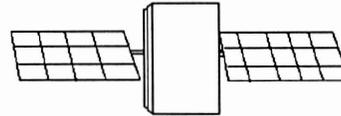


# Communications

Extension Information • University of Missouri-Columbia • 1-98 Agriculture • Columbia, Missouri, 65211

## VIDEOCONFERENCE

# Site Facilitator's Guide



By Joanne Heisler  
Extension Education

Experience and evaluations show that on-site facilitation of videoconferences, or videoteleconferences, is *critical* to their success. (See the glossary inside this guide for definitions.) More preparation is needed—because, in addition to meeting the usual needs of any meeting, the facilitator must become familiar with videoconferencing equipment and with the exact timing of video, while meeting the needs of an audience who is not sure what to expect. When well done, the technology becomes transparent, allowing conference participants to interact with national experts.

People must fulfill many roles in a successful videoconference. The complexity of each conference determines how many people will be needed to fill them. The most important role is overall coordination. So make sure one person is clearly responsible for coordinating the people fulfilling each of the various roles.

### Preconference Activities

**1. SELECT ROOM:** Determine the size and location of the room in terms of the audience you expect. However, if a fixed dish is wired into a room, that may well be the determining factor. Secure

the room as soon as a decision to receive a videoconference is made.

**2. EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS:** Besides the "satellite receive" dish, you will need either television monitors or a video projector and screen, plus adequate cables to connect all the equipment. When permission has been purchased or granted to record the program, you also will need a video recorder. A telephone must be available, preferably in the back of the room, for the phone-in question and answer segments.

If the room and audience are large, supplementary amplification may be needed. Do not use a built-in public address system, because all sound

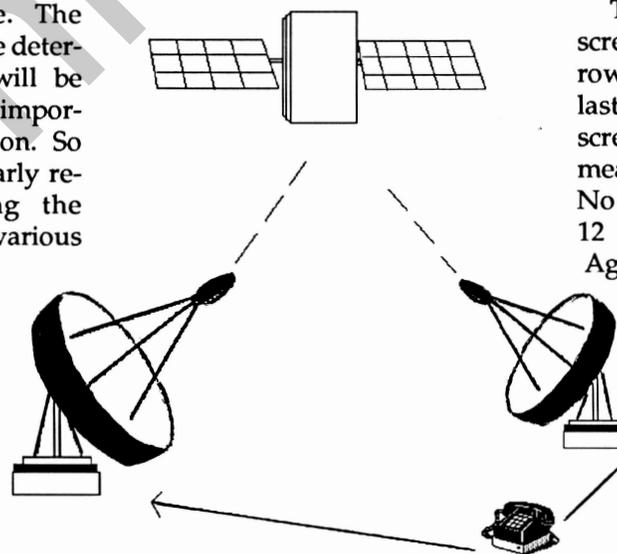
should come from the front of the room, where the monitors or screen are located.

To determine the size and the number of monitors you need, figure that each one inch diagonal serves one person: That is, a 25 inch screen serves 25 people. Place monitors high so they are above the heads of the audience. When using multiple monitors, it is important to adjust the color so all pictures look alike. When a large screen and video projector are used, the room will need to be darkened (but not totally dark or people can't take notes).

