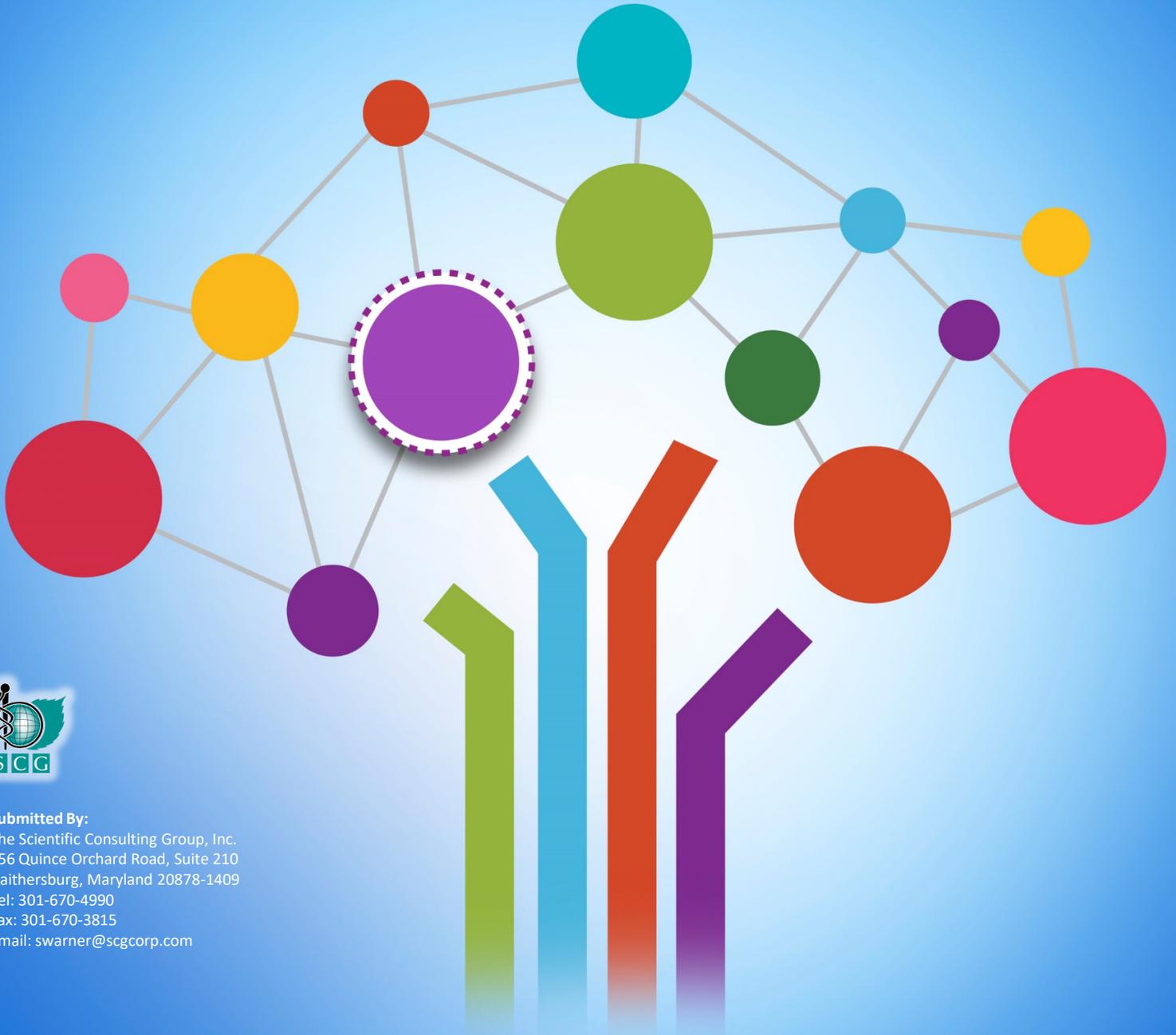


NIHCATS III Capability Statement for Virtual Conference Support



Submitted By:

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About The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc. (SCG)

The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc. (SCG), is a woman-owned, small business located in Gaithersburg, Maryland, that began in 1991. SCG was named among America's Fastest Growing Companies in 2016 by Inc. 5000 and has received dozens of awards that recognize the quality of our work. Our corporate philosophy emphasizes proactive communication that involves listening to and understanding our clients' needs, innovative approaches to implementing and managing projects, and a devotion to continuously improving the quality of our services. Our conferencing staff (most of whom are Certified Meeting Professionals and/or Certified Government Meeting Professionals) have planned and managed in-person and virtual meetings of all sizes, ranging from small working groups of five or six specialized experts to large national and international scientific conferences with more than 4,000 participants.

