



## Virtual annual meeting process

### Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences

April 2020

The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences has conducted two virtual members' meetings, and is preparing to conduct a third one. The following documentation explains how these virtual meetings were set up and conducted.

#### About the virtual meetings

The first virtual meeting was an Annual Meeting of the members of the Federation that took place in May 2019. The second virtual meeting was a Special Members Meeting scheduled in November 2019 to pass a special resolution. The third virtual meeting will be the next Annual Meeting of the members, and is to be held in June 2020. Due to the varying circumstances under which each meeting took/is taking place, the arrangements for each are a little different.

#### Language

The Federation is a bilingual organization and serves its members in both English and French. Similar to how its in-person annual meetings were formally handled, the virtual meetings were not fully bilingual, i.e. there was no simultaneous interpretation. However, the Board Chair and other presenters endeavour to use both languages throughout the meeting. Members are encouraged to ask questions in their language of choice, and the Board Chair will respond in the same language.

#### Legal

The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences was established under the Federal Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (the "Act").

The Federation's bylaws were amended to permit virtual annual meetings. This was a necessary step under the Act. The amendments to the bylaws were recommended by the Board of Directors for membership approval prior to the Annual Meeting.

The Federation's lawyer was present at the first and second meetings, both to assist us with procedural questions that might arise due to the new virtual format of the meetings, and to be available to answer questions about legal items that were on the meeting agenda.



## Governance and elections

The nominations and elections process for positions on the Board Directors is regulated by the Federation's Elections Policy & Procedures, and is held concurrently with the Annual Meeting, and is launched at the same time as the formal invitation for the Annual Meeting goes to members, between 21 and 60 days prior to the meeting.

Members receive a series of emails beginning with the meeting invitation, and then an invitation to nominate candidates for the elections. Members then are given two weeks to submit nominations. At this point staff review the nominations for validity, collect bios and statements of intent, and arrange for the Nominating Committee to meet and put forward a slate for election.

Concurrently to the nominations process, the CEO under the direction of the Chair also prepares the agenda and meeting documents. The final document package, including the list of valid nominations and the candidate slate from the Nominating Committee, is sent to the members no later than 21 days prior to the meeting.

When the document package is sent out, members are also given their login information to an online absentee ballot. Members may submit their votes for the elections and for the rest of the motions via absentee ballot if they are not able to attend the meeting. Members may both submit an absentee ballot and then participate in the meeting itself, but if they submit an absentee ballot they are precluded from voting at the meeting. The deadline to submit an absentee ballot should be no less than 48 hours prior to the meeting which allows staff the time to tabulate the result and to update the list of members with information about who has voted to ensure that they do not also vote during the meeting.

The election for the Board of Directors then takes place during the Annual Meeting, and the absentee ballots are added to the votes of those in attendance at the meeting. During the meeting, staff will monitor the list of participants and compare it against the list of members to ensure that no member is voting twice.



## Roles and responsibilities

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities prior to the meeting</b>	<b>Responsibilities during the meeting</b>
Board Chair	Develop meeting agenda with the CEO.	Chair the meeting.
Treasurer		Present the financial report.
Board members	Register for the meeting. Volunteer to move and second the motions ahead of time.	Participate in the meeting. Submit questions. Vote on motions.
Members	Register for the meeting.	Participate in the meeting. Submit questions. Vote on motions.
CEO	Develop meeting agenda with the Board Chair. Oversee the preparations for the meeting.	Facilitate the meeting. Run the presentation slides. Read questions from the chat box aloud.
Chief Operating Officer	Project manager. Coordinates responsibilities of the staff.	Launch polls (i.e. motions), count votes and announce the results.
Lawyer	Provide support with the revision of bylaws to allow virtual annual meetings.	Ensure that the meeting is being run according to the rules. Answer any questions about the changes to the bylaws.
Executive Assistant	Send out invitations and absentee ballot login details. Coordinate the nominations process. Monitor the registrations. Coordinate meeting documents.	Take meeting minutes.
Member Relations Officer	Assist with member communications.	Monitor and triage members' written questions as they come in. Respond in writing to administrative questions. Flag questions for CEO to read aloud.
Event Planner	Build registration form. Build absentee ballot form. Arrange for A/V services and meeting space, if needed.	Onsite event support, as needed.
Business Operations Lead	IT support, as needed.	IT support, as needed. Monitor membership email inbox for questions from members who have trouble connecting. Respond to technical questions sent via meeting chat.
Program Managers		Observers.