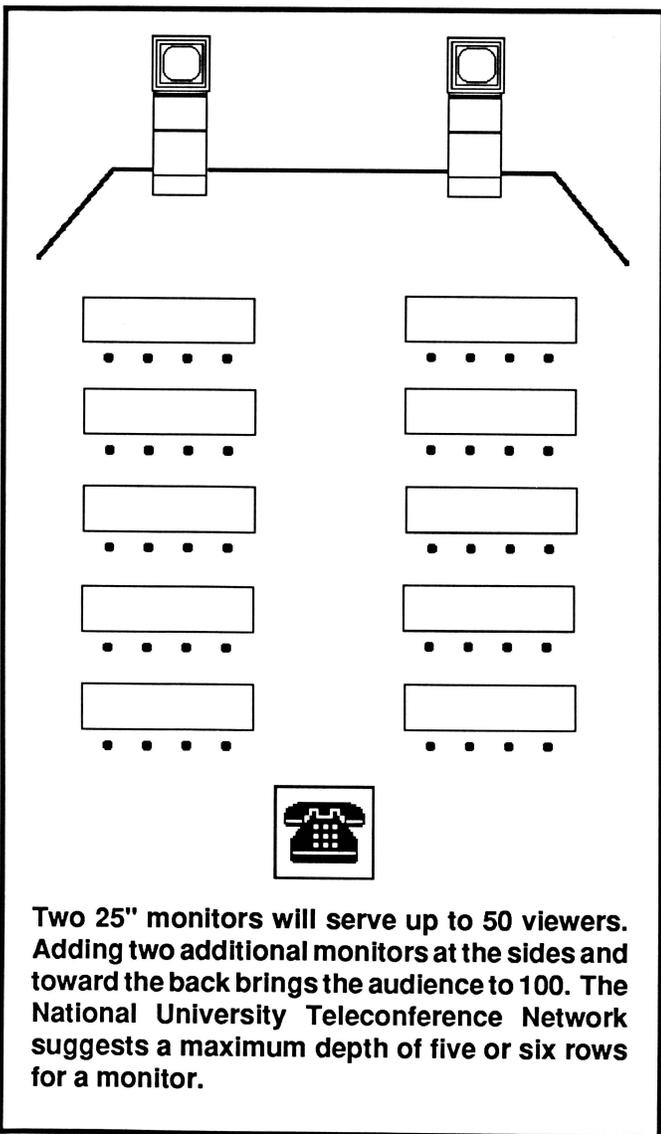
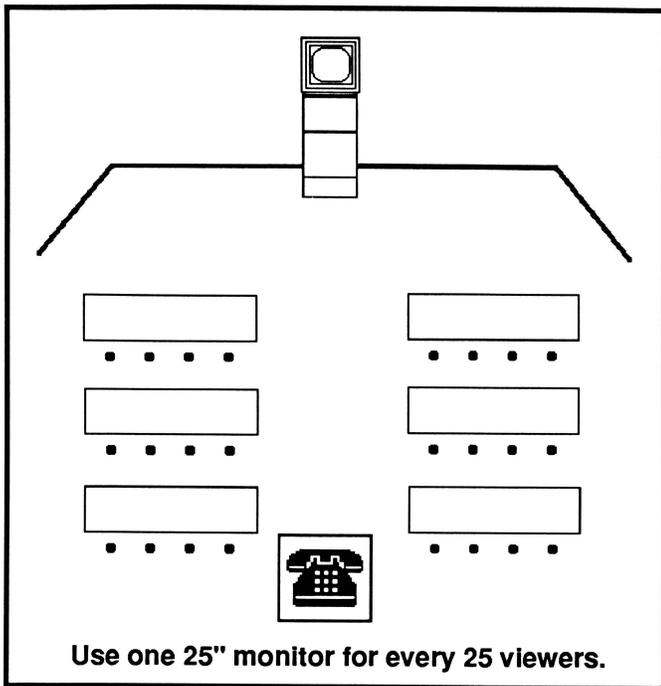
The National University Teleconference Network suggests a maximum depth of five or six rows for a monitor.

To determine the size of the large screen, divide the distance to the last row of seats by eight. That is, if the last row of seats is 64 feet from the screen, dividing 64 feet by eight means you need an eight foot screen. No one should be seated closer than 12 feet from an eight foot screen. Again, place the screen high so no one has to look around anyone else.

Because equipment is so important to a videoconference, make certain someone is in charge of it—someone who knows how to handle it and will check it out before the conference. You may have to sweep snow off the dish in a snow storm!



Simplified diagram of uplink-satellite-downlink, with telephone interaction.



**3. LOCAL WRAP-AROUND:** A wrap-around is usually a local segment that complements the video segments of the program you receive. Wrap-arounds are generally seen as essential for a videoconference to really reach its audience. Many experienced teleconference producers consider it the most important single element. Depending on the time, length and organization of the satellite portions of the program, wrap-arounds may take place before, during and/or after the broadcast. Videoconferences often originate in other time zones, so the local timing isn't always ideal.

