Updated Remote Participation Governance Guidelines

Purpose: Consideration
Submitted by: APEC Secretariat

First Budget and Management Committee Meeting
Nha Trang, Viet Nam
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Executive Summary

At SOM 2 in 2014, Senior Officials endorsed the Remote Participation Governance Guidelines (2014/SOM2/035) for conducting meetings with remote access of delegates and invited guests.

Since May 2014, about 15 sessions of remote participation have been conducted during APEC Fora's meetings and project events. Most of them include remote presentation and interactive discussion, which went well in general.

Some of the procedures and timeline for preparing for a remote participation meeting proposed in the previous Guidelines have not proved practical, especially for meetings held at SOM cluster. Some governance issues have not been addressed in the existing guidelines. In addition, there have been some changes in available remote participation technologies. In general, the processes for conducting remote access meetings have become cheaper and more straight-forward. Therefore, this paper aims to update the guidelines to ensure better governance and coordination among relevant stakeholders.

Required Action/Decision Points

It is recommended that the Budget Management Committee (BMC):

1. Approved the Updated Remote Participation Guidelines;
2. Submit the Updated Remote Participation Guidelines to SOM for endorsement.

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Remote Participation Governance Guidelines

1. INTRODUCTION

With APEC's multilateral agenda, physical face-to-face meetings allow for greater opportunities for discussions, informal collaboration, networking and knowledge exchange. However, some delegates face limited opportunities for travel to meetings given other work commitments, time, cost, and other personal considerations. Should this happen, remote participation provides real-time access remotely either via video and/or audio. Cross-fora collaboration can be further promoted through remote participation. A model of managed online meetings involving on-site attendees and remote participants offers an alternative to increase participation and outreach. E-participation is not only a viable solution for people who cannot physically attend a meeting but is also an environmental friendly option.

Concerns

While some have been supportive of making greater use of remote participation technology, others recognize that remote participation cannot fully replace the advantages of face-to-face interaction at meetings. Other concerns that may preclude the use of remote services on a wider basis revolve around time zone differences, unstable internet connections, local firewalls, lack of access to remote participation technology and confidentiality of discussions.

Utilizing Remote Participation

Being able to participate remotely when onsite participation is not possible is useful.

Despite constraints to remote participation, APEC meeting organizers are encouraged to explore this option as a supplement to face-to-face meetings, on a case-by-case basis and in close consultation with the meeting host. The remote facility is envisaged to be most beneficial where it facilitates the "virtual" attendance of key stakeholders for particular agenda items (where those stakeholders could otherwise not attend) or where it brings together a sub-group of interested economies to advance a specific issue inter-sessionally.

Remote participation could be used for both delegates and invited guests. Invited guests will need to be approved by the concerned fora in accordance with the Guidelines on Managing Cooperation with Non-Members endorsed at SOM 3 2015 (2015/SOM3/005) .

Guidance

There are a number of remote participation meetings already taking place in APEC. The Remote Participation Governance Guidelines have been agreed as a guiding tool to help the Meeting host and Chair, physical and remote participants prepare for an effective and successful session. A meeting using remote participation is still an official APEC meeting, and the relevant guidelines apply, including the Guidelines for Hosting APEC Meetings, APEC Meetings Communication Guidelines, Guidelines on Managing Cooperation with Non-members and others.

This document lays out a framework describing the types, requirements, governance, logistical and technical requirements needed for various forms of remote participation. It offers guidance to meeting hosts on selecting, governing and deploying the remote participation option where appropriate.

2. TYPES OF REMOTE PARTICIPATION

There are many different types of remote participation available. The following describes some common scenarios for remote participation. Using scenarios allows us to identify the key requirements for specific types of meetings, so that individual solutions to individual scenarios become possible, rather than attempting to find a "one size fits all" solution that would apply to every type of meeting.

Teleconferencing and remote presentations are two simple forms being used currently. Following some internal trials, the following scenarios using Skype for Business[1] in conjunction with a webcasting center model (Skype Meeting Broadcast feature) have been identified as appropriate configurations that could be used to suit different meetings. Annex 1 provides a snapshot diagram of these scenarios.

