



# Online Professional Development Follow-Up Support Tools

## EMAIL GROUPS

Description of Online Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example Resources*
<p>Sites where users can create and participate in discussions. Works by broadcasting emails from members to all other members. If a member responds to an email, all members receive the response and can reply to it.</p> <p>Four main options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Put all emails in the "to" box and ask participants to hit "reply all" to respond.</li> <li>2. Start an off-site hosted email group using a free commercial service.</li> <li>3. Start an off-site hosted email group using a paid subscription hosting service.</li> <li>4. Configure your own server (on-site) to host an email group.</li> </ol>	<p>Email is easy and almost universally used. Email messages are delivered to participant mailboxes so they don't have to go to a different site to read and respond to discussions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Easy, low-tech for short-term conversations.</li> <li>2. Free, simple to start and manage, users can manage their own subscriptions; participants may have delivery and viewing options.</li> <li>3. Does not have advertising, greater user control and options, participants have a variety of delivery and viewing options.</li> <li>4. Offers greatest user control and options.</li> </ol>	<p>Depending on the type of software or service used, it may not be easy to archive messages in a central place for later reference. If it is a very active group, participants may get frustrated with the amount of emails received.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can be "messy" and difficult to manage if participants drop out of the group or add in. If you wish to drop out, you need to rely on everyone deleting your name from the "to" field before sending a "reply all."</li> <li>2. Messages sent to participants may include advertising.</li> <li>3. There is a cost involved for the service, although some website hosting packages include hosting for email groups.</li> <li>4. There are costs involved in terms of staff time to install and configure the software. The software may not be free.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Free commercial groups (hosted off-site):</b>  <a href="http://www.aardvarkmailinglist.net">http://www.aardvarkmailinglist.net</a>  <a href="http://groups.google.com">http://groups.google.com</a>  <a href="http://groups.yahoo.com">http://groups.yahoo.com</a>  <a href="http://lists.topica.com">http://lists.topica.com</a></p> <p><b>Open source (free) software (on-site):</b>  <i>Majordomo</i>  <a href="http://www.greatcircle.com/majordomo">www.greatcircle.com/majordomo</a>  <i>SmartList</i>  <a href="http://www.procmail.org">www.procmail.org</a>  <i>Listproc</i>  <a href="http://www.cren.net/listproc/">www.cren.net/listproc/</a></p> <p>Commercial software (on-site):            Listserv (fee associated)  <a href="http://www.lsoft.com">http://www.lsoft.com</a></p>

### Professional Development Applications for Email Groups:

Email groups can be used to hold pre- and post-event discussions, share ideas, and maintain dialogue among participants as a method of follow-up.

\* These are just a few examples. There are many options for each tool.

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## eSURVEYS

Description of Online Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example Resources*
Sites where users can set up and launch simple surveys. Once the survey is created, a unique URL is generated that is then sent to potential survey participants.	It is quick and easy to create and complete surveys, and there are no printing and mailing costs. Basic (limited) services are free for a single user. Tabulations of the data are calculated electronically and available with one click.	Some users may be less comfortable with an online format than a traditional paper format. The free services are somewhat limited. There is a fee charged for services and option, like the ability to customize surveys.	<i>Survey Monkey</i> <a href="http://www.surveymonkey.com">http://www.surveymonkey.com</a>  <i>Zoomerang</i> <a href="http://www.zoomerang.com">http://www.zoomerang.com</a>

### Professional Development Applications for eSurveys:

eSurveys can be used to assess needs, evaluate events, or find out how clients are using knowledge gained in a training. They can also be used to register clients for events.

## eMESSAGE BOARDS

Description of Online Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example Resources*
Sites where users can create and participate in discussions about specific topics. Modeled after real-world bulletin boards where a person might post (pin up) a message and others might respond by posting another message.	Advantages over email groups are: 1) discussions are easily archived in a single location for later reference; and 2) postings (messages) can be separated into "threads" or subtopics of a discussion for ease in following the entire group's discussion.	A disadvantage over email groups is that participants must go to a specific site to access the message board to read or respond to postings (messages). Also, there may be a cost involved to set up the software or subscribe to a service, and free services often involve advertising.	<b>Open source (free) software (on-site):</b> <i>bbPress</i> : <a href="http://bbpress.org">http://bbpress.org</a> <i>phpBB</i> : <a href="http://www.phpbb.com">http://www.phpbb.com</a> <i>PunBB</i> : <a href="http://www.punbb.org">http://www.punbb.org</a> <b>Commercial software (on-site):</b> <i>Quick Topic</i> : <a href="http://www.quicktopic.com">http://www.quicktopic.com</a> <b>Commercial software (hosted off-site):</b> <i>EzBoard</i> <a href="http://www.ezboard.com">http://www.ezboard.com</a>

### Professional Development Applications for Electronic Message Boards:

Electronic message boards can be used to hold pre- and post-event discussions, share ideas, and maintain dialogue among participants as a method of follow-up.

