

Persistent Questions About Virtual Engagement and Work Among NERRS Staff & Collaborators

The following bits of advice were gleaned from 20 interviews with project and engagement leads of projects funded by the NERRS Science Collaborative during the COVID-19 pandemic. Compiled by Susanne Moser, Ph.D. (March 2022).

Project Implementation

- What has surprised you in who stepped up into leadership roles?
- How to balance openness/focus with varied end user input?
- What is the philosophy on collaboration, communication in your project?
- How to align/integrate national projects with each other?
 - “Think tanks” to explore
 - Along themes, e.g., “human dimensions”

Virtual Engagement

- Need new ideas – techniques get old pretty quickly (“only so many slides”)
- How to get everyone to talk in Break-out Groups?
- How to get products and commitments out of meetings? Approach follow-up?
- How do you know who is being missed, that all the right voices are at the table?
- How do you run team meetings?
- How to make people feel heard and that they used their time well?
- How to build trust, go deep (esp. across cultures)?
- What works best for different audiences?
- Is there an ideal group size for virtual engagement?

People & Self-care

- How are project leads caring for themselves?
- How to support those with kids better?
- How to lift everyone up?
- How to you manage to still safeguard quiet time for thinking and writing?

NERR System/Network

- Will we lose our sense of community if we’re not meeting in person?
- How to use tools better for system-wide engagement?
- How to help people as they change jobs within the NERR system?
- What are the long-term budget implications for the NERRS Annual Meeting and Science Collaborative if the virtual stays?

