Resources and Tips for Elevating Your Team Science in an All-Virtual World

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As we navigate this brave new world of virtual-only professional interactions, you may have questions and concerns about how to successfully keep doing team science without in-person meetings. And while we’re all becoming more adept at remote collaboration, the nature of SESYNC projects and teams can provide unique challenges. Below, we provide some tips and resources for SESYNC teams to navigate this new way of working. We also provide details on how to contact us for tailored team support.

Click below for more information on the following topics:

- Personalized Support for SESYNC Teams
- Tips and Best Practices for Virtual Collaborations
- References and Further Resources

Personalized Support for SESYNC Teams

While upcoming meetings at SESYNC have been cancelled, our staff is ramping up remote support services for our teams. Our trained facilitators, team science experts, and data scientists are here to help you overcome the unprecedented challenges your team may be facing in this extended period of distancing and isolation. Please reach out to us with any problems, questions, or uncertainties you are experiencing—big and small.

Team Science Support:

Need advice on designing efficient and effective virtual meetings? Having issues maintaining team engagement
and momentum? Unsure how to facilitate certain team dynamics without the benefit of face-to-face interaction? Unclear how to integrate ideas or results into a broader synthesis narrative? We’re here to help with a new support service: teamhelp@sesync.org [1]! Contact us with team science questions or issues directly related to your SESYNC-supported work and we will happily connect you with one of our experts on staff. Help can take the form of:

- Q&A over email
- Live online coaching sessions over Zoom (up to 1 hour each)
- Feedback on meeting agendas, team documents, and other Pursuit materials.

**Computational Support:**

Are you having issues with cleaning or harmonizing your data? Got data analysis problems? We’re here to help! Contact cyberhelp@sesync.org [2] with your data science questions, or visit cyberhelp.sesync.org [3] to view our frequently asked questions [4], quick-start pages [5] describing how to use SESYNC resources, and full-length lessons [6] on topics including text mining, creating maps, and agent-based modeling. We are available to help via email, or we can schedule a Zoom meeting to discuss your data science problems in depth.

Common issues that the Cyberhelp team can assist you with include:

- Processing/analyzing data on remote servers (e.g., “Slurm” computing cluster, Rstudio server, Jupyter server)
- Sharing code and results (e.g., git, GitHub/GitLab, GitHub gists, data visualization, interactive visualizations)
- Sharing and managing data (e.g., SESYNC storage, SQL databases)

**Tips and Best Practices for Virtual Collaborations**

**General Tips:**

- Co-develop or revisit a team participation agreement.
  - Clarify expectations and roles such as contributions, interactions, time commitments, and tasks.
  - Establish a plan for decision-making, such as what research direction to go in, to resolve issues when team members are absent from meetings.
  - Agree on how to award authorship on team products, including author order and inclusion.
  - Create a communication plan, including frequency of check-ins and communication platforms.
- Use a virtual video conference platform to get “face time” with participants. SESYNC offers three platforms: Skype for Business, WebEx, Zoom. Please contact cyberhelp@sesync.org [2] to get a meeting set up for your team.
- Protect your meetings from unauthorized participation (e.g., “Zoombombing”) by setting meeting passwords, using a virtual waiting room, and controlling screen sharing. See these articles for guidance on how to change your Zoom settings and protect your meetings:
  - Security Settings for Zoom Meetings [7]
  - How to Keep Uninvited Guests Out of Your Zoom Event [8]
- Use an online note-taking platform (e.g., Etherpad [10], Hackpad [11], Google Docs [12], etc.) so that all can see notes.
- Use a task-tracking platform (e.g., Asana [13], Trello [14], or even GitHub [15], GitLab [16] GitLab Issues [16] or Projects [17]) to help the team make progress on big-picture tasks, as well as discrete sub-tasks (e.g., before a meeting, during a day-long meeting, after a meeting).
- Make sure to field and answer questions/comments from participants in an equitable way.
  - Consider structuring discussions to explicitly allow everyone to contribute. For example, give each participant a fixed amount of time (e.g., 2 minutes) to comment on a topic, followed by 30 minutes of free-form discussion.
  - Use multiple modes of communication where necessary. For example, if a participant did not
vocally contribute to a remote discussion, the PI or facilitator may consider sending a personalized email to solicit their thoughts. This is especially important if you know the individual tends to be on the quieter side.

- Break large goals/tasks into more manageable bites; small accomplishments keep momentum going between virtual meetings.
- Build team redundancy by having more than one person able to accomplish critical research tasks. This will decrease burnout, account for life events, and increase progress toward your goals. Each team member will feel they have contributed to the products.

**Tips for Team Leaders/Meeting Facilitators & Team Members/Meeting Participants**

Tips are available [here](#) [18].

**References and Further Resources:**

Bammer, Gabriele et al. 2020. "Effectively including online participants in onsite meetings." [https://i2insights.org/2020/03/24/effective-online-plus-onsite-meetings](https://i2insights.org/2020/03/24/effective-online-plus-onsite-meetings) [19]


WildLabs. "Useful Resources for Hosting Virtual Events." [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oC5BCLgmjplyvJ9ZnEV9Ga6zl_jHMr7y-JcYDa6heQg/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oC5BCLgmjplyvJ9ZnEV9Ga6zl_jHMr7y-JcYDa6heQg/edit) [22]

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**Links**

[1] mailto:teamhelp@sesync.org
[2] mailto:cyberhelp@sesync.org
[3] [https://www.sesync.org/cyberhelp.sesync.org](https://www.sesync.org/cyberhelp.sesync.org)
[4] [https://cyberhelp.sesync.org/faq](https://cyberhelp.sesync.org/faq)
[5] [https://cyberhelp.sesync.org/quickstart](https://cyberhelp.sesync.org/quickstart)
[6] [https://cyberhelp.sesync.org/lesson](https://cyberhelp.sesync.org/lesson)
[7] [https://umd.service-now.com/itsupport/?id=kb_article_view&amp;sysparm_article=KB0015411&amp;sys_kb_id=93a8eafdb7384904cb03562399619e4](https://umd.service-now.com/itsupport/?id=kb_article_view&amp;sysparm_article=KB0015411&amp;sys_kb_id=93a8eafdb7384904cb03562399619e4)
[8] [https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-uninvited-guests-out-of-your-zoom-event/](https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-uninvited-guests-out-of-your-zoom-event/)
[9] [https://cyberhelp.sesync.org/faq/virtual-meeting-security.html](https://cyberhelp.sesync.org/faq/virtual-meeting-security.html)
[10] [https://etherpad.org/](https://etherpad.org/)
[11] [https://github.com/dropbox/hackpad](https://github.com/dropbox/hackpad)
[12] [https://www.google.com/docs/about/](https://www.google.com/docs/about/)
[13] [https://asana.com/](https://asana.com/)