Remote Participation Type	Description
Observing a real meeting	Participants listen to or watch the meeting remotely via a Remote Participation System (such as Skype for Business) or Webcasting center (either live or recorded).
Participating in a real meeting (moderated remote participation)	Used for combination meetings including both face-to-face and remote participation. Remote participants are able to make interventions/provide comments or conduct a remote presentation during the meeting.
Participating in a virtual meeting	Primarily used for informal small or medium group meetings such as study groups. Allows online seminars to be shared with remote locations.

Note that at this stage the Guidelines do not cover live web-casting.

The typical form of remote participation utilizes a standard interactive web conferencing software (Skype for Business is the preferred for APEC), a webcasting center (providing live or on-demand webcasting services), standard terminal devices (PCs, smartphones, desk phones and so on). In the case of moderated remote participation and remote listening, the remote participation facility is connected to a physical conference venue through the Internet. Annex 2 provides a diagram for the remote participation system and a Webcasting Centre model can be seen in Annex 3.

The remote listening mode may be used during instances of poor internet access or internet traffic congestion. Because of low-streaming audio bandwidth, this mode is also useful when remote participants experience limited internet bandwidth or can only use a traditional desk phone. With Skype for Business, the platform of the remote participation system and the webcasting center providing both video and audio signals, implementing the remote listening mode merely involves inactivating the video feature. An example of the remote listening facility can be found in Annex 4.

Such remote listening/viewing might also be done in recorded form, to allow a listener/viewer to fast-forward to specific agenda items of interest, or to permit access at a more convenient local hour. Should the session be recorded, it should be agreed by the members of the relevant APEC Fora in advance.

3.   GOVERNANCE

3.1. Authorization for Remote Participation

The Chair of the meeting/fora and the APEC Secretariat are the focal point for remote participation request. The request will then be communicated with the fora members for consideration. Once agreed by the fora, the fora Chair will, through the APEC Secretariat (Host Economy Representative – HER or Program Director – PD), make request to the meeting host on having remote participation approach. Agreement by the host to provide necessary technical infrastructure and staff to facilitate remote participation is required. If the meeting host is not able to provide conditions for remote participation, the Fora could still conduct the meeting using remote participation at its own costs. Once the use of remote participation is confirmed, the Secretariat could give technical assistance, including remote and onsite as appropriate and subject to budget availability, on preparation and operation of the remote participation sessions.

Time zone of the venue of the physical meeting should take primacy. Adjustments to minimize the remote participants' inconvenience can be attended to at the host's discretion in consultation with the Chair of the meeting.

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[1] Previously known as Microsoft Lync.

3.2. Accreditation and Registration

APEC meetings are generally restricted to accredited delegates from member economies and approved institutions. As such it is important that all remote participants or webcast viewers undergo a proper accreditation process by the meeting host.

Non-member participants will need to be approved by the concerned fora in accordance with the Guidelines on Managing Cooperation with Non-Members. Other persons at the remote site should not be allowed access without the meetings agreement.

When expecting a large number of remote participants, in particular for viewing/ listening, of a meeting, the Meeting hosts could consider allowing online registration for remote participants.

Participant list of the meeting will include remote participants.

3.3. Documentation and Materials

It is important that all meeting materials (including agenda and presentations) be made available in advance of the meeting in order for remote participants to be able to pre-read materials, engage in the meeting and provide contributions to the discussions.

All material presented remotely will be treated as normal APEC documents in line with current guidelines.

3.4. Confidentiality

APEC operates by consensus and it needs space to consider and debate issues to develop consensus. For the deliberative process to function optimally, it is necessary to safeguard the free and candid exchange of ideas. Therefore, while APEC makes publicly available summary reports and other documents classified for public release by the originating fora, meeting participants are expected to display sensitivity in disclosing information to the public exchanged during the course of its deliberations.

