

## Success Story:

# Institute of Government at University of Central Florida

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**Marion Bakamitsou**

Project Manager,

The Institute of Government at University of Central Florida

The mission of the Institute of Government at University of Central Florida (UCF) is to increase the effectiveness and quality of government in Florida through applied research, training, technical assistance programs, and public service. The Institute’s unbiased and balanced expertise has resulted in lasting relationships with local and state government, educators, communities, and professional associations in both the public and private sectors.



## Challenge

One of the ways in which the Institute positively impacts the community is through their partnership with the Florida Association of Code Enforcement (F.A.C.E). The Institute supports F.A.C.E. by educating and certifying code enforcement personnel throughout Florida. In addition to maintaining necessary certifications and licenses, the Institute also delivers F.A.C.E.’s annual conference – a critical event where its members can network and participate in trainings. In April 2020, when the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic threatened to derail the annual conference, Mari Rains, Director for the Institute, knew that they had to pivot and come up with a viable alter-native to an in-person event.

Marion Bakamitsou, Project Manager for the Institute, was also convinced that there had to be a better solution to offer the client other than to cancel. “This conference is critical to F.A.C.E.’s mission. The conference is where they host their annual meeting and provide trainings. With COVID-19, that came to a crashing halt. Being their partner, we needed to help not by cancelling but delivering it differently.”

Even with approval to hold the conference virtually, Bakamitsou still needed to overcome multiple obstacles. F.A.C.E. had never hosted a virtual event. Time constraints were another concern. Additionally, as a non-profit organization, the Institute had a small team and a limited budget. The Institute had to quickly find a solution that they could learn and implement by the time of the conference.



## Solution

After evaluating their options, the Institute selected GoTo's GoTo Webinar as their platform to host the conference. One primary factor influencing their decision was GoTo's quality of customer service. "Prior to the conference, the Institute rehearsed the virtual event on GoTo Webinar. The extra preparation with GoTo's Event Services team made the event run efficiently and flawlessly. It was a huge success," said Bakamitsou.

GoTo's offer of GoTo Webinar through the Emergency Remote Work Kit was another attractive component. At a time when organizations needed to quickly transition to virtual events due to COVID-19, the Emergency Remote Work Kit offered non-profits like the Institute seats of GoTo Webinar free of charge for 3 months. Bakamitsou took advantage of this opportunity as a way to test the platform to ensure it was the right fit.

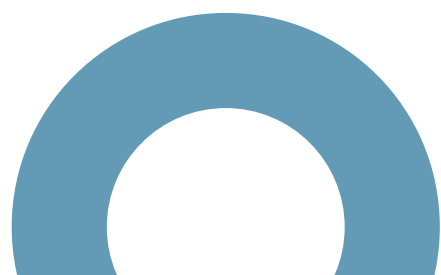
*"We started testing GoTo Webinar incrementally through staff meetings and we started recording things. We were very excited because we saw fairly quickly that it was going to meet our needs," she said.*

Ultimately, it was GoTo Webinar's robust feature set that solidified their decision. The polls, surveys, chat, and Q&A features helped create an engine to encourage attendee engagement and participation. The Reporting feature gave the Institute insight into training attendance, active participation, polling participation, and evaluation completion to track progress towards their goals. Finally, the Recorded Events feature allowed Bakamitsou to offer cloud recordings of the live event afterwards, while still maintaining the look and feel of the live event, with the ability for attendees to submit questions and evaluations, as well as respond to polls. Bakamitsou commented, "The Recorded Events feature of GoTo Webinar was the final element to seal the deal, because not only did we want to have a virtual live event, but we also wanted to offer a second day of our conference through the whole month, where people could come in at their convenience and participate in these trainings."

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## Results

Both F.A.C.E and the Institute were ecstatic about the success of the conference. Not only was F.A.C.E. able to retain their budgeted conference revenue, but they also saw a 50% higher profit margin from moving the event online due to savings on travel, hotel lodging, speakers, food, and venue costs they would have otherwise needed to pay if the event was in-person. Previous enrollment for the conference typically ranged from 270-280 attendees. By switching the conference to a virtual event, enrollment jumped to almost 400 people, a nearly 50% year over year increase. Further, the most prized measure of success was the overwhelmingly positive testimonials from attendees and speakers. When asked to reflect on her overall experience, Bakamitsou stated, “We had an amazing experience. GoTo Webinar ended up being such a success and exceeded our expectations. We needed it at a time when we didn’t know how we were going to pull this off.”



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Shifting your events from in-person to virtual doesn't have to be a hassle!  
Call us at 1 (800) 514-1317 to speak to an advisor.

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