

# Guidance for VP26 Session Chairs on How to Prepare and Deliver a Virtual Session

This guide provides practical steps for session chairs to prepare for and run a successful virtual session during RDA VP26.

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## 1 Equipment & Technology Requirements

All VP26 sessions will be delivered through Zoom and streamed into Whova, the RDA VP26 event platform.

Session presenters will need:

- A desktop/laptop with functioning microphone and camera
- A fast, reliable Wi-Fi or wired internet connection
- Headset or earphones
- The Zoom App (download at [zoom.com](https://zoom.com))
- Access to the Whova App (Registration is required to attend VP26. Access to Whova will open in February 2026 for all registered attendees.)
- Presentation slides (template provided by the Secretariat)

## 2 Setting Up Your Space

To ensure a professional environment:

- Use a blurred background, plain wall, or a VP26 background
- Ensure your face is well lit; avoid sitting with a window behind you
- Keep your microphone uncovered and test audio levels
- Choose a quiet room and minimise background noise
- Sit at an appropriate distance with your head and shoulders visible
- Close all unnecessary programs and disable notifications before screen sharing

## 3 Available Secretariat Support

Each session has an assigned RDA Secretariat team member who will:

- Open the Zoom room and start the recording
- Provide presenter/chair rights and technical support
- Edit and publish recordings after VP26

## 4 Responsibilities of Session Chairs & Moderators

Chairs are responsible for:

- Opening the session and introducing presenters
- Chairing the session, including monitoring online chat for questions and discussions
- Sharing links and materials in the chat
- Monitoring Zoom chat for any Q&A
- Facilitating discussion and audience interaction
- Closing the session on time

## 5 Before the Session: Pre-Session Preparation

To ensure a smooth start:

### 5.1 Technical Setup

- Access your session through Whova (Registration is required to attend VP26. Access to Whova will open in February 2026 for all registered attendees.)
- Join Zoom 20 minutes before the scheduled start for technical checks
- Consolidate all presentations into one slide deck if possible

### 5.2 Materials & Content Preparation

- Prepare materials in advance including presentation slides, collaborative documents, and various links for live input and brainstorming
- Prepare collaborative notes and shareable links for attendees
- Prepare interactive sessions and try not to rely heavily on presentations. Virtual fatigue can set in quickly

- Use interactive tools (quizzes, questions, polls, reactions) when possible. (Note that the Secretariat has a Mentimeter account that can be requested, please note that it will be allocated on a first come, first served basis)
- Ensure sufficient time for both presentation and discussion
- Create breakout opportunities using virtual breakout rooms when possible
- Keep your group webpage updated for newcomers

## 6 How to Join the Session

You must be registered to attend VP26. Registered attendees will receive access to Whova in February 2026. Please register now. Whova login details will follow.

To join:

- Log into Whova
- Navigate to your session
- Click "Live Stream: Join Stream"
- You will be connected to Zoom automatically

## 7 Starting Your Session

### 7.1 Opening & Introductions

At the beginning:

- Inform attendees that the session is being recorded
- Encourage those who prefer not to appear to turn off their cameras
- Include a welcome message in the session chat to notify participants that the session will be starting soon and share links to the prepared materials
- Run through the session agenda early and invite contributions by participants (note that late-joining participants will not see links if they were added prior to them joining)
- Introduce yourself and any co-chairs clearly, stating your name and role
- Enable video so participants can identify a face with the speaker and feel more at ease
- Ask participants to introduce themselves briefly in chat and include their details in the collaborative notes

### 7.2 Setting Context for Participants

- Some participants attending the session will be unfamiliar with your group's work / Birds of a Feather idea. Please share information with participants on:
  - The aims of the group/Birds of a Feather's idea and VP26 session
  - Onboarding information to welcome newcomers
  - Explain acronyms and technical terminology
  - Expected key takeaways from the session
- Inform the audience how to submit questions - through the VP26 platform's Q&A feature or via shared collaborative notes

## 8 Running an Engaging Virtual Session

### 8.1 Facilitation & Inclusivity

#### Engagement Best Practices

- Post questions or comments in the chat to encourage participation
- Share key links (notes, slides, resources) in the chat — but repost regularly for late joiners
- Use two session chairs where possible to share facilitation and chat management
- Avoid slide-heavy presentations; prioritise interaction
- Allocate adequate time for discussion

#### Active Monitoring & Interaction

- Monitor chat actively for any questions and comments
- Implement regular check-ins asking "Any questions from participants?"

#### Inclusive Facilitation

- Be mindful all the time as many participants will join from different time zones at potentially inconvenient times for them
- English may be a second language for many. Speak slowly, clearly, and separate your words throughout your presentation

#### Interactive Tools You Can Use

- Mentimeter or similar tools for polls/questions
- Zoom Whiteboard for group brainstorming
- Zoom cursor pointer tools to emphasise key points
- Breakout rooms for small group discussions
- Zoom's automated captions for accessibility

## 9 Ending Your Session: Post-Session Follow-Up

- Collect unanswered questions for follow-up
- Thank attendees and click "End Meeting" — this stops the recording and closes the room
- Send a thank you email to participants with links to materials captured in the session
- Remind attendees that the recording will be available in Whova within 24–36 hours

## 10 Further Assistance

If you would like to discuss any of the points above or require further support and guidance with planning your session, please contact [secretariat@rda-foundation.org](mailto:secretariat@rda-foundation.org).