Throughout our presentation, participants shared resources, discussed what we were sharing, and asked questions in the chat. This document shares those conversations and answers some commonly asked questions.

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Participant Recommended Resources

In the chat, participants shared their favorite virtual tools, including:

- Diep Vuong: Try out ahaslides.com It is much cheaper than mentimeter and achieves great interaction.

- Scott Neilitz: We use groupmap https://www.groupmap.com/

- Debby Lewis: nearpod

- Rebecca Brightwell: I would suggest turning on captions in Google... it does live captioning

- Jeremy Foutz: With Zoom, closed captioning is an additional feature https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/207279736-Managing-and-viewing-closed-captioning

- Mariah Acton: FunRetro is a really good platform to do this type of sticky note exercise too: https://funretro.io/features/

- Genevieve Hugenbruch: You can also use the annotate feature in Zoom if you can't use a different platform.

- Jennifer (Jen) van Stelle: Miro is also really great: https://miro.com

- Anne Heberger Marino: Mural is another good option. https://www.mural.co/
    - Lauren Bates: Be sure to check out all of templates in Mural. There are a lot of good options, and you can also create your own.

- Susan Savage: Idea Boardz works well too. People can post ideas and others can "vote up" so you can see what ideas have larger groups in agreement.

- Cathy Hearn: Jamboard is a really cool alternative to poster paper/sticky notes. It's also a Google tool and we've found that users find it intuitive. In my opinion it has a little more functionality than Google Slides for facilitating discussion. https://edu.google.com/products/jamboard/

- Christopher Voegeli: I really like linoit for sticky note activities and it's free

Participant Questions

Below are some questions from the chat and our answers:

What other tools can you use for online facilitation?
Q: Google Slides work so well with Zoom; however I've run into an issue with people not having access to them (typically federal employees). Any other tools that function the same that you have used instead?

A: You can find a list of the tools we're familiar with in our [facilitator's templates](#). You may also want to check out the resources participants shared, above. We chose Google Slides for today's presentation because we've found it to be generally accessible and intuitive to participants and allows multiple people (up to 100!) to edit at the same time. But many of you have some great ideas for alternatives!

What are the privacy policies with different platforms?
Q: How are the privacy policies with these different platforms? This has been on ongoing concern of mine.

A: This is an important question, especially as evaluators consider confidentiality concerns, data privacy issues, and working with different server settings. Many entities such as the federal government, schools, and even certain companies may have different security restrictions for users. Privacy and access will vary by platform and we do

recommend looking into this when selecting the tool for your meetings. We also recommend testing the tool or enquiring ahead of the meeting as to which tool your participants will be able to access. You could try this with a pre-meeting poll to see if anyone has issues accessing the platform.

What if you can't share a link via chat?

Q: How do you share in Microsoft Teams when invited guests outside of my organization have very limited access, such as no sharing. We are locked down tightly for security reasons. That is why we do not use Zoom. Any suggestions?

A: Related to the above question on security, you may not be able to share a link to participants via your video platform or if you're meeting in person. One workaround is to use a URL that is easy for participants to type in. For example, by hosting the content on our site with a short link (engagerd.com/aea) participants can easily type the URL into their browser even if they can't access the clickable link. This is something we've used for in-person convenings as well. If you can't host it on your own website, platforms like Mentimeter give participants a short code that they can type into the site to access the content. This isn't a solution for all security issues (see above), but may help participants access materials on their own when you can't share a link with them directly.

What "low-tech" tools do you recommend?

Q: Wondering how you do this with audiences that are "low tech"--I work with a lot of folks that don't have multiple screens and who struggle bouncing from Zoom to the internet.

A: In our presentation we had participants switching between Zoom, Google Slides, and the conference platform Pathable. It's a lot! Here are some tips for making your meeting more accessible:

- The fewer different platforms you use, the better! If your participants are able to use Zoom, consider using some of the in-app features we recommend in the [facilitator's templates](#) such as polling, chat, and annotating slides. Companies such as Mural are also developing whiteboards that will soon be able to integrate with Zoom. If you decide to add another platform to your conversation (such as Google Slides), try to minimize switching between the two.