SCG's staff stays current with conferencing industry trends (e.g., green, virtual, and digital meetings) and utilizes the latest techniques and technologies to streamline our services and improve the overall meeting experience for participants. We anticipate and prevent potential problems and have established procedures that can be implemented to resolve the various problems and challenges that can arise when supporting virtual meetings.

For almost 30 years, SCG has successfully provided responsive, cost-effective, and creative virtual meeting, writing, editing, materials development, graphics, administrative, and communication support services for Institutes, Centers, and Offices at the National Institutes of Health (NIH)—including the National Cancer Institute (NCI), National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), and the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives (DPCPSI) within the Office of the Director (OD)—and other Federal and private-sector clients, such as the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Battelle Memorial Institute. We have received consistent high-performance ratings for our products and services; adherence to schedules; budget management; and overall contract management.

SCG's Approach to Hosting Virtual Conferences

Although nothing can compare to the power of meeting in person, unprecedented circumstances have had a major impact on in-person meetings. Virtual events allow event organizers, speakers, and attendees to interact remotely through a virtual environment. SCG uses various platforms for virtual meetings and virtual events. For clarity, SCG uses the universal definition for a virtual meeting, which is when individuals in various locations connect at the same time using technology to accomplish a shared goal. Virtual meetings tend to be somewhat simple to plan and do not need as much preparation time as a virtual event. A virtual event, like an in-person event, tends to have multiple sessions, poster sessions, exhibit halls, and so forth. These allow attendees to customize their event experiences to best fit their interests. In contrast, a virtual meeting offers only one session for all attendees. Although a leader or moderator may preside at a virtual meeting, all attendees are typically involved in the conversation in one way or another. At a virtual event, however, keynote speakers or session panelists are usually addressing the group in a one-sided conversation. Virtual events, like their in-person counterparts, take a lot of planning and organization.



Choosing the Right Online Meeting Tool

SCG has experience using many different options that are in the marketplace for virtual meetings. Questions that we ask when reviewing online meeting tools include the following:

- **Can it record meetings?** This is a useful capability if some invited attendees are unable to join the meeting in real-time or if attendees want to be able to review the recording afterward.
- **Does it have chat capabilities?** Many online meeting tools allow attendees to type comments and questions in real-time. This feature is helpful for larger meetings when hosts do not want multiple people to interrupt with questions.
- **Does it offer personalized meeting rooms?** Some online meeting tools allow customizing the “meeting rooms” to be consistent with company branding and tone.
- **Are there engagement features?** Online meeting tools can incorporate options for quizzes, voting/polling, and apps to be included in meetings. These additional features are a huge asset when it comes to keeping attendees engaged during the meeting.
- **Can users edit documents in real-time?** It can be extremely useful to find a meeting tool that allows team members to edit documents and collaborate in real-time.
- **Can participants share files and screens?** These features are especially useful for enabling speakers to control their PowerPoint slide decks without others hearing “next slide.”
- **Does it have a virtual waiting room?** Vetting attendees before allowing them to enter can be useful if there are closed discussions.
- **Does it support breakout rooms?** Larger meetings tend to have breakout sessions to allow more attendee engagement, and not all platforms have this capability.
- **Does it allow poster sessions and/or an exhibit hall?** Poster sessions can be held in many online meeting platforms, as can virtual exhibit halls.

Platforms

SCG has extensive knowledge and experience with the virtual platforms described below. We also have business premium accounts with the majority of the providers listed below.

