The tips below can help ensure that your committee conducts a smooth, effective video interview.

**Before the Interview**

- **Let candidates know who will be in the room.** Provide candidates with a list of who will be participating in advance. This will eliminate the need for more lengthy introductions at the start of the interview and give candidates a sense of what to expect. Do a very brief round of introductions at the start so candidates can match a name and a face.

- **Do a test run.** Ask each committee member to participate in a 15-minute test run a day or two before the interview to work out any tech issues and make sure everyone knows how to use the video platform.

- **Set the stage.**
  - **Webcam.** The camera should be positioned so you are centered in the frame and looking straight-on at the screen. You may need to prop your laptop or monitor up with books if it’s not the right height.
  
  - **Audio.** Check your computer microphone to be sure your voice is clear and not muffled and the volume is not too loud or too soft. Using headphones with a built-in microphone can drastically improve sound quality for you and the people at the other end by cutting down on audio distractions such as keyboard clicking, paper shuffling, or ambient noise like the traffic outside your window.

  - **Lighting.** Try to incorporate natural or diffused light rather than artificial or bright lighting that will wash out your face. Lighting from behind you will make your face appear in shadow, so your best bet is to have a soft light focused on you from behind your computer screen. Try playing with the lighting to see what works best.

  - **Background.** Make sure the physical space immediately around and behind you is neat and professional looking. The ideal location has a plain background and a chair at a desk or table that puts you at the right height for the camera to frame your upper body and face.

- **Make sure you have a strong internet connection.** Video and audio can suck up a lot of bandwidth. If you’re working from home, make sure your system can handle it, so you don’t freeze during a video call. Some systems also allow you to call in over the phone while doing video, to ensure that if you do lose the connection you will still be on the call. If you are at home with others, it may be worth asking them to stay off the internet or avoid streaming during your interview.

- **Eliminate distractions.** Close any open windows on your screen, including your social media, email, and other notification services. These can also slow your internet speed. Mute your cell phone and desk phone. Make sure pets, children, or any people in your vicinity are kept out of the room, and let everyone know you’re doing an interview and they need to be quiet. It may be helpful to put a “quiet” sign on the door or your monitor so anyone passing by—including family members—knows that you’re on a video interview.
• **Be prepared.** Familiarize yourself with the candidate by reviewing their cover letter, resume, and any other information you have about the candidate. If there is more than one interviewer, decide in advance who will ask which question. Also make sure you have the candidate’s materials and interview questions easily accessible. Printing the materials ahead of time can be a good idea so that you are not switching back and forth on your computer and can fully focus on the candidate.

• **Select an interview host.** That person will open and close the interview, and keep an eye on time throughout. They can also make sure that participants have a chance to break into a conversation to ask follow-up or clarifying questions.

• **Always have a backup plan.** Technology is far from perfect. Make sure to establish a backup plan with the candidate at the start of the meeting. The easiest plan to put in place is to ensure that you have the candidate’s contact information or a conference line set up. The backup plan should be communicated before the video interview with all participants, including the candidate. If there is a technology glitch, make sure that candidates know it does not reflect poorly on them.

**During the Video Interview**

• **Use technology to your advantage.** If you’re conducting back-to-back interviews using the same meeting link, check to see if there is a feature like Zoom’s "Waiting Room" that lets the meeting host control when specific participants can join the interview. This can ensure that candidates don’t join too early, when the committee is in discussion or when another interview is in progress.

• **Be on time.** It’s a good idea to plan to join the video call one or two minutes before the start time.

• **Make eye contact.** Address your attention to the camera when you’re talking, not the image of the person or people you’re talking to. It’s not unusual for people to get distracted by their own image on the screen—if this is an issue for you, minimize the screen so you can’t see yourself. Many video platforms like Zoom allow the option to view your video layout in “Gallery View,” which lets you see thumbnail displays of all participants in a grid pattern.

• **Stay engaged.** Make sure you are not only listening closely to the candidate’s answers, but also paying attention to things like facial expressions, body language (what you can see), and other nonverbal cues.

• **Use mute judiciously.** If you are not talking, place yourself on mute. This is especially important if you’re taking notes with a keyboard, which can be extremely loud.

• **Record notes as soon as possible.** Make note of strengths and areas of concern immediately following the interview or during breaks between scheduled interviews. The longer you wait, the more detail you will forget and the less likely it is you will actually record your thoughts.

Finally, make sure that the warmth, professionalism, and values of your organization shine through on video just as they would in person. Take a moment to greet candidates, close out the conversation appropriately, and treat the video interaction with as much rigor as you would any other interview.