## Software

There are a number of software platforms to consider. Please note that the Federation does not endorse or recommend any specific platform, nor has the Federation received remuneration to promote any specific product. The information shared here is only description of the choices that the Federation considered. Any association wishing to hold a virtual annual meeting should conduct their own research into features and pricing before selecting a software platform.

Some of the options for video conferencing include but are not limited to:

- GoToWebinar / GoToMeeting
- Zoom
- Cisco WebEx
- Adobe Connect
- Skype for Business / Microsoft Teams
- GetQuorum

Depending on the requirements of the meeting, it may be necessary to use a separate voting platform in tandem with the video conferencing platform. Some of the options for online voting include but are not limited to:

- SimplyVoting
- ElectionBuddy
- SimpleSurvey
- eBallot
- Election Runner
- GetQuorum

The Federations uses a combination of the “Pro” version of GoToWebinar and the “Self Administered Elections” version of SimplyVoting to conduct its virtual members’ meetings.

Please note that GoToWebinar and SimplyVoting do not integrate with each other, nor do they integrate with the Federation’s existing association management systems. Thus, it is necessary to keep a separate spreadsheet manually updated to track which of the members have registered and participated in the meeting.

## Audiovisual support

For the first meeting in May 2019, the Federation hired Baldwin A/V to provide audiovisual services. For the second meeting in November 2019, it was determined that extensive video equipment was not required and the audio was handled with in-house technical capabilities. For the June 2020 meeting, there will be no external technicians brought in given that everyone will be working remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions.



## Video and presentation slides

For the first meeting in May 2019, the Federation shared both video of the presenters and PowerPoint slides, using a picture-in-picture. This particular arrangement cannot be done by default in GoToWebinar. Baldwin A/V brought in their equipment to capture the video and overlay it on the bottom right corner of the slides, and then screenshare the composite picture in GoToWebinar.

Having video requires a teleprompter or similar style of monitor/screen for the presenters (Board Chair, CEO) to read from. However we found that the presenters tended to look more at their own notes which were more up-to-date than the notes on the screen.

After the first meeting, we decided not to continue with doing video as the benefit did not seem to be of enough value to justify the expense and the complication of the set-up.

Currently, we use PowerPoint slides that are displayed via screensharing during the meeting. The slides contain both English and French text, i.e. there is one set of bilingual slides, not separate slides for each language. It is important that the slides contain the full text of each motion, as we will see later that the Polls (which are used for motions) will only contain an abbreviated version.

In lieu of the video feed, headshots of the speakers are included in the corner of the slides.

## Practice, practice, practice

The Federation conducted a number of trial runs prior to each meeting, at least 10-12 per meeting.

The majority of the trial runs were conducted by senior management and the staff who would be at the meeting, with additional staff playing the roles of the Board and Members. This was necessary for two reasons. First, to test out the set-up, figure out how to make the best use of the available features, and to identify new procedures for the online meeting. Second, all staff including the CEO needed to become comfortable with the set-up and the software.

Once staff were fully trained, there were additional trial runs with those who had speaking roles, namely the Board Chair and the Treasurer. These trials allowed us to test the equipment connection of the Treasurer, who would be calling in for the meeting. Staff also submitted mock questions to practice the process by which members would be invited to submit questions.

Finally, on the day of the meeting, there was a full “dress rehearsal” a few hours prior to the actual meeting. This allowed the equipment to be fully tested, and it enabled everyone to become familiar with their roles and workstations.

The end result was a team that worked together seamlessly and professionally even when unforeseen circumstances arose during the meeting. Everyone knew their roles and how to communicate with each other during the meeting, and the meeting itself ran smoothly. Even though the Federation has done it twice now, staff will still be doing trial runs prior to our third meeting in June 2020, especially given that staff will no longer be in the same location as one another due to COVID-19 restrictions.