- **Webex** is a browser-based software capable of hosting up to 3,000 simultaneous viewers and up to 200 simultaneous video feeds. Attendees can access the event link via the registration email, an Apple or Android mobile device, the Webex website, or through audio-only dial-in access. If breakout rooms are needed and attendance is 1,000 participants or fewer, we recommend using Webex Teams, which offers breakout sessions.
- **GoToMeeting** and **GoToWebinar** provide virtual event software that allows organizers to host up to 3,000 attendees with 25 simultaneous video feeds and has polling/voting capabilities, breakout rooms, meeting transcription, screen-sharing, and the option of designating a backup host.
- **Zoom video webinars** can host up to 50,000 viewers with a maximum of 100 live video panelists. To ensure attendee security, the platform is password protected, has virtual waiting rooms, and AES-256 encryption. Toll-free dial-in numbers are not available in this platform.
- **ClickMeeting** is a browser-based virtual video conference platform allowing both live and pre-recorded online events. It hosts up to 1,000 people, allows an unlimited number of monthly online events, and up to 6 panelists.
- **WebinarJam** is a cloud-based broadcasting technology that can host up to 5,000 viewers and six presenters and can stream both live and pre-recorded events.

- **AdobeConnect** is a comprehensive platform for remote training, web conferencing and presentations, and desktop sharing. Breakout sessions can be accommodated into “pods” and have many engaging features, such as multiple chat pods, polls, and simulations.
- **Microsoft Teams** is an easy-to-navigate platform that can instantly set up a meeting for up to 10,000 attendees and includes chat functions and screen or file sharing; it is best for internal meeting needs.

SCG also has used the Community Brands and vFairs for Battelle Memorial Institute meetings that involved more than 2,000 attendees, 500 posters, 36 separate speaker tracks, and exhibit halls with approximately 50 exhibit booths.

SCG’s Experience with Virtual Conferences

For almost 30 years, SCG has built an excellent reputation for providing high-quality support services for NIH clients. Since March 2020, SCG has hosted more than 100 virtual meetings and events for our Federal and private-sector clients, ranging in size from 4 attendees to 3,450. SCG also possesses high-quality processes for developing products and services, as demonstrated by our numerous awards for excellence. SCG’s unparalleled qualifications and stellar past performance make us a logical choice to assist NIHCATS III customers with their virtual meeting needs.

NCI. Under several contracting mechanisms since 1991, SCG has provided meeting logistics support, writing, and editorial services, as well as administrative management, to various divisions at the NCI. Recently, we have supported numerous task orders to pivot previous face-to-face meetings to a virtual platform. For NCI’s CISNET Mid-Year Meeting (website home page shown here) in June 2020, we accommodated 150 attendees with plenaries and multiple breakouts over a 5-day period. SCG also has coordinated and hosted more than 70 virtual meetings for the NCI



Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP). SCG provides the webinar platform, conference telephone line, or other meeting service, as necessary. SCG staff work with attendees to schedule the meeting, send Outlook invitations with up-to-date and easily accessible meeting connection information, and send reminders several days in advance of the meeting. SCG also distributes meeting materials to attendees before or after the meeting as requested. Approximately 15 minutes before the meeting, SCG opens the webinar or conference line, monitors participant attendance, and welcomes participants as they join. SCG staff have remained on the meeting or call for its duration to monitor the system and ensure the call goes smoothly; these webinars and calls also are recorded. If the meeting includes presentations, SCG staff have run the presentation slides or transferred presentation privileges to other attendees to present their own slides. SCG staff also have conducted polls through the Webex system if requested. After the meeting, SCG staff members close the webinar or conference call, distribute any post-meeting materials to attendees, and distribute the minutes as requested for attendee approval.



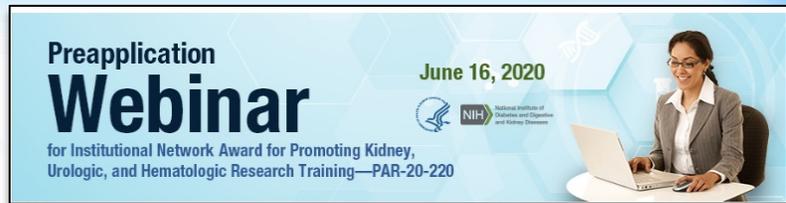
NIDDK. SCG provides scientific conference and meeting logistics support, writing, and editorial services, as well as administrative management, to various divisions within the NIDDK for meetings ranging in size from 20 to 500 people.

