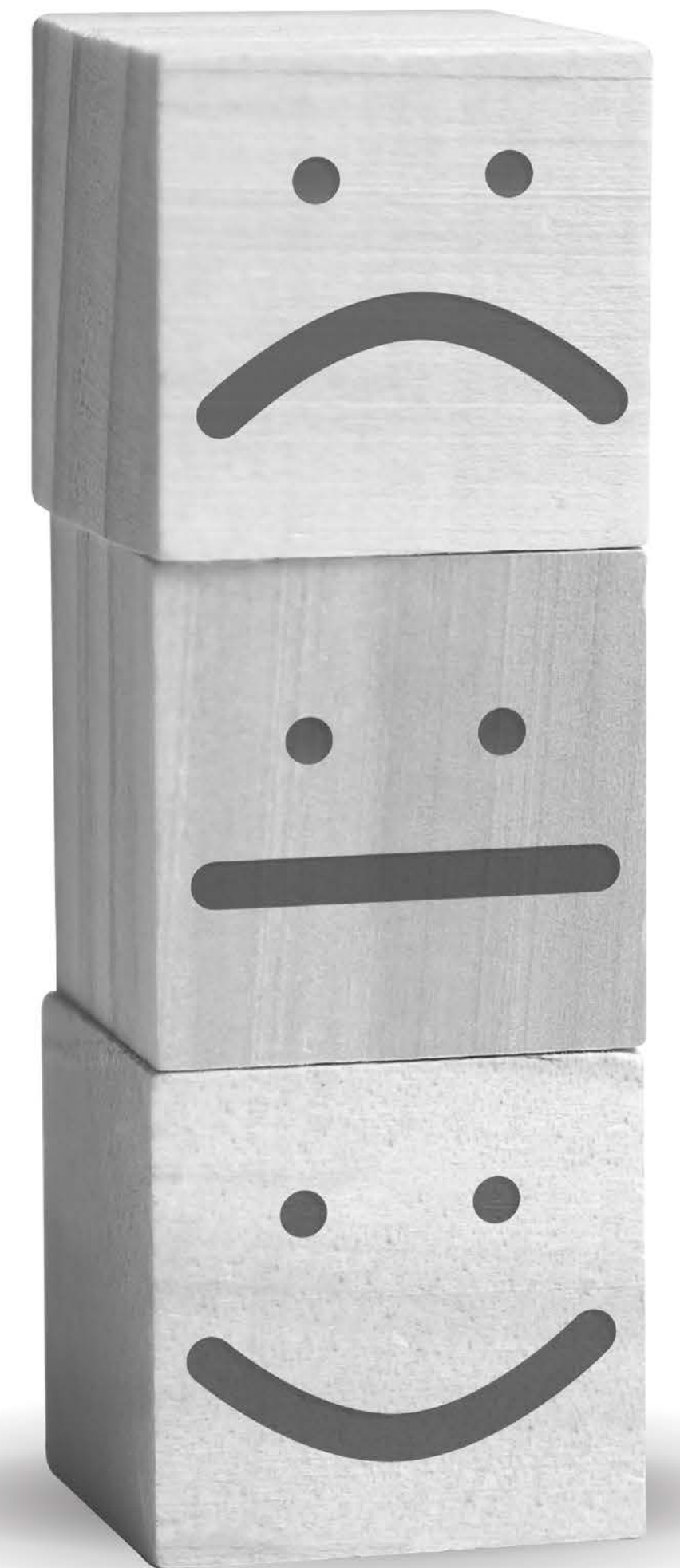
**Operationalize:
5 Tips on Learning
Design for Webinars**



01. Ensure your webinar is demand-driven.

It is always useful to conduct a short survey with the webinar's target participants. The survey should act as a needs analysis exercise that assesses the audience's prior experience with the topic and identifies learning needs.

- If you wish to delve deeper into the pre-design, consider conducting a **Learning Needs and Resources Assessment (LNRA)** to determine what the participants already know and what they need to learn.
- You do not always have to conduct a full LNRA. A best practice is to review the registration list beforehand to get a sense of participation. Review the organizations' websites and look at profiles of a subset of participants; this step helps you understand their scope of work and choose examples and stories that address their sector or where they work.
- As part of the LNRA, you can ask a few questions on the registration form, conduct 10-minute phone calls with three to five potential participants, and visit the websites of the participants' organizations. Look for recurring themes—ideas and challenges that come up frequently—and build virtual activities around these areas to engage your participants.
- For webinars with a limited audience or offering planned learning programs, the LNRA should ideally be much more specific and detailed.



When you send out the webinar log-in details, include a short pre-webinar reading or video so participants can get a head start if they wish. Alternately or additionally, send a couple of open-ended questions for participants to consider, and then revisit these questions during the webinar.

02. Invest in engaging content.

A webinar is not merely a series of PowerPoint slide decks presented by speakers virtually.

Webinars pose specific challenges not present in face-to-face learning situations. Participants in webinars may be less motivated, since their inducement to attend is lower. They are likely not conditioned to learning through virtual platforms, so their expectations for learning are also low. Moreover, the anonymity of the experience allows them to multitask during the webinar and not devote their full attention to what you are saying.