One critical role is the local host. Before the broadcast begins (during the test pattern) — as a minimum — the host should welcome the audience and give them an idea of what is going to happen. This is the time to tell them what they can expect from the broadcast, including a rundown of the national presenters and the conference agenda. It is also the time to hand out any materials, explain how the phone-in question and answer segments will be handled, give information about breaks and refreshments and introduce any local sponsors and presenters.

One popular wrap-around activity is to invite a small panel of local experts on the topic to react to the broadcast and respond to local questions. The length of the local program, of course, depends on the length and structure of the broadcast. Some videoconferences are designed as workshops with local activities built in. These segments need careful on-site management.

**4. BUDGET:** On the expense side, costs may include fees to the conference originator, downlink dish rental, equipment rental (monitors, recorders, etc.), marketing and publicity expenses, duplication of conference materials, room rental, refreshments, conference supplies (name tags, folders, signs, office supplies), local speaker expense and staffing.

On the income side, consider looking for co-sponsors. Depending on the topic of the conference, local chambers of commerce, banks, hospitals, coops and malls are all possibilities. They may provide money, services, local experts, brochures, mail lists, credibility, advertising and a variety of other kinds of assistance. Be creative. Call them early and keep them informed every step of the way.

To arrive at a fee, after you have estimated expenses and subtracted available underwriting, divide the balance by the number of people you expect to attend.

**5. PROMOTION:** All of the usual marketing tools can be used for videoconferences including direct mail (letters, brochures, flyers, newsletters), posters, signs and the media (press releases, radio spots, television spots, talk shows, columns). Be careful *not* to overemphasize the videoconference aspect of the program. Focus on the topic as a workshop or seminar with a satellite-delivered component.

The most popular single marketing tool is the brochure. Brochures can be designed with a tear off pre-registration form to help learn how many people will attend so hand out materials and refreshments can be accurately gauged.

**6. PROGRAM MATERIALS:** The program originator may send handouts or an original to be duplicated at the site. Co-sponsors may have supplementary materials available, or the local wrap-around may generate some handouts.

Have an agenda and a program evaluation for each conference participant. These may come from the originator or be generated locally. Some evaluations are designed to cover content, others to cover satisfaction with the delivery mode and some to do both.

**7. REFRESHMENTS:** Light refreshments are always appreciated. Depending on the time of day and the length of the conference, something more substantial may be required. Finger foods are best. If a lunch is needed, a box lunch can be offered, or people can be asked to bring a brown-bag lunch with beverages provided on site.

## The day of the conference

**1. ROOM SET UP:** Classroom style seating is preferred for most videoconferences because it allows for reading handouts and taking notes. For videoconferences with a workshop component, workshop style seating (around three sides of tables) will encourage interaction within the room. In all events, be sure each seat has a clear view of a monitor or screen.

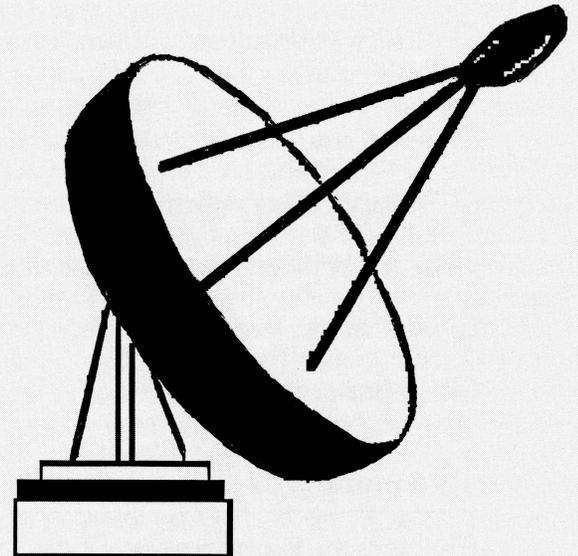
Equipment needs to be set up and checked out well in advance of the start of the broadcast. Always be prepared with "Plan B." Without the satellite reception, there is no program. The person responsible for the technical set-up needs to be there throughout the entire program, from test pattern to the end of the transmission.

**2. REGISTRATION:** Be certain to have enough people to handle registration activities so that everyone can be seated in time for the local welcome and be ready for the start of the broadcast. (Satellite conferences are timed to the second!)

Registration staff will need to greet registrants, handle registration income and nametags, and distribute hand-out materials.