We were awarded our original contract in 2004, and we won the 2011, 2016, and 2019 recompetes. Between 2004 and 2019, SCG supported 30 virtual meetings with an average attendance of 100 people. However, since January 2020, we have support 13 virtual meetings thus far, with attendance up to 1,200 attendees using Webex and Zoom. For the virtual meetings SCG has created registration websites; scheduled, set up, and hosted the virtual meeting (webinar banner shown here); disseminated the teleconference and virtual platform connection information to participants, sent Outlook invitations, agendas, and other materials as requested; managed screen sharing and coordinated audiovisual displays; assigned speakers and transitioned presenter privileges; confirmed proper functionality of the platform and recording equipment; responded to participant requests and helped troubleshoot any problems that arose; and provided technical support and a back-up platform as needed.

NIH. For the DPCPSI at NIH, SCG provides a wide range of virtual conferencing, meeting, and webinar support. SCG has supported more than 60 virtual conferences for DPCPSI in the last 7 years. Using an advanced Webex platform, SCG planned a large webinar on data metrics for the NIH Office of Data Science Strategy on February 19, 2020. The workshop received an unexpected amount of interest, and SCG was able to negotiate and secure a larger webinar platform to accommodate the almost 3,000 attendees. The webinar had a 63 percent attendance rate and received high praise from DPCPSI federal staff, as seen in the quote displayed at the right.

Meeting support for virtual site visits for the NIH Office of Research Infrastructure Programs (ORIP) grant recipients is another service that SCG has supported. SCG coaches the recipients individually to ensure that the technology runs smoothly and has managed the hosting both onsite at the ORIP offices and, more recently, remotely.

These virtual meetings provide a cost-effective review of the grant-funded projects. An example of the coaching SCG provides is the February 13, 2020 final site visit to the facilities funded by Grant C06 RR014530. SCG coached the University of North Dakota (UND) grantees a total of six times before the virtual meeting, along with numerous calls to address all of the grantee's concerns and to plan multiple back-up plans for the site visit in the event an upcoming snowstorm caused disruption to the virtual meeting connection. These coaching sessions helped identify weaknesses in UND's connection and allowed SCG to plan solutions that ensured a successful virtual site visit. In the wake of the pandemic, many in-person meetings have been shifted to virtual formats. Some cases, like the DPCPSI Council of Councils meeting, require extensive planning and redesign. SCG was able to create a new virtual process for the May 2020 Council of Councils meeting, delivering a safe, physically distant meeting for the minimal number of NIH employees and contractor support staff who attended in person. A thorough event script was designed and carefully followed, and a plan was developed for all future virtual Council of Councils meetings. The meeting required a plan to virtually



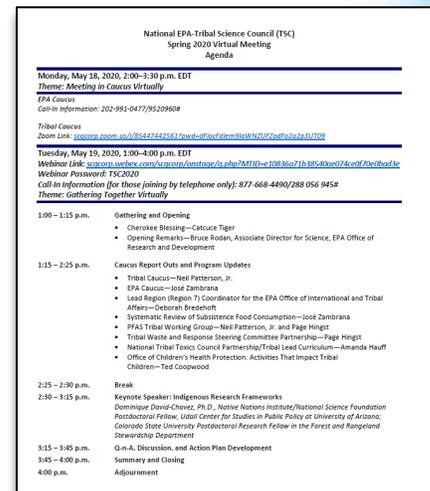
“Our team wanted to thank you for your excellent technical support and services. The virtual workshop support was nerve-racking, but you dealt with calm and professionalism. It was a fun experiment, and we received a lot of positive feedbacks. It has been a pleasure to work with you on the project. Please pass on our thanks to your colleagues whose names we do not know.”

manage closed sessions, breakout sessions in cases of conflicts of interest, motions, and voting. The resulting event script contained planned procedures for all situations. In addition, SCG had staff providing technical support and monitoring the webinar chat, both on site and off site, to ensure a comfortable experience for all Council members and attendees. SCG also ensured the availability of several staff members who could continue to host and run the meeting should any power outages or connectivity issues arise on the NIH campus.