To meet these challenges, it is imperative that you invest in designing your content to make it interesting for your audience. Remember, a recorded webinar has a longer shelf life than a face-to-face presentation.



Here are a few tips to ensure that your content is engaging:

- **Define the webinar's people, purpose, and time.** Identify a terminal learning objective and design multiple enabling objectives to communicate the learning.
- **Cover a reasonable number of objectives.** Every webinar should have three to four key takeaways. Spend 10–15 minutes explaining the background and detail for each.
- **Grade and structure the content.** Divide the content into three parts: (1) must-know, (2) need-to-know, and (3) good-to-know. This will help prioritize and narrow down content to be included. Next, think of content structure. Some possible structures include (1) chronological, (2) process-oriented (i.e., step by step), (3) easy to difficult, or (4) known to unknown.



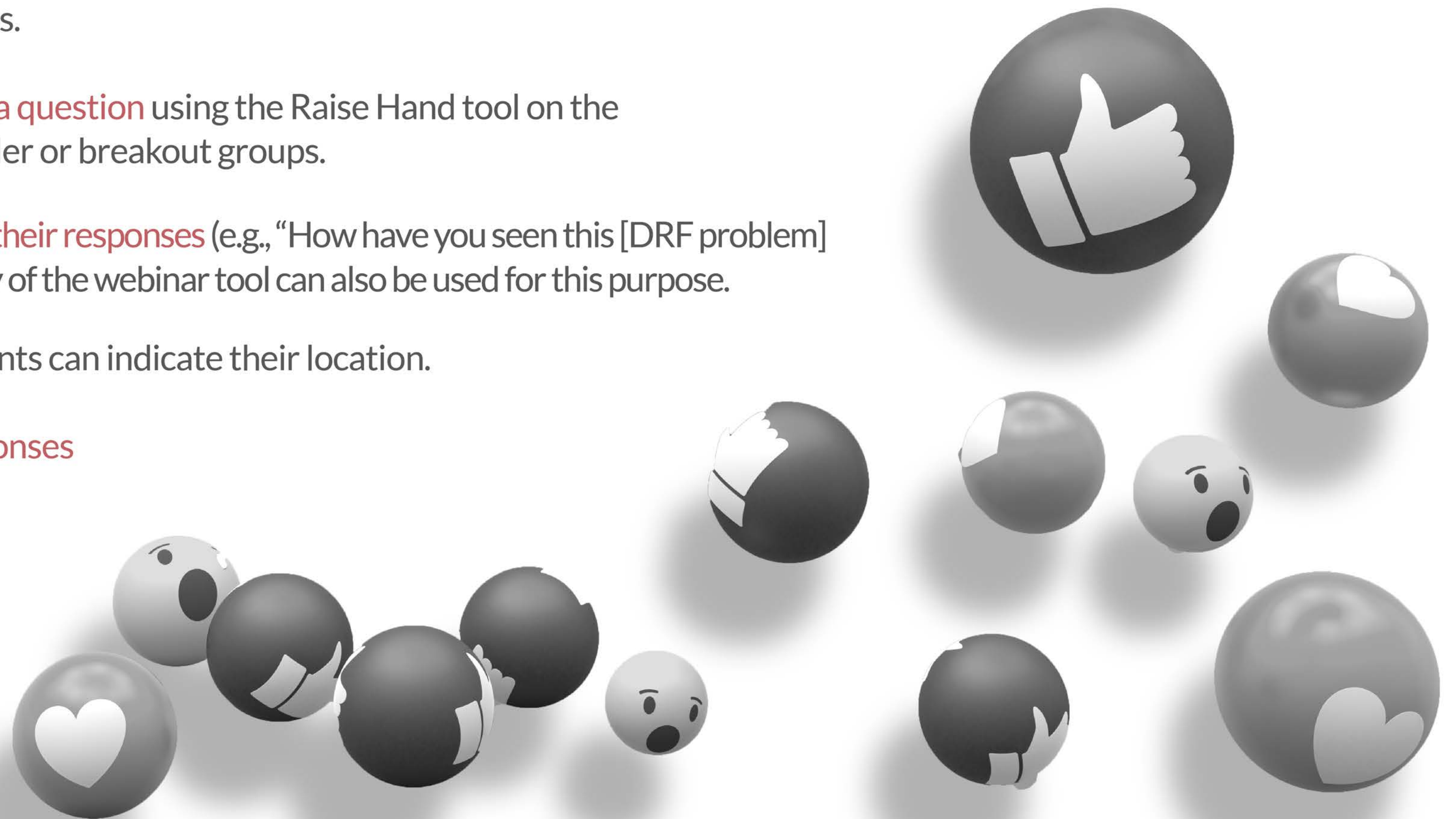
- **Keep your presentations short.** Based on decisions made while grading content, chunk the presentation. To accommodate shorter attention spans associated with online learning, don't go for more than a few (10–15) minutes without asking the participants a question or running a poll. Dividing a longer presentation into smaller segments with breaks in between will energize participants, help them refocus, and allow more voices to be heard. It also lets presenters check for understanding, and (since presenting to silence can be de-energizing) allows them to pause and recharge.
- **Create soft monitoring and evaluation targets.** Think about what the participants will do during the webinar beyond just “listening” and “watching.” How can the audience be more active to deepen their own learning? For example, can they apply the principles and knowledge to their own experience through analysis, naming, reflection, etc.? You can even create easy-to-measure targets like net referral scores and star ratings for the meeting.