- Tailor your presentation to the group you're working with. It's completely fine to go low tech with hand gestures and chat responses in the platform you're already using. For some groups we work with, it isn't even feasible to do video conferencing. This includes those with limited broadband, access to devices, or familiarity with technology. In these cases, you may need to find a different solution. Some of our clients have done individual calls, sent mail, and used alternate apps like WhatsApp messaging to communicate with their audience. It all depends on getting to know the group you're working with and finding a solution together.

- Above all, practice makes perfect. Experiment with the technology with your group until you find what works. You may also need to build extra time into your meetings to troubleshoot tech issues and get everyone set up.

What mobile tools do you recommend?

Q: Anyone have thoughts on how the opening activity on Slides can be optimized for youth on their phones? (Hard to move an image without resizing it.)

A: While we have not worked as much in a mobile environment, we agree that Google Slides may not be optimal. One solution that comes to mind is a polling app that may already be optimized for mobile. In addition to the built-in polling feature in Zoom, we've used Mentimeter and Slido in the past.

What about meetings focused on sharing information rather than engaging participants?
Q: Any suggestions for how to handle virtual meetings when people are more interested in receiving information rather than being involved in decision-making?

A: We believe that adults most effectively take in new information when they are actively participating in the learning process. Even for meetings where you're not soliciting input directly from the audience, engaging activities can help them process information. For example, use the sticky note activity or journaling to give participants time to reflect on what they've learned or write down a question about the material. Even in our presentation, which was mainly about communicating information to you, we built in lots of participant activities to better understand our audience and help you engage with the material. If your meeting plan is to simply read a slide show, you might as well send it to your audience ahead of time and skip the meeting altogether. Instead, ask yourself what participants will get out of the meeting and how they might discuss or process this information together.

How do you "read the room" while sharing slides?
Q: How do you 'read the room' when sharing slides? I have such a hard time presenting and seeing more than a few people at a time.

A: There are so many things that technology makes easier, but human interaction isn't always one of them! We appreciate this question and have struggled with it ourselves – when you're presenting online, you often can't see the videos of the participants. One suggestion we have is to slow down. Take a moment between slides or topics to stop screen sharing so you can see participants and they can see each other. You can make this explicit by doing a "temperature check:" stop sharing slides and ask the participants to make a gesture showing how they feel. It can be thumbs up or down, or even any gesture they feel expresses themselves. For large meetings, ask participants to scroll through the videos to see how everyone else is doing. People often appreciate the break and chance to see other faces!

Similarly, we like to stop screen sharing during discussions. We might put our discussion questions in the chat and then take down the screen share so everyone can see each other's faces as they discuss. It's not quite as good as the real thing, but creates more opportunities for real interactions.

What are "snaps"?
Q: Why are plus signs considered "snaps"?

A: Maybe it's just a hippie California thing but, in some circles, audience members will snap their fingers when they agree with what the speaker is saying. It's a nice bit of audience feedback without disrupting the speaker. At Engage R+D, we often put plus signs in the chat box to mimic this snapping when we like what someone is saying. It's a nice little piece of feedback to the speaker and others on the call. You can use this idea with any symbol that resonates with your group.

Participant Discussion on Meeting Norms

Our slide about meeting norms brought up a lot of good conversation in the chat. Below are some comments and our thoughts:

- It is important to communicate what interruption norms are appropriate and acceptable for what you're trying to do.

- I struggle with the "interruptions are normal"... there are things you wouldn't allow in in-person meetings, so what "type" of interruptions can we be ok with without allowing it to become an overwhelming cultural shift with distracted participants?

- Maybe they mean interruptions like kids or pets requiring your attention?

- Re: camera - having the camera on all the time is an issue that touches on equity.

- Part of mindfulness: asking people to state what they're leaving outside the meeting so they can take part as their full selves during the meeting. From big social things happening to trying not to think about another big meeting later in the day

Our thoughts: In our [facilitator's templates](), we share several different examples of meeting norms. These will vary depending on the unique context of your group as there is no one-size-fits-all. In fact, before putting up a big list of norms, we suggest working with participants to create a list together whenever possible. We also love the resources speakers shared for helping participants focus on the meeting: acknowledging and letting go of distractions is a good one, as well as giving participants a moment to get a beverage and sit down can also be helpful.

