

# Remote Engagement Tools Needs Assessment



**With remote and web-based engagement being used more and more in planning projects, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, many planners are scrambling to find the right online tools for their public engagement work.**

Finding a digital tool that fits your project's goals and objectives is important, but evaluating technical tools can be overwhelming. A needs assessment can help identify what elements of a tool are essential, desired but not essential, or non-essential to a project. In choosing online engagement tools, it is important to know and to clearly articulate the intended purpose of the engagement process, including defining an equitable vision and goals, and understanding key needs and priorities.

The following worksheet is intended to provide planning practitioners and partners with a set of evaluation criteria for useful, appropriate, and inclusive online engagement, including baseline equity criteria to consider when selecting a tool or set of tools.

## Questions to Ask:

- Who is the audience you are you trying to reach?
- Who are the most vulnerable communities that the project effects and what needs might they have related to tool accessibility?
- What are your goals for equity and inclusion? Use an equity advisory group to help develop and operationalize these goals.
- What is the scale(s) of planning that this applies? Citywide, neighborhood, corridor?
- What is the depth of information you want to solicit?
- Is there a need for a set of different kinds of tools for different projects (types, phases etc.)?
- Is the tool going to be used once, periodically, or is there a need for constant or continuous engagement efforts?
- What is the technical capacity of the staff who will be using the tool, now and in the future? How much technical support will staff likely need?
- What are the budgetary constraints?

## Which types of tools will you need for your online engagement activities?



### Mapping/geospatial data friendly

For example: Maptionnaire, Social Pinpoint



### Tradeoff analysis/budgeting

For example: Ethelo, MetroQuest



### Prioritization/ranking of scenarios or images

For example: MetroQuest



### Qualitative and/or quantitative data collection

For example: Survey Monkey, The Hive



### Supports brainstorming/collaborative thinking

For example: MURAL, Social Pinpoint



### Includes data analysis/visualization tools

For example: Survey Monkey, Google Forms



### Includes questionnaire branching

For example: Survey Monkey, Maptionnaire

## Key equity considerations when choosing an online engagement tool

### ACCESS

(i.e. computer access, internet access)

- Is the tool easy to use on a variety of digital devices including mobile?
- Can the tool be developed in a way that doesn't require high speed internet access to participate?

### BARRIERS

(i.e. English proficiency, Disability, Poverty, Elderly, Adults 25+ without HS diploma)

- Does the tool have an accessible user interface? Does it meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)?
- Does the tool have a closed captioning option for audio and alt text options for visually impaired users?
- Does the tool have multilingual capabilities?

### HISTORY

(i.e. Public Participation Behavior)

- Does the tool *require* registration or sharing of personal information in order to participate?