**3. QUESTION AND ANSWER SEGMENTS:** Telephone interaction is a vital part of every videoconference. Hand out index cards with the program materials so participants can record their questions. When it is announced that the phone lines are open, ask people to hold up their cards, so one person can collect them, place the call and ask the questions.

## Glossary



**ad hoc teleconference:** Refers to a teleconference that uses facilities that are temporarily linked together for a specific meeting or event; implies a one-time or occasional use of teleconferencing as opposed to a permanent system or regular usage.

**antenna:** A metallic structure used to transmit or receive electromagnetic signals or waves. In teleconferencing terms, the primary component of an earth station used to transmit or receive video signals.

**audioconference:** Two-way electronic voice communication between two or more groups, or three or more individuals, who are in separate locations.

**bird:** Slang for communication satellite.

**CCTV:** Closed Circuit Television.

**communications satellite:** A satellite in earth orbit which receives signals from an earth station, and retransmits them. Signals may include video, audio or data.

**decoder:** Device that reconstructs or "unscrambles" an encrypted signal.

**dish:** Slang for a parabolic antenna that is the primary element of a satellite earth station.

**downlink:** A satellite receiving station. Also referred to as a TVRO (television receive only).

**earth station or earth terminal:** The equipment and electronic devices needed to send a signal to or receive a signal from a satellite.

**encoder:** A device that electronically alters a signal (encrypts) so that it can be clearly seen only by recipients that have a decoder which reverses the encryption process.

**encryption:** The process of electronically altering or "scrambling" a signal. Encryption is usually used as a security method for satellite transmissions.

**facilitator:** The individual responsible for the local component at a teleconference site. May or may not be an expert in the subject matter.

**footprint:** Area of the earth covered by a satellite transmission beam.

**ITFS:** Instructional Television Fixed Service.

**local loop:** Also referred to as the "Last Mile." The local loop gets the signal from the receive site to the viewing room. Microwave, fiber optics, cable and sometimes broadcast are used to distribute the signal.

**modulator:** A device which converts the video signal and audio signal onto a viewable TV channel.

**monitor:** Generally a television set used specifically for the display

of video information from a source other than a broadcast television system. Can be used to display graphics, single frame, compressed or full motion video.

**origination site:** Generally used to describe the location from which full motion video is transmitted and possibly uplinked in ad hoc videoconferences. Other sites participating are referred to as receive sites.

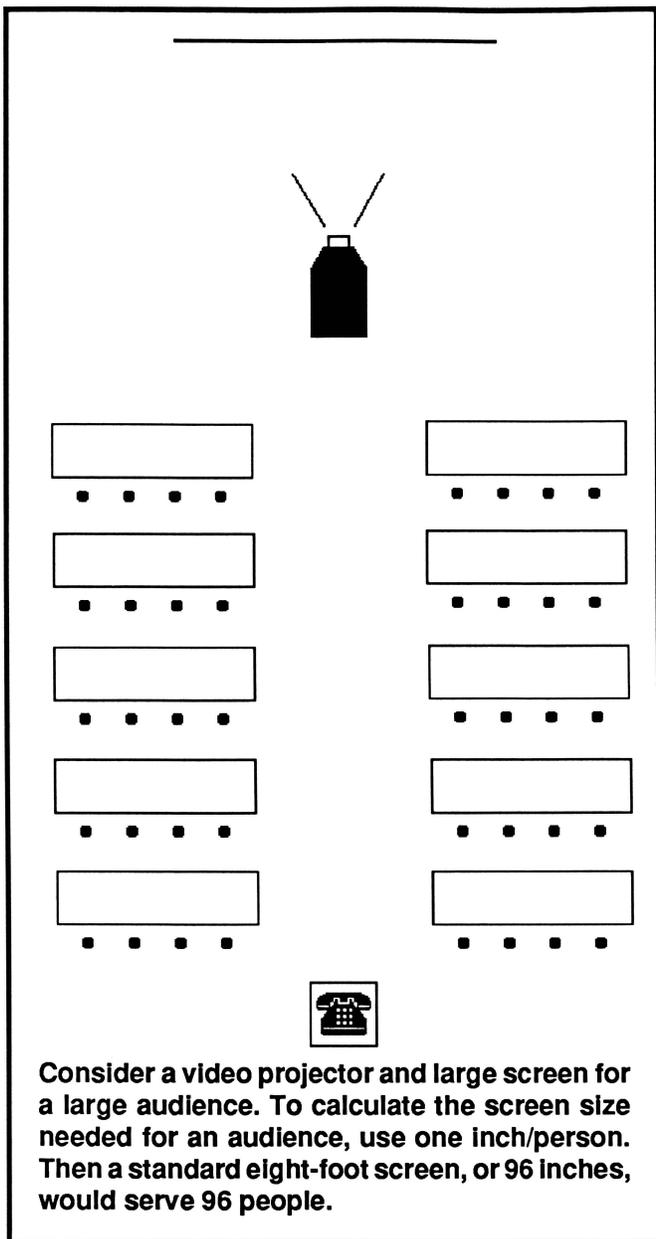
**teleconferencing:** A generic term for interactive group communications through an electronic medium; includes group communication via audio, audiographics, video and computer systems.