We also acknowledge that we are currently working in unprecedented times. To name a few: There's a pandemic that has kept many people home together, working and living in the same spaces. In California where we're based, increasingly severe fire seasons have not only meant evacuations and displacement but also intermittent loss of internet and power across the state. We are currently facing an important election as well as a national reckoning with racial justice and white supremacy. Some of these crises will subside. Many will continue. For our group, we wanted to acknowledge that the rules that applied to regular meetings in office conference rooms simply may not be relevant to the people we're meeting with. We try to choose norms that strive for kindness and compassion over perfectionism and compliance.

Using Google Slides and Other Tools from Our Presentation

We received many questions about how we used Google Slides and other tools during our presentation:

What platform did you use for the activities?
Q: Are the opening activities technology a Google slide?
Q: In Google sheets, are multiple people able to add/edit the same slide?

A: Yes – we used Google Slides for this activity because they are hosted online so anyone can edit and they are generally accessible and intuitive for the groups we work with. Up to 100 people are able to edit a document at one time. There are also a lot of other apps to check out that might suit your needs, including those shared above. If you'd like to try out the template, you can access our sample [here]().

Can you do this activity in PowerPoint?
Q: Can you do this in Powerpoint as well/instead of Google slides?

The main benefit of Google Slides is that they are hosted on a website, meaning participants can access and edit them using a shared link. PowerPoint presentations are typically saved to your computer and not accessible to other participants, so you wouldn't be able to have participants edit the slides the way we did in our activities. That said, there may be ways to share a PowerPoint using Office 365 or other Microsoft Products. You might also check out the other apps shared above.

How did you make the virtual sticky notes in Google Slides?
Q: Are the virtual sticky notes in the slides just text boxes?

A: Yes – the virtual sticky notes are text boxes. You can usually make any shape into a text box and decorate the colors and lines, much like we did in this presentation. If you'd like to try out the template, you can access our sample here.

How did you make the virtual stickers for the gallery walk?
Q: How did you make the stickers (hearts/question marks) on Google slides?
Q: How do you add the reactions to the Google slides?
Q: How could we add these hearts or thumps up to the slide?
Q: How are there so many of the little heart, +, ? symbols? Did you just copy and paste a lot on top of each other?

A: The virtual stickers on our slides are shapes – Google slides has options for hearts, circles, and more that you can use. You can also use images like the hand we used in the opening and closing activities. We then copied each shape many, many times (this will depend on how many are in your group) to make a stack of them. An advanced move is to make the shapes slightly transparent so that you can still read any text underneath when they are placed on a top of a virtual sticky note. If you'd like to try out the template, you can access our sample here.

How did you divide up participants?
Q: Are there 12 separate sets of google slides? One for each month? So when doing the gallery walk of four slides, I'm only looking at ideas from those in my birth month?
Q: In the journaling activity, how did you assign a slide for every participant?

A: At Engage R+D, we are typically used to hosting smaller meetings of less than 50 participants, with occasional virtual sessions of up to 100 people. This works well with Google Slides, which can be edited by up to 100 people at one time. For a larger group at AEA, however, we had to get creative. We broke the audience up into 12 groups based on the month they were born and created 12 separate (but identical) slide docs. This meant that participants could only see the responses of those in their group. If you're working with a very large group like this, it may be a good opportunity to try out one of the other collaboration apps so that all participants can interact with each other. But for the purposes of our demonstration, we wanted to show you what we typically do with smaller groups in Google Slides.

We also demonstrated a journaling activity where small groups or individuals might need their own slides for journaling. You can label the different slides with numbers, letters, or even the participants' names if you know them and have them find their slide in the document.

How did add music to your slides?
Q: Love the music – how do you make this work while presenting? Is each presenter playing music in the background?

A: To play soundbites for each slide, we used PowerPoint. While the group was using a copy of the slides in Google Slides, we had a separate version of the slides in PowerPoint that contained sound bites that would play when we reached the slide. We used [this tutorial](#) for embedding the sound. When you share your screen on Zoom, make sure to check the box to share your computer audio so that participants can also hear the sounds.