## How the Federation uses GoToWebinar

The following is the process that the Federation uses to set up the event in GoToWebinar.

- Log in to GoToWebinar and create a new event
- Set the date and time of the meeting
- Give the meeting a name, e.g. “Annual Meeting 2020 | Réunion annuelle 2020”
  - Note: GoToWebinar allows meetings in English or in French but not both at the same time. To work around this, the event is set-up in English but with bilingual text inserted wherever possible. It is not fully bilingual and this is not ideal for the Federation’s francophone members, but a better solution in the right price range is yet to be found.
- Insert a bilingual description for the meeting
  - Example: “The Annual Meeting of Members of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (the "Federation") will be held electronically via GoToWebinar on ... at ... (ET). | La Réunion annuelle des membres de la Fédération des sciences humaines (la « Fédération ») se tiendra par voie électronique, par GoToWebinar, le ..., à ... (HE).”
- Make note of the Attendee audio access code (under Settings) and the webinar ID (under Share Event). This information will be needed later.
- Under Branding & Colors, customize the look and feel of the registration form by uploading a logo and selecting the organization’s colours.
- Under Share Event, make note of the Registration URL which is to be shared with members.
- Under Registration, change the Approval setting to “Manual Approval”. This allows staff to review and approve each registration to verify the person is eligible to participate, and it prevents non-members from gaining access.
- Under Registration, edit the Registration Questions. By default, the First Name, Last Name and Email fields will always be required and cannot be translated. Add custom questions as needed.
- Under Registration, ensure that Registration Notification is set to “Send Email” to send automated emails to the organizer when someone registers.
- Under Emails, set the Reply To name and email address. The Federation uses the name “Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences” and a shared membership email mailbox rather than an individual’s name and email. The purpose of using a generic shared mailbox allows multiple staff to access and monitor registrations and questions.
- Under Emails, ensure that the Confirmation Email to Registrants is set to “Send confirmation emails”. Edit the text of the email by clicking on “Send confirmation emails”. The English text of the message will be populated automatically. The French text needs to be manually added.
  - In the 2<sup>nd</sup> text box at the bottom of the message, enter the text (replacing the sections in [BRACKETS]):  
Merci de votre inscription à [FRENCH EVENT TITLE]

Veillez envoyer vos questions et commentaires à [EMAIL]

### PARTICIPER AU WEBINAIRE

Cliquez sur le bouton « Join Webinar » ci-dessus le [DATE] à [TIME].

Remarque : Ce lien vous est destiné exclusivement et ne doit pas être partagé.

### FONCTION AUDIO DEPUIS VOTRE ORDINATEUR



Vous serez automatiquement connecté à la bande audio du webinaire depuis le microphone et les haut-parleurs de votre ordinateur (voix par protocole Internet). L'utilisation d'un casque d'écoute est recommandée.

--OU--

#### FONCTION AUDIO DEPUIS VOTRE TÉLÉPHONE

Si vous préférez utiliser votre téléphone, vous devez sélectionner l'option à cette fin après vous être joint au webinaire. Les numéros à utiliser sont les suivants :

Canada : [DIAL-IN NUMBER]

Code d'accès : [ATTENDEE AUDIO ACCESS CODE]

NIP audio : s'affichera à l'écran après vous être joint au webinaire

ID du webinaire : [WEBINAR ID]

- Under Emails, set the Reminder Emails to automatically go out 1 day prior and 1 hour prior to the event. The benefit of these reminders is that the emails will include the personalized connection information for each registrant so it is handy in their inboxes. And again, the French text needs to be manually added.
  - In the 1<sup>st</sup> text box, enter the text (replacing the sections in [BRACKETS]):  
Ceci est un rappel que [FRENCH EVENT TITLE] se tiendra le [DATE] à [TIME] (HE).

Veillez envoyer vos questions et commentaires à [EMAIL]

#### PARTICIPER AU WEBINAIRE

Cliquez sur le bouton « Join Webinar » ci-dessous le [DATE] à [TIME].

Remarque : Ce lien vous est destiné exclusivement et ne doit pas être partagé.