- **Foster audience interaction.** Interactive tasks create deeper engagements. Provide instructions to help participants engage with the content to meet their learning objective, as applicable to their individual situations.

For example:

- **Precede your presentation with an open question to the participants.** A slide could read, “As you listen to this short presentation on [webinar topic], consider how you have witnessed these principles in action.” Be sure to call on one or two participants to express their views. This participation can be kept short—30 to 45 seconds.
- **Include at least one audience poll or a multiple choice quiz after each presentation or topic.** If the presentation or topic is longer than 30 minutes, break for some audience interaction every 30 minutes.
- **Ask participants to raise their hands in response to a question** using the Raise Hand tool on the webinar platform. Remember this works best in smaller or breakout groups.
- **Ask open questions to the group and hear samples of their responses** (e.g., “How have you seen this [DRF problem] affect your country?”). The chat/messaging functionality of the webinar tool can also be used for this purpose.
- **Incorporate an interactive map** where the participants can indicate their location.
- **Include questions that have one- or two-word responses** and then present the responses in word clouds.
- **Ask the audience to find an object that symbolizes their involvement** with the topic and share that with the group. This can be done via text in the chat box or via a photo or video on a phone group.



03. Share the airspace:

Empower your participants to engage in learning activities.

- Design opportunities for large group discussions, small group work (if possible), and individual reflection (great for introverts!).
- Break the webinar into 10- to 15-minute sections or mini-presentations. Frame each mini-presentation with an open question that invites the learners to listen and watch more attentively.
- Use the platform's whiteboard and invite the audience to add their answers on web post-its.
- Allocate adequate time for questions throughout the webinar, as opposed to cramming in a few token questions at the end. A best practice is to leave 30 percent of the total webinar time for questions, interspersed throughout the duration of the event. Should the Q&A session end early, then close your webinar ahead of schedule.
- If the webinar includes more than 10 participants, using an audio line is too complicated. In these cases always use a chat box or Q&A box to solicit responses.
- It is always fun to invite participants to do a kinesthetic or active-movement task. For example, you can stretch together at the halfway point to get the blood flowing again—or maybe engage in a short breathing exercise.
- Include blank framework or process templates and share them with the participants. Provide opportunities for the participants to fill in the templates as the session progresses. A few participants can be invited to share progress throughout the session.



04. Prepare visual content.

Webinar participants may not always be able to see the presenter or have an opportunity to interact. Hence the visuals for your content are critical.

- Invest time and resources to create high-quality presentation materials. Choose strong images, keep the text clear and minimal, and make sure that the formatting (titles, headers, spacing, etc.) is consistent.
- Limit each slide to just one idea or one broad point.
- Use 30 point (or larger) font for optimal legibility. This is critical for participants joining on handheld devices like smartphones and tablets.
- Where possible, replace text with infographics, images, graphs, and charts.
- Use on-screen slides with basic visuals and little or no animation so people with slower bandwidth connections won't experience a delay in the transitions. If possible, log in as a participant on another device to see what participants are experiencing.





- When possible use online mind-mapping tools and other data visualization platforms to avoid death by PowerPoint. Mind mapping helps retention and engagement, simplifies complex issues, and sparks creative cognition.
- Presenters should ensure that they stay in the frame, keep still, and are in focus. During the test run, test the depth of field or range of focus for your webcam, as well as how far you can move from side to side before you're out of the frame.
- Change slides frequently (set a time limit per slide) to keep the visuals moving and fresh. A new slide helps to bring back the attention of the participants and allows them to refocus.



At the start, provide a simple outline of the webinar that explains what will be covered. Refer to this outline repeatedly during the session so that participants are aware of their progress. Consider using a graphic (e.g., a “you are here” arrow, a milestone, or roadmap) that marks where you are in the webinar, and periodically show a slide that indicates your progress throughout the material. This is also an excellent way to break up the webinar into different sections.



05. Finish well.

To accommodate the unexpected, always plan your webinar to use only 80 percent of the time allocated. No matter how late you start, **always finish on time** so that people can leave as planned.

If you have time at the end of the webinar, invite the learners to name what they will apply to their work situation going forward. If you still have a few minutes after the end of the Q&A session, mention and briefly discuss some questions that you anticipated but participants did not ask.

The facilitator should close the webinar by thanking participants for their time and attention and by announcing the post-webinar follow-up schedule. It is a good idea to mention where the webinar recording will be available and by when.

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**Disaster Risk Financing
& Insurance Program**