While APEC encourages all meeting participants to preserve the privacy of meeting participants and deliberations, transparency can be facilitated through dissemination of information when there is explicit permission and acknowledgement of all parties concerned.

3.5. Recordings

Any recordings of APEC meetings, including remote participation sessions, as well as the purpose and usage of the meeting recordings should be agreed to beforehand by the Chair and members of the relevant fora. Meeting feeds cannot be posted or webcasted without agreement from the Fora Chair and members.

In general, it is accepted that meetings may be informally recorded by APEC participants, purely for the purpose of assisting note taking by economies or the Secretariat. These recordings must be kept confidential.

3.6. Interpretation

English is the official working language in APEC. Should the remote speakers wish to use other language than English during their participation at an APEC meeting, they should be responsible for the interpretation services at their end at their own costs, and inform the meeting Chair and organizers as well as the APEC Secretariat in advance to ensure appropriate technical set up.

3.7. Communications

Regular communication among all parties is key to advancing and implementing remote participation services at APEC meetings. Agreement to extend remote participation for a meeting should be sought in advance among the fora Chair and members and the meeting host. The list of remote participants

should be shared among the Meeting/Fora Chair, APEC Secretariat and meeting host for appropriate preparation.

For meetings hosted by the APEC Host Economy, the Host Economy Representative (HER) will be the coordinator between the Host Economy and the APEC Secretariat during the preparation for remote participation sessions.

The meeting host and APEC Secretariat will coordinate in facilitating and conveying the process, infrastructure and technical requirements necessary for the blended onsite and remote meeting.

4.   ROLES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The remote participation service requires the involvement of several stakeholders to deliver a successful outcome. Each stakeholder has their responsibilities and helps ensure accountability for each meeting's success and seeks out ways to continually improve the remote meeting experience.

Chair of the Fora and/or the Meeting	• Ensure that fora members are agreeable to use remote participation; • Make request with the host/organizers, with assistance from the HER/ PD, for remote participation; • Introduce members who are participating remotely at the start of the meeting. Manage the agenda in a timely manner and engage both onsite and remote participants during the meeting.
Meeting host/ organizer	• Consult with Chair and members of the relevant fora to confirm use of remote participation method; • Provide physical and hardware resources; sufficient internet bandwidth connectivity; facilities to accommodate the remote service; enforce participation protocols; and troubleshoot problems faced by remote participants; • Provide in-room technical support staff to check required equipment; • Provide personnel to assist the Chair in moderating the remote participation sessions (e.g speaking request and arrangement for remote speakers); • Upload the meeting video file to the Webcasting Centre if it is pre-agreed so by the concern APEC Fora (once this feature is developed).
APEC Secretariat: Host Economy Representative Program Director IT Unit	 • Coordinate between the Host Economy and the APEC Secretariat during the preparation for remote participation sessions; • Act as the contact point for meeting arrangements and documentation, liaison with remote participants on procedural arrangements and assists the Chair to facilitate the meeting; • Facilitate and support the remote participation system;
Remote attendees	• Indicate intention to participate remotely well in advance of meeting; • Check out any local firewall restrictions; • Log onto the Skype for Business platform at least ten minutes early to address any technical issues prior to the meeting; • Communicate difficulties during the meeting to the coordinator via the chosen instant messaging channel.
Fora Members	• Consider using remote participation method when appropriate.

5.   REQUIREMENTS AND EQUIPMENT FOR REMOTE ACCESS

Deploying the remote participation service requires some minimum hardware, software and external service items on-site as noted below. The interactive web conference software can be developed by the APEC Secretariat.

Skype for Business has been utilized for remote participation of APEC Meetings in the past two years and is recommended as the APEC Secretariat could provide most efficient assistance. Where Skype for Business is not a possible option, the remote speakers, meeting host and APEC Secretariat will work together to find other technical solution.