#### FONCTION AUDIO DEPUIS VOTRE ORDINATEUR

Vous serez automatiquement connecté à la bande audio du webinaire depuis le microphone et les haut-parleurs de votre ordinateur (voix par protocole Internet). L'utilisation d'un casque d'écoute est recommandée.

--OU--

#### FONCTION AUDIO DEPUIS VOTRE TÉLÉPHONE

Si vous préférez utiliser votre téléphone, vous devez sélectionner l'option à cette fin après vous être joint au webinaire. Les numéros à utiliser sont les suivants :

Canada : [DIAL-IN NUMBER]

Code d'accès : [ATTENDEE AUDIO ACCESS CODE]

NIP audio : s'affichera à l'écran après vous être joint au webinaire

ID du webinaire : [WEBINAR ID]

- If desired, under Emails, enable the Follow-up Emails. The Federation does not usually make use of these.

At this point, the registration form is ready to go. Create an Excel spreadsheet with all of the members and use it to send out invitation emails to the members using your regular email campaign platform, including the link to register. Monitor the registrations as they come in, and update the Excel list of members manually to keep track of who has registered and who has not.



(Optional) Create a Tip Sheet PDF, upload it to the web (e.g. Dropbox or Box.com), and share the link in the invitation email. A sample Tip Sheet is included as Appendix A.

Continue preparing the event in GoToWebinar:

- Under Engage Your Attendees, create a Poll for each motion that may be needed.
  - There is a limit of 20 Polls per meeting.
  - There is a limit of 127 characters in the text for each Poll, requiring that the text of the motion be cut down to its simplest form, especially if bilingual. For example, the Poll might say “2. Approve the Agenda of the May 15, 2019 meeting | Approuver l’ordre du jour de la réunion du 15 mai 2019”
  - The answers to the Polls should be “Yes | Oui”, “No | Non”, and “Abstain | Abstention”.
  - Not all Polls need to be actually shown during the meeting. You may create contingency motions if you expect that they might be needed. It is better to have as much prepared ahead of time than trying to create motions on the fly during the meeting (which is also possible).
  - The Polls do not need to be shown in the order that they are listed in GoToWebinar during the meeting but it is easier if they are in order.
  - It is recommended that each Poll be numbered with the same number of the Agenda item to which it corresponds to assist both staff and members who are following along.
- If desired, create a survey to be launched after the event ends. Keep it short, no more than 3 questions.
- Upload the Handouts for the meeting, so that these documents are easily available to all participants during the meeting, namely:
  - the Tip Sheet
  - the English meeting documents
  - the French meeting documents
  - the Agenda
- Go back to the top of the GoToWebinar screen, and add the participating staff (including the CEO) as Organizers. Add the speakers (Board Chair, Treasurer, etc.) as Panelists. Each will then receive personalized login information and have appropriate administrative permissions during the meeting.
- When conducting trial runs, clone the meeting in GoToWebinar by clicking the 3-dot menu near the title and select “Copy Webinar”. This copies over all of your settings and enables staff to participate in the full experience.

## How the Federation uses SimplyVoting

The Federation uses SimplyVoting to manage absentee ballots prior the meeting taking place, with the following steps:

- Create a new Election
- Upload the list of members to the Electors section
- Create a Question for each motion to be approved
  - Use a short/abbreviated version of the motion in the Title field and the full text of the motion in the Description field.



- Type = Plurality (most votes wins)
- Write-ins = No Write-ins
- Voters Select = One option
- Allow Voters to abstain = Yes and list Abstain as an option
- Under Options, add “Yes” and “No”
- Close the Election at least 48 hours before the meeting to allow for manual processing.
- Mark on the master Excel spreadsheet of members those who submitted absentee ballots and tabulate the results in preparation for meeting.

Note: SimplyVoting is fully bilingual, allowing for both English and French to be entered for each field.