SCG had to quickly pivot the in-person 13th NIH Matilda White Riley Behavioral & Social Sciences Honors Event (website home page shown here) to a virtual event in a matter of weeks. The virtual event was held June 8, 2020, for 230 attendees using the NIH Webex platform. SCG conducted coaching calls with the speakers and panelists and also served as the backup host and provided technical support to attendees. SCG recorded, transcribed, and captioned the event. We also uploaded the Section 508-compliant recording to the Matilda White Riley registration website.



EPA. SCG has supported two National EPA-Tribal Science Council (TSC) webinars, including the TSC Spring 2020 Virtual Business Meeting (agenda shown here). For these webinars, both of which used the Webex technology, SCG set up the technology, hosted the webinar, and provided a back-up host in case of any technical difficulties. No technical difficulties arose in either of the webinars, but SCG staff were ready to handle any issues. The Spring 2020 Virtual Business Meeting had approximately 45 attendees, and the second webinar, held in July 2020, had approximately 25. The audience for both included TSC members, TSC support staff and contractors, speakers, and invited guests. In addition to hosting the Spring 2020 Virtual Business Meeting, SCG also hosted a dry run prior to the event to ensure that the key players were familiar with the Webex technology. SCG developed a “Webex Connection Instructions” document for both webinars and provided it to all participants. The client and the two TSC Co-Chairs were pleased with the success of both events and commented on how smoothly SCG ran the webinars.



For EPA’s Healthy Schools Program, SCG has planned, marketed, staffed, and recorded 30 webinars over the last five years as part of the Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Professional Training Webinar Series for schools (schools graphic branding shown here). In developing each webinar, SCG prepares planning documents that include an agenda for the hour-long presentation, suggested expert speakers, and participant learning objectives. SCG offers expert speakers assistance in slide development, coaching calls, and webinar dry runs. Each webinar is marketed for four to six weeks to EPA Regions, partner organizations, and a network of more than 70,000 subscribers. On the day of each webinar, SCG staff run GoToWebinar technology, answer participant questions, and troubleshoot user errors, as well as send out webinar chat posts that provide links to more information about topics brought up during speaker presentations. SCG assists EPA in fielding



questions in real-time so that a list of approved participant questions is ready for the 30-minute question-and-answer session immediately following the presentation. Following each live webinar, participants receive a link to evaluate the webinar and access their personalized certificate of completion. SCG video production staff prepare video and caption files, which are made available for on-demand viewing on EPA's website.

SCG tracks metrics over time to determine overall series success and participation for both live and on-demand webinars. To date, all 30 IAQ Professional Training Webinars have garnered a total of 20,254 participants. Approximately 75 percent of participants reported an increase in knowledge after attending a webinar, with an average self-reported increase of 46 percent. Eighty-six percent of participants committed to taking action to improve school IAQ, a 21 percent increase in the number of participants making that commitment after the webinar, as compared to before the webinar. Overall, participants give webinars high ratings for providing tangible steps and realistic solutions to their IAQ problems, as well as for highlighting school district success stories and additional resources.

SCG has provided support for more than 30 webinars hosted by EPA's Asthma Program, using the GoToWebinar platform. Throughout the history of SCG's supporting this program, the webinars have garnered more than 20,000 registrants and an average attendance rate of more than 50 percent. The Asthma Program's most successful webinars are the annual presentation of the National Environmental Leadership Award in Asthma Management (shown here), for which SCG has helped award more than 20 asthma programs and supported six webinars. SCG's support for the Award Winners webinars includes developing detailed marketing campaigns, overseeing the award submission and review process, hosting expert review panel webinars, and supporting the final award winner presentation. In addition, SCG develops and hosts live webinar polling questions, virtual question and answer sessions, and post-webinar evaluations. In 2020, SCG supported the EPA Asthma Program's most successful webinar to date, "Home Characteristics and Asthma Triggers Checklist and Training for Home Visitors: Making Homes Healthier," with more than 1,400 registrants and nearly 800 attendees. The historic webinar included four live polling questions with an average response rate of 50 percent, as well as 88 technical and content-related questions from participants. SCG support staff answered the technical questions during the webinar and facilitated the expert speakers' ability to respond to the content-related questions in the webinar's discussion forum that followed the event. SCG's support has been essential to the success of the Asthma Program's webinar series.





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