

PLANNING QUESTIONS: CHOOSING ONLINE COLLABORATION TOOLS FOR HARVESTING

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Which online collaboration tool to use when?

This document has some of the questions I consider when selecting which tool or tools to use for harvesting. These are just a starting place; you will have your own questions to add! You can make a copy of this document and make it yours (File / Make a Copy).

There are six categories of questions below:

1. [Group size](#)
2. [Time](#)
3. [Accessibility](#)
4. [Devices](#)
5. [Working with the Harvest](#)
6. [Designing for the Harvest](#)

1 Group size

- **What is the size of the group?** Sometimes this is the first decision point for me. Some tools are more stable with larger groups, some tools are better suited to smaller groups.

2 Time

- **How much time is there to 'meet' the tool during the meeting?** E.g. time for technical instructions/demo, and time to transition people into the tool. The more basic the functionality of the tool, the quicker it will be to introduce/explain.
- **How long is the meeting?** If your meeting is only 60 minutes long, you won't want to spend a lot of the time with technical instructions/demo; may want to select a tool that works quick and easy. Longer meetings, you can allocate a bit more time to introduce a tool or tools and host people into them well.

3 Accessibility

Consider that not everyone can: See well or at all, Hear well or at all, Speak well or at all, Move well or at all, Understand information presented in some ways well or not at all. ~ Source: LeAnn Naillon and Jennifer Grush-Dale from Living Independence Network Corp,

Some considerations for visual accessibility:

- How will the tool work for people who use screen readers or other assistive technologies?

- How will the tool work for people who use reverse contrast or dark mode monitors, or who have colour blindness? E.g. use of colours, font choices.
- Is the tool entirely keyboard operable?
- Are there particular features within the tool to be aware of regarding your group's accessibility needs? Or language translation accessibility?

Technical accessibility:

- **Are there any internet bandwidth considerations?** E.g. folks joining from areas with low or wobbly bandwidth such as rural or remote areas.
- **Are there any tools blocked or security requirements?** E.g. server locations, data storage, privacy rules.

4 Devices

- **How will people access the online tools?** E.g. on their mobile phone with the Zoom app, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, older devices that don't have much processing power, phone dial-in only?
- **How mobile-friendly do we need the tool to be?**

5 Working with the Harvest

- **Is it okay if the harvest lives in the tool as-is or do we need to work with it in different ways for sensemaking, etc.?**
- **What export functionality is needed?** E.g. images only, PDF only, Excel (from Excel you can easily move into Word, etc. for written summaries).

6 Designing for the Harvest

- **What different formats will the harvest be in?** E.g. Typed words, photo/images, music such as YouTube links or Spotify links, voice notes, videos, etc.
- **How multi-media friendly do we need the tool to be?**
- **Will there be small group conversations that need their own harvest spaces? How many small group spaces are needed?** This can sometimes help folks focus on their own harvest space; seeing a reflection of what's been important in their conversation that isn't mixed in with the whole group.
- **Do you need to create some organization for what is harvested?** E.g. Graphic organizer with a series of questions in a harvest template to help guide the conversation and focus the harvest.
- **Are there supplemental materials that need to be included?** E.g. policy brief, draft recommendation, other background materials.
- **Are there any other functional needs for the harvest space?** E.g. anonymous contributions, prioritizing or voting, etc.
- **Is there a particular look + feel that is important to convey in the harvest space?** E.g. visual metaphors, imagery, branding colours, etc.