**transponder:** That portion of a communications satellite that acts as a receiver, amplifier and retransmitter for all signals communicated up to and down from the satellite. There are 12 to 24 transponders on each satellite.

**uplink:** An earth station that transmits a signal to a communications satellite.

**videoconferencing:** Teleconferencing using telecommunications channels for fully interactive video and audio or one-way video and two-way audio.

**wrap-around:** Local informational or educational activities before, during or following a videoconference. These activities help focus the teleconference content toward outcomes and ideas which can directly assist the viewer.



At the end of the program, thank the participants and local presenters and ask them to fill out and turn in evaluations.

## After the conference

1. **RETURN** all equipment.
2. **HAVE EVALUATIONS TABULATED**, a roster prepared and copies provided to appropriate colleagues, sponsors, administrators and presenters.
3. **SEND THANK YOU LETTERS** to all sponsors and presenters.
4. **PAY** all expenses.

## References

"Facilitating Teleconferences," Vicki A. Hanrahan, TEL-COMS

Facilitator's Manual, AMA by Satellite, The American Management Association and the Public Service Satellite Consortium

NUTN Sourcebook: Teleconferencing in Higher Education, National University Teleconference Network

Receiving Video Teleconferences: A Site Coordinator's Handbook, Telecommunication Development Center, Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota

Teleconference Coordinator's Manual Arts and Sciences Teleconferencing Service, Oklahoma State University

Telespan Glossary, Telespan Publishing Corporation.

In lieu of using cards, people can hold up their hands and accompany the facilitator to the phone. The facilitator places the call. But the questioner asks the question.

The most sophisticated way to handle questions is with microphones in the room. This requires a technician to set them up and to monitor them.

Whichever method is used, the caller should give the name of the calling site, the questioner's name and should keep all questions brief and pertinent. Callers should be aware that they will hear an echo of their own voice. The distance from them to the satellite and back, causes a quarter-second delay.

4. **LOCAL WRAP-UP:** Either the local moderator, or another person familiar with the topic being discussed, can be the on-site host .

## Site Coordinator's Planning Checklist\*

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### Three months before

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- Make decision to receive videoconference.
- Choose local site coordinator.
- Notify originator of intention to receive conference.
- Select and reserve site for conference.
- Reserve all equipment.
- Contact possible co-sponsors.
- Determine registration fees.
- Prepare budget.

### Two months

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- Select and confirm local host and moderator.
- Contact local presenters.
- Establish pre- and on-site registration procedures.
- Design brochure.
- Develop/select mailing lists.
- Select and contact conference staff.
- Reconfirm local presenters.
- Mail brochures.

### One month

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- Write releases for the media.
- Order refreshments.

### Two weeks

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- Review and reconfirm site, equipment and personnel.
- Duplicate handout materials.
- Check that local presenters have all the information needed.
- Secure conference supplies.
- Check all equipment.

### Day of videoconference

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- Set up room, equipment, refreshments and registration.
- Hand out materials.
- Welcome guests.
- Receive satellite program.
- Conduct local wrap-around.
- Collect evaluations.

### After conference

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- Return equipment.
- Tabulate and distribute evaluations.
- Write thank you's.

**\*Copy this checklist  
for each conference**

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