

Think Tank Survey Report

January 2020



Key Findings:

1. The 2020 Think Tank components were highly rated by participants. Over 80% of respondents rated the overall content, relevancy and usefulness of content, and clarity/presentations of content experts either a “4” or “5” on a 5-point scale. Zero respondents rated any of the components as poor (rated 1 or 2).
2. Most respondents enjoyed the virtual format (81% agreed or strongly agreed). However, participants were split on whether they preferred the online format compared to in-person events. Only 26% of respondents agreed that they preferred the online format with 45% disagreeing and 30% neutral. Respondents noted that a hybrid format may be best in the future because some people may not be able to attend in-person events.
3. The session formats were generally rated as very positive. Most participants thought the 20-20-20 format worked well (77% agreed). Just over 50% would have preferred more time for small group discussions; however, most respondents did not see a need for additional large group discussion time.
4. Approximately 85% of participants said they would be likely to recommend the Think Tank to friends or colleagues (rated 8, 9, or 10 in likelihood to recommend). Over 90% said they were either somewhat or very likely to attend a future Think Tank themselves. Overall, support for future Think Tanks was strong among survey respondents.
5. The primary strengths of the Think Tank were the collaboration opportunities, networking, and perspectives gained from the topics and presenters. Comments discussed the benefits of having a diverse group of professionals with varying areas of expertise. Respondents thought the virtual format was well run and organized.
6. The primary weaknesses also revolved around the virtual format but more so in comparison to in-person events. The days were perceived as long and made connecting with people harder than in-person. Furthermore, some comments mentioned grouping of sessions by themes or a general theme for the Think Tank as being beneficial.

Additional Thoughts from evaluation and feedback.

Deeper Dive sessions were well received and gave those that were interested in those subjects an opportunity for further discussion.

Parks and Recreation was by far the profession most represented – followed by higher education, planning, research, and public health. Also, economic development, land/water wildlife conservation, the outdoor industry, public schools, and others.

We had many positive comments including it was the best virtual conference attended and the respondent had attended many.

On the “suggestion side” for improvement”: the individual came from a tiny P & R department and found little that applied – discussion items not on the radar screen

Hoping for more local government/community-based sessions – DEI, managing increasing citizen expectations, transparency and open government, etc.

It was different than expected-more representation outside of Parks and Recreation – while there was some connection it seemed more relevant for research interest and academia

Breakouts were too short. Since it is by invitation there is an expectation of a curated deep dive into topics

More time needed in small groups

Liked the sessions that made us dive deeper rather than the “feel good” sessions

The lack of diversity among thought leaders and topic experts was noted.

Just a few notes on the positive side: the variety and depth of viewpoints, and thoughts shared, creates a type of holistic learning that is hard to find in other settings

Lots of great ideas and passionate people. This is the best online offering of the year

On the subject of a virtual Think Tank – as expected general thought that it would be better in person, 4 days on Zoom too much etc. Several recognized that it is the only way they could have attended due to budget restrictions and that it enables a broader range of topics and “topic experts”

It would have been so much better in person

Suggestions that it remain a hybrid event.