System	Description	Cost Implications
Interactive Web Conferencing Software (Skype for Business) Solution	• Skype for Business video meeting features allows 250 bilateral, 1,000 unilateral participants, voice call, instant messaging (IM) and remote presentation services. • Connects remote participants to the physical meeting via a virtual meeting room which participants can access through the Internet or a PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network). • Host meeting organizer (technician) opens the virtual meeting room with this solution. • Remote participants without Skype accounts can access through the Secretariat's subscription via Skype Web App, located in the invitation email to remote participants containing the "Join a Meeting" tab.	APEC Secretariat
Internet bandwidth	• Skype for Business recommends minimum, good quality bandwidth of 2.5Mbps for interactive presentations. For audio/video purposes only, 2Mbps is sufficient.	Meeting host; Remote participant
Notebook PCs	• Are generally required (two), one to capture video and audio at the meeting and conduct communications via the internet. A second laptop is beneficial as a backup in case of technical failures.	Meeting host
Webcam	• To capture images of the speaker/s or the conference room. Where tracking cameras are not available, two camcorders are typically used, one to provide a fixed view of the room and the other of the podium.	Meeting host
Microphone system	• Is required to connect the remote facility to the microphone system at the physical venue.	Meeting host
Presentation equipment	• Beam projector and white screen for remote participants to view the real meeting room.	Meeting host
Intercall application	• Required to integrate PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) to Skype for Business to provide teleconference feature via telephone service with local charge.	Meeting host or Remote participants
Communication device at the remote sides	• Communication devices that are compatible with Skype for Business services	Remote participants

Intercall application is not advisable if the internet speed is sufficient. It should be made clear in advance who, between the Meeting host and Remote participants, would bear the cost arise from usage of intercall.

6.   MANAGING THE REMOTE PARTICIPATION PROCESS

A meeting involving remote participation requires the key stakeholders to communicate in advance of a meeting to understand the objectives and the interaction between both onsite and remote delegates. Where possible, the HER could inform the APEC Secretariat (PDs) as soon as possible in advance if the Host Economy will not provide remote participation facilitation at any meeting venue.

The following are recommended steps when deploying the remote participation facility. The meeting Chair, meeting Host and APEC Secretariat may discuss and agree with other timeline as necessary.

Further guidance on process can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to be developed by the APEC Secretariat.

Steps where possible	Description
4 – 6 weeks before the meeting (or when meeting agenda is developed)	• The Fora Chair, meeting host and APEC Secretariat (HER/PD) should have preliminary email exchanges on the possibility of deploying remote services for a specific meeting. Fora members' agreement for using remote participation should also be sought. • The meeting host will make the final decision if they could provide conditions for remote participation. They also decide if the "Remote Participation" option should be included in the registration system for efficiency.
2 weeks before the meeting	• Meeting Chair/Program Director or the meeting host (if they oversee the registration for remote participants) shares the consolidated list of registered remote participants among fora/meeting Chairs, meeting host and APEC Secretariat.
7 - 10 days before the meeting	• Program Director overseeing a particular meeting communicates with fora members and remote participants on arrangements for remote deployment, technical requirements and document submission timelines (best practice is 10 days before meeting). • Program Director conveys an invitation email to remote participants explaining the process to access the virtual meeting room, managing time zone issues and the availability of pre-meeting documents in the forum's ACS (APEC Collaboration System) page. • Program Director clarifies with meeting host on physical and technical requirements: technical staff, internet bandwidth connectivity, microphones, presentation equipment, notebooks and webcams (if applicable).
1 day before the meeting	• Program Director reminds remote participants and speakers/presenters to check notebook, headphones, test individual remote access, internet bandwidth and a conducive, quiet environment for the meeting. A test run with remote attendees to troubleshoot issues is recommended. • Program Director checks the meeting room setup including arrangements, facilities and supporting staff responsible for deploying the remote access facility.