## Room and technical set-up

### Meeting 1: May 2019

- Held in a medium-sized meeting room at a hotel
- Head table with presenters seated, with a black backdrop and 2 branded pop-up banners in background
- Video camera in the middle of the room facing the presenters
- AV table behind the camera facing the head table
- Two tables off to each side on an angle facing the head table
- 5 laptop computers:
  - 1 computer at the AV table to “host” the meeting and send out the live feed, including audio via computer, with a presentation remote to allow the front panel to control the slides
  - 4 staff computers at side tables for each of:
    - Person to launch Polls and tabulate results (motions)
    - Person doing IT support, monitoring email inbox, and monitoring technical questions in the chat box
    - Person monitoring written member questions, flagging for whether to read aloud, and answering administrative questions via writing in chat
    - Person reading member questions aloud, for the Board Chair to answer and all the members to hear
  - All computers except the live feed were muted, and all Organizers and Panelists were also muted in the GoToWebinar software except for the person currently speaking

### Meeting 2: November 2019

- Held in Federation office
- One large boardroom table, with CEO, Board Chair, Governance Coordinator, and Lawyer on one side. Other staff on opposite side facing them.
- 3 laptop computers:
  - 1 computer in front of Board Chair and CEO, sending out the live feed with the PowerPoint slides, allowing them to advance slides
  - 1 computer in front of Member Relations Officer and Chief Operating Officer, allowing them to monitor and triage incoming questions via the chat box and to launch Polls (i.e.



motions). A second screen was connected to this laptop facing the CEO, allowing the CEO to read the flagged questions aloud for all members to hear.

- 1 computer in front of the Business Operations Lead for technical support, overall monitoring, and the email program open to respond to questions from members who were having trouble connecting.
- Audio was connected using a Polycom telephone with dial-in connection to GoToWebinar.

### Meeting 3: June 2020

- All staff and speakers to be connected using individual computers from their own homes, due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Staff to have Microsoft Teams also running to allow for quick offline communication during the meeting.
- All staff, speakers, and members except for the person(s) currently speaking will be muted via the GoToWebinar software

## Instructions and Tip Sheet

It is important to keep in mind that while hosting a virtual annual meeting is new for staff, participating in one is also new for the members. Sending out clear instructions on how to connect and participate in the meeting is necessary to ensure that all members have the opportunity to login and exercise their right to be heard.

The Federation sends its members a “Tip Sheet” (see example in Appendix A) prior to the meeting and shares it again as a Handout during the meeting. The Federation also sets up automated reminders in GoToWebinar a day before and an hour before the meeting to ensure that all registered participants have the necessary information to join at the specified time.

## During the meeting

When it is time for the meeting to begin, all staff (Organizers) and speakers (Panelists) should connect to the meeting at least 20 minutes prior using their personalized login link from GoToWebinar. One staff member who will be the primary organizer will log in to the GoToWebinar account, and start the meeting from there. All others should be logged out of the GoToWebinar account, and just use their personalized link.

The primary organizer will be in charge of the meeting, from a technical perspective. They will click “Start broadcast” once everyone is logged in and ready to begin. They will also be in charge of ensuring the recording is enabled (if desired) and they will end the broadcast when the meeting is over.

The person advancing the slides (may or may not be the same as the primary organizer) should be someone who is technologically-savvy, given that they will be sharing their computer screen with all the members. It is recommended that they have a clean desktop screen on their computer and that they are able to deal with any pop-up notifications that might come up.



Another person (ideally the person taking the minutes) should also have a blank Word document or similar open on their screen. In the event that a motion needs to be modified, they can begin screensharing the Word document and type out the new motion for all members to see. This should not be the same person as who is controlling the Polls (motions) because that person will need to be working to add/modify the Poll in the software at the same time.

Remaining staff will divvy up the responsibilities of monitoring members' questions, reading any written questions aloud for the Board Chair and all members to hear, launching Polls (motions), and muting/unmuting participants as needed.

## Members' questions

It is essential to the function of the annual meeting that members have the ability to voice their questions and raise issues during the meeting. Most software allows for both written and verbal questions.

Federation members are encouraged to submit their questions in writing in advance of the meeting via email and during the meeting via the chat box. Note: it is important for staff to keep checking email during the meeting in case more questions come in that way.

Administrative and technical questions (e.g. can you send me the slides, where do I find the meeting documents) are answered in writing by staff. Substantive questions to the meeting (e.g. can you explain this motion) are highlighted by using "flags" in the software. The CEO has the question list open on their screen and reads aloud the substantive questions verbatim for the Board Chair to then answer. When there is doubt as to the type of question, it is treated as substantive and read aloud. This is important so as to ensure that staff are facilitating the meeting and not contributing to or modifying the content.

