Staying Connected

With the COVID-10 pandemic exposing vulnerabilities in health systems around the world, we as RESULTS advocates are well placed continue advocating for global collaboration to build up those systems, which can support healthy populations, be resilient to infectious diseases, and reach the most vulnerable.

We know that parliamentarians have been overrun with correspondence about the pandemic recently, and despite the fact this is a global problem which will require a global response, many MPs and decision-makers may have less bandwidth to engage with international issues at the moment. This is partly why we are asking you to write one joint letter from your local group to the Secretary of State.

But the reason for a joint campaign action is twofold. As a global community, we need campaigning and advocacy perhaps more than we have done in a long time, and at RESULTS we think that you as a grassroots network of peers who are engaged in issues concerning poverty and injustice, are well placed to support each other.

We won’t make progress on ending poverty and improving people’s access to healthcare, education and economic opportunities without working collaboratively and in solidarity with others. It’s a difficult time to be doing advocacy, especially given many of us are being affected by the pandemic ourselves, but a crucial one. At RESULTS we have been trying to focus on what we can control in this time of crisis. Although we aren’t able to connect face-to-face, we can still take impactful and meaningful campaign actions from our homes.

Online meetings

Here is a very quick guide for how you may want to collaborate with your local group on this month’s letter. There are lots more resources out there and you may want to start with the basics and keep experimenting with different ways of online meetings to see what works for your group. We know it won’t have the same feel as your usual meetings but going online can be an opportunity to grow and try something new.

**Step 1.** Set up a platform. At RESULTS we use Zoom for online meetings - it’s easy to set up a free personal account, with which you can host calls of up to 40 minutes. Decide who from the group will host the meeting (the other participants won’t need to create an account to join.) Watch or download this online training session ran by our colleagues at RESULTS in the US to guide you through best practice.

**Step 2.** Find a time that works for everyone, you can use a Doodle poll to help you. Remember best practice for meetings in general. Set an agenda which people can contribute to, make sure everyone knows how to join and when. Be clear on the purpose of the meeting, and set some ground rules or ‘norms’.
Step 3. Preparation. Set up a Google Doc and share with group members before the meeting. Using the screen share option on Zoom allows you to type up and edit a letter as a group in real time, as well as read through the action materials together. This 4 minute video shows you how. Consider if any other prep work required (reading the action materials and thinking about how you’d like to structure the letter in advance, for example.) There are some talking points for your letter in Background Sheet 2.

Step 5. During the meeting: consider using a few simple facilitation tools to help you interact and make decisions. Some online ice breakers might help you replicate the time you’d spend just chatting face-to face. Don’t forget to wrap up the meeting by summarising the next steps and who will take them.

Step 4. Nominate on person to send the letter via email or post. If any of your group members couldn’t make the meeting, check in with them to see if they would like to add their name first. You’ll find the Secretary of State’s contact details in the action sheet. We’d love to read your letters so ‘cc’ dela.anderson@results.org.uk if you’re sending it via email.

Step 5. Reflect on what went well, and what you could do differently next time. How did it feel to meet online? Did the technology work for you? Did you spend enough time checking in with each other? Could you use an email or group message to do some preparation before the meeting? How can you stay in touch before the next meeting?

Top tips

- Schedule time during the meeting to just catch up.
- Test your technology in advance.
- If you can use your camera, do - it’s much more personal.
- Be patient if it doesn’t go to plan!
- Create a culture of checking in and supporting each other.
- Remember that RESULTS staff can be available to help.

More resources

- A quick overview of online meetings: conferencing platforms, facilitation tools and more.