Before the start of the meeting	• Program Director ensures all presentation materials for the meeting have been uploaded to the physical meeting room and the Skype for Business online meeting room.
	• Program Director coordinates and clarifies with the host's technical staff to ensure internet connectivity onsite and for remote participants; projection equipment, remote process and moderation protocols, and contingencies for any downtime during the meeting.
During the meeting	• Remote participants will remain muted by default and be unmuted only for the duration of the planned intervention or once given the floor by the Chair. The remote participants will then hear a recorded voice asking to provide the intervention.
	• Host technical staff managing the remote access facility takes the cue/directions from the Chair throughout the meeting.
After the meeting	• Program Director checks the meeting video file (if any) has been uploaded to the Webcasting centre by the meeting moderator successfully.
	• Program Director checks in with remote attendees post meeting to make sure they had a positive experience, and work on ironing out wrinkles as they're identified.

7.   CONTINGENCY PLANNING

A contingency plan considered by meeting hosts, moderators and the program director in advance of a remote participation meeting may be useful to meet any interruptions or technical downtimes that may occur. The following offers some suggested guidance to adopt during such events.
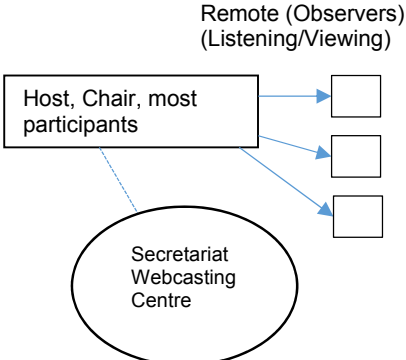
- Remote attendees are advised to log on to the Skype for Business platform 10 minutes before a meeting commences to address any technical issues, if any.
- Remote presenters may need a longer lead time of 30 minutes before a meeting to ensure internet connection and presentation file uploads are in place. If remote presenters are not connected early to test the system, the technical staff (meeting moderator/organizer) may consider an appropriate cut-off time before canceling the intervention to avoid any disruptions to the physical onsite meeting which should proceed as usual according to the meeting schedule.
- In instances of power failure, disruption to the internet or Skype for Business service, remote participation will be halted. The physical onsite meeting should proceed as normal.
  In cases of slow or poor internet connection, the remote listening option is possible by dialing in to the PSTN (via a desk phone) Skype for Business meeting number advised in the invitation email sent to remote participants in advance of the meeting. Attendees should be aware that intercall phone charges are applicable for this listening feature.
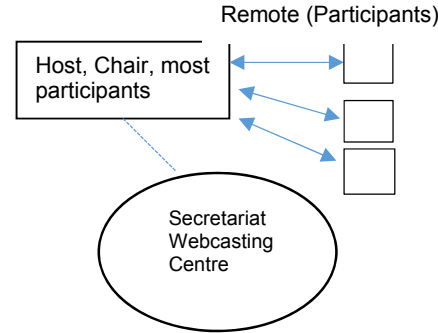
8.   REPORTING AND UPDATING

The APEC Secretariat will monitor the use of remote participation, and report back on its progress. In addition a set of FAQs will be put together to cover common problems experienced and to provide advice. These guidelines will be updated periodically.

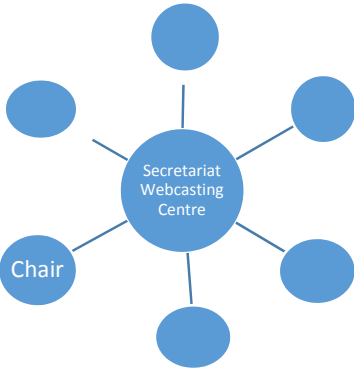**Annex 1: Recommended Initial Remote Participation Scenarios**

(A) Observing a Real Meeting

Appropriate for:

Remote (Observers)
(Listening/Viewing)

Host, Chair, most participants

Secretariat Webcasting Centre

(B) Participating in a Real Meeting

Remote (Participants)