\* These are just a few examples. There are many options for each tool.

# Online Professional Development Follow-Up Support Tools

## INSTANT MESSAGING

Description of Online Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example Resources*
A way to send a quick text message to anyone who is on your list. Some programs have voice and video capabilities.	Instant messaging is quicker and easier than an email, provides immediate answers to quick questions, and is considered less intrusive than a phone call. Instant messaging programs are also free.	Everyone in your "group" needs to be on the same instant messaging program to communicate, unless they have a special merging program.	<b>Free commercial programs:</b> <i>Yahoo Messenger</i> <a href="http://messenger.yahoo.com">http://messenger.yahoo.com</a> <i>ICQ</i> <a href="http://www.icq.com">http://www.icq.com</a> <i>iChat AV</i> <a href="http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/ichat/">http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/ichat/</a> <i>Google Talk</i> <a href="http://www.google.com/talk">http://www.google.com/talk</a> <i>MSN Messenger</i> <a href="http://join.msn.com/messenger/overview/">http://join.msn.com/messenger/overview/</a> <i>AIM</i> <a href="http://www.aim.com">http://www.aim.com</a>

**Professional Development Applications for Instant Messaging:** Instant messaging can be used to hold online "office hours" for follow-up support after a training, host small group chats, send quick messages to remind and encourage learners to try new innovations, and send quick feedback about a program or resource.

## AUDIOCONFERENCING

Description of Online Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example Resources*
Two-way voice communication between two or more individuals/groups who are in separate locations linked by a telecommunications medium (e.g., telephone, computer).	Audioconferencing (teleconferencing) is easy, economical, and almost universally used.	If participants are not aware of teleconferencing etiquette, outside noise can be distracting and make it difficult to hear the speaker. This form of communication is also less engaging than some other forms of communication.	<b>Free software:</b> <i>Skype</i> <a href="http://www.skype.com">http://www.skype.com</a>  <b>Commercial software:</b> <i>PGi</i> <a href="http://www.pgi.com">http://www.pgi.com</a>

**Professional Development Applications for Audioconferencing:** Audioconferencing can be used to hold pre- and post-event discussions, follow up on high need areas (themed conference calls), and share ideas and maintain dialogue among participants as a method of follow-up.

\* These are just a few examples. There are many options for each tool.

# Online Professional Development Follow-Up Support Tools

## VIDEOCONFERENCING

Description of Online Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example Resources*
Two-way voice and video between two or more individuals/groups who are in separate locations linked by a telecommunications medium (e.g., from simple computer cameras to elaborate television systems).	An advantage over straight audioconferencing is that this method can be more engaging for participants.	Videoconferencing can be quite costly, depending on the sophistication of the system. There is also a level of knowledge and skill needed by both the participants and presenter that may take an extended amount of time to learn.	<b>Free software:</b> <i>Skype</i> <a href="http://www.skype.com/allfeatures/videocall">http://www.skype.com/allfeatures/videocall</a>  <b>Commercial software:</b> <i>WebEx</i> <a href="http://www.webex.com">http://www.webex.com</a> <i>LiveMeeting</i> <a href="http://www.livemeeting.com">http://www.livemeeting.com</a>

### Professional Development Applications for Videoconferencing:

Videoconferencing can be used to hold pre- and post-event discussions, follow up on high need areas (themed conferences), and share ideas and maintain dialogue among participants as a method of follow-up.

## WEB CONFERENCING

Description of Online Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example Resources*
Two-way communication that uses the World Wide Web to send text, audio, or video between two or more individuals/groups who are in separate locations.	An advantage over straight videoconferencing is that this method allows for even greater engagement and interactivity through the sharing of documents, presentations, and applications.	Web conferencing can be quite costly, depending on the sophistication of the system. There is also a level of knowledge and skill needed by both the participants and presenter that may take an extended amount of time to learn.	<b>Commercial software:</b> <i>Webex</i> <a href="http://www.webex.com">http://www.webex.com</a> <i>GoToMeeting</i> <a href="http://www.gotomeeting.com">http://www.gotomeeting.com</a> <i>Adobe Connect</i> <a href="http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro">http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro</a>

### Professional Development Applications for Web Conferencing:

Web conferencing can be used to hold pre- and post-event discussions, followup on high need areas (themed conferences), and share ideas and maintain dialogue among participants as a method of follow-up.

\* These are just a few examples.  
There are many options for each tool.