It is also possible to use the "raise hand" and "unmute" features in the software to open the floor to verbal questions from the members. The Federation has had mixed results with this. During one meeting, members were encouraged to use the "raise hand" button and then staff would unmute that member when it was time to speak. However, a number of participants misunderstood the on/off toggle for raising their hands, and kept raising their hands even though they didn't intend to ask a question. During another meeting, the Federation attempted to "unmute" the entire list of participants during the question period at each motion to open the floor however the software did not respond as expected and participants were still muted. This feature requires further testing and remains to be less reliable than submitting questions in writing.

## After the meeting

Download the recording (if desired) from the GoToWebinar account. Then delete the meeting in GoToWebinar to erase the information of who voted for whom during the Board elections. By default,



GoToWebinar does not show this information in the Polls but it is there in the background to be found afterwards and should be immediately removed.

### Additional resources

- <https://www.canarie.ca/so-you-want-to-have-a-virtual-annual-general-meeting/>
- <http://www.carters.ca/pub/bulletin/charity/2020/covid/Federal-AGM-bulletin-2020-04-03.pdf>
- <https://theonnc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Final-Virtual-AGM-Facilitation-Guide.pdf>
- <https://theonnc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Final-AGM-Template-Script.pdf>
- <https://theonnc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Template-AGM-Critical-Path-2019-AGM-Critical-Path.pdf>
- [https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/ResearchAndResources\\_DOCS/COVID-19\\_AGMs%20During%20the%20Pandemic\\_VC.pdf](https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/ResearchAndResources_DOCS/COVID-19_AGMs%20During%20the%20Pandemic_VC.pdf)

### Questions?

Contact us at [membership@ideas-idees.ca](mailto:membership@ideas-idees.ca) for more information.



## Appendix A: Sample Tip sheet

**Date:** [DATE]

**Time:** [START] to [END] ET

**Location:** online via GoToWebinar

### 1. Prepare for the meeting

- **Register for the meeting at** [LINK]
- **The president, or a representative selected by the president**, from each member association and institution of the Federation may participate. Sorry, no observers.
- **Check your system requirements** at <https://support.logmeininc.com/gotowebinar/system-check-attendee> to test your set-up
- **Review the meeting documents** so that you are prepared to vote on each motion. The meeting package will be provided early April. If you have questions about the material, contact us ahead of time at [EMAIL]
- In lieu of attending the meeting, **you may submit an absentee ballot** at [LINK] (Login details will be provided in May)

### 2. Join the webinar

- **Join the webinar 10 minutes early** to ensure you are connected before the meeting begins
- **Log in to GoToWebinar** from your computer:
  - Refer to the personalized GoToWebinar link that you will receive via email, OR
  - Visit [www.gotomeeting.com/en-ca/webinar/join-webinar](http://www.gotomeeting.com/en-ca/webinar/join-webinar) and enter webinar ID [WEBINAR ID]
- **Connect your audio:**
  - To listen with your computer audio, connect your headphones or speakers, and microphone OR
  - To listen with your telephone, dial 1-647-497-9368 and enter code [ATTENDEE AUDIO ACCESS CODE] followed by your personalized pin code
  - **Tip!** Mute yourself when not speaking to prevent excess noise or feedback
- While the meeting unfolds, you can **vote on motions** by responding to the “Polls” as they pop up on your screen
- Ask questions during the meeting by typing them in the “Questions” box OR by using your microphone

### 3. Technical support

- GoToWebinar provides technical support at [www.gotomeeting.com/en-ca/webinar/online-webinar-support](http://www.gotomeeting.com/en-ca/webinar/online-webinar-support)
- You don't need to have a GoToWebinar account to participate in the webinar
- You will need to log in to GoToWebinar via your computer (or via the GoToWebinar app for iOS or Android) in order to fully participate. Users who ONLY dial in by telephone without first logging in will not be able to vote.

### Still have questions?

We are here to help! If you experience difficulties connecting to the webinar, please reach out to [EMAIL]