Host, Chair, most participants

Secretariat Webcasting Centre

(C) Participating in a Virtual Meeting

Secretariat Webcasting Centre

Chair

Informal small meetings	Sub-fora	SOM/ Committees
√	√	√
√	√	x
√	x	x

Annex 2: Diagram of Remote Participation System
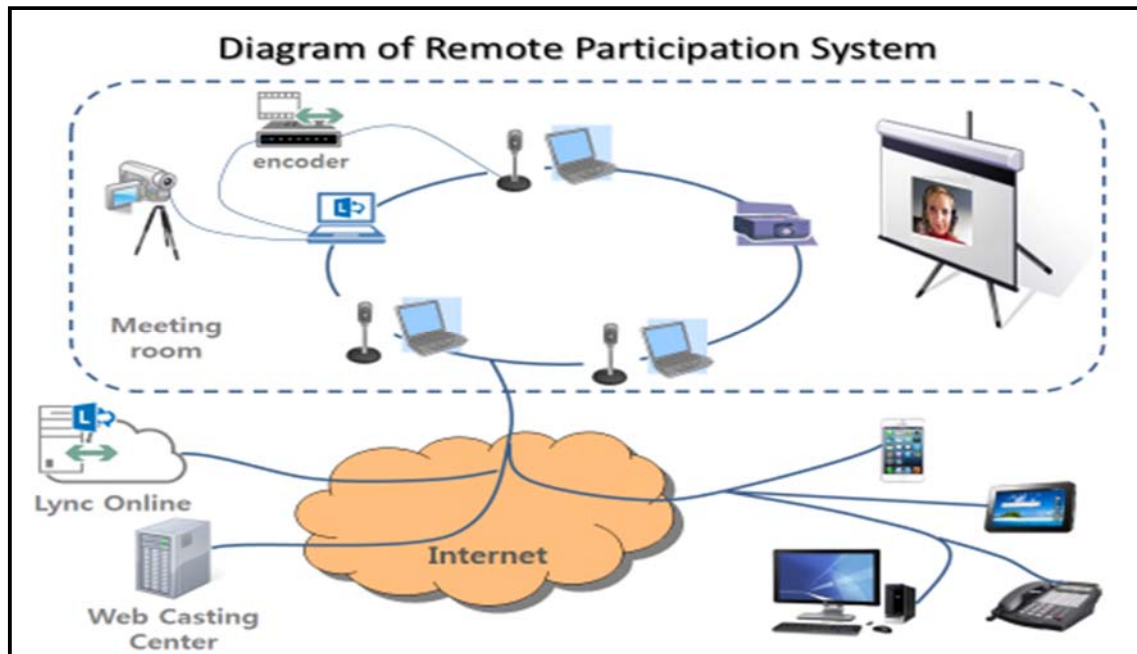
The Remote Participation system consists of a webcam connected to a notebook (or camcorder), Skype for Business (previously known as MS Lync) Online, Webcasting Center and terminal devices for remote participants as in the slides above.

The meeting venue should provide presentation facilities and microphone systems.

The remote participation system provides a hybrid of online and offline participation. For instance, 3 participants out of 100 meeting members can join a meeting remotely via the remote participation system while the other 97 participants are attending the same meeting onsite.

For terminal devices, participants can utilize a PC with webcam, smart device (iPhone or galaxy pad for instance), telephone to join the meeting remotely. Attendees can use a smart phone to make a comment remotely to a meeting while watching the meeting through the smart phone.

Skype for Business is the platform solution for Remote Participation with main features as follows:

- Get real-time presence information - including photos, availability status, and location - and enhanced instant messaging (IM) to connect efficiently and effectively.
- Make voice calls through your computer to other Lync or Skype users in your organization or in other organizations that use Lync or Skype.
- Create, moderate, and join pre-planned and on-the-fly audio, video, and web meetings with people inside and outside your organization.
- Enhance online presentations with screen-sharing and virtual whiteboards.

Further details on using Skype for Business for meeting attendees and presenters can be obtained at this link:
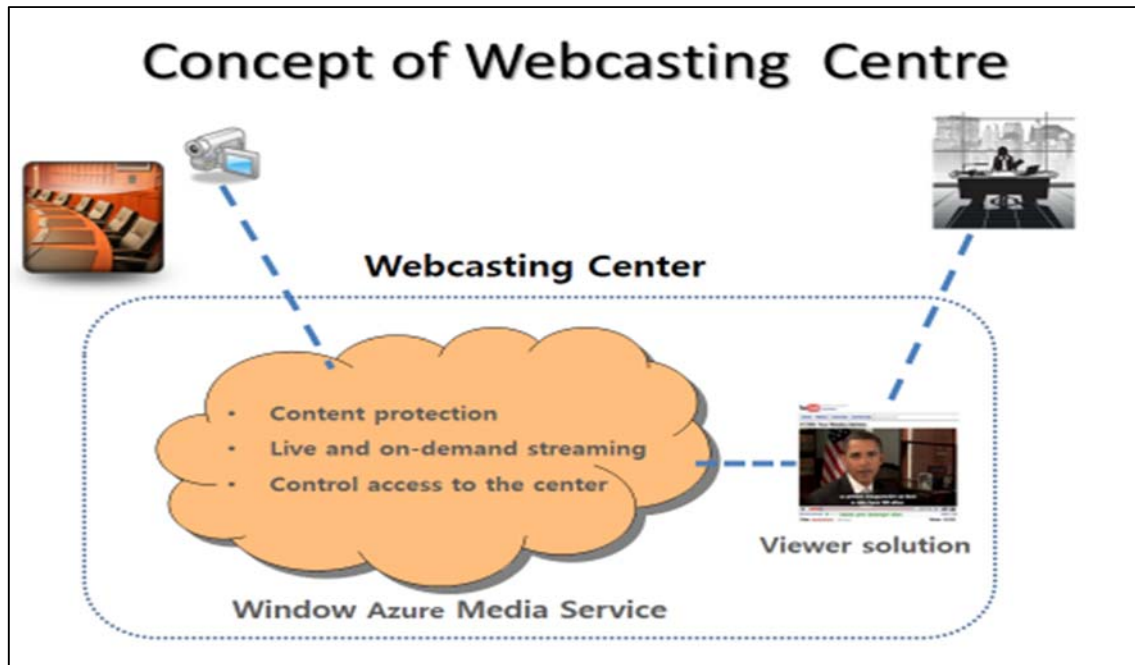
Successful meetings with Skype for Business (User guide document)
https://download.microsoft.com/download/E/5/D/E5DF7F75-8B6B-4CD4-B702-D8E7743EB032/4065_Successful_Meetings_with_Skype_for_Business_External.docx
Details on Hosting Guidelines and Communications Guidelines can be found in the following link:
http://www.apec.org/About-Us/About-APEC/Policies-and-Procedures.aspx

Annex 3: Webcasting Centre Model

Concept of Webcasting Centre

Webcasting Center

- Content protection
- Live and on-demand streaming
- Control access to the center

Viewer solution

Window Azure Media Service

Requirement of the Webcasting Center

o Video

— Provide HD quality streaming as well as SD streaming, making it optional to users.
— Should capture at least one video stream of the venue, another view if possible
— Enable users to make a selection among the video signals if multi signals are available.
※ *Meeting will be recorded through webcam connected to the MS Lync or high-end camera.*
— Provide an automatic bandwidth adjustment system to optimize usage where internet bandwidth may be limited or restricted from the user to the webcasting center.

o Audio

— Provide voice from a venue microphone or webcam microphone, which should be made optional to users.
— Allow remote delegates to listen to the audio through computer speakers without having to join a Remote Participation solution based upon Lync.

o Authentication and Security

— Authentication should be performed against details stored in the AIMP Directory.
— Security should provide restricted access where only users with a valid login can enter, and usage management reporting on an event-by-event basis or over a specific period.

Annex 4: Remote Listening Model

The Remote Listening mode may be necessary for instances when the internet access is very poor or internet traffic is highly congested. In addition, remote listening is useful when remote participants experience limited internet bandwidth or can only use a traditional desk phone. With Skype for Business, the platform of the remote participation system and the webcasting center (Skype Meeting Broadcast feature) providing both video and audio signals, implementing the remote listening mode merely involves inactivating the video feature. The following examples below display the remote listening modes implemented at the webcasting center and Skype for Business respectively.