

More Learning, Less Travel: A Study of Webinar User Experiences

Prepared by Josh Smyth
Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador



Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network
Partenariat sur l'économie sociale et la durabilité

Bridging, Bonding, and Building / Renforcement des liens et des capacités



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Acknowledgements

This research study was carried out by the Community Sector Council NL as part of the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network, supported by generous funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The project benefitted from the support and knowledge of many people. At the Community Sector Council offices in St. John's, Program Associate Pam Corrigan, Research Associate Fran Locke, Senior Program Associate Darlene Scott and CEO Penelope Rowe all provided exceptional guidance, support, and review through every stage of the work. At Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook, Dr. Ivan Emke (Associate VP: Research) was instrumental in laying out the scope of the project and reviewing its progress. Graduate student Connie Boland and librarians Crystal Rose and Louise McGillis were all helpful during the literature review phase.

Lead Organizations

Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador

<http://communitysector.nl.ca>

The Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC) is an incorporated charitable organization dedicated to advancing the distinct role of the voluntary non-profit community sector. We serve as an incubator of new programs and as a resource centre for the community sector, fostering voluntarism, social innovation, collaboration, social enterprise, and knowledge building.

Since its founding in 1976, the CSC has taken the lead in bringing new technologies to the community sector. Our website hosts a wealth of resources for sector organizations, and we regularly use webinars to provide these organizations with access to experts, new skills, and networks of their peers.

Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network

<http://www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic/>

Led by Mount St. Vincent University and connected to the Canadian Social Economy Hub, the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network (SESRN) is a group of academic researchers, community organizations, and participant governments who have come together to explore the social economy in Atlantic Canada.

Penelope Rowe, CEO of the Community Sector Council NL, is a Co-Director of the SESRN and also serves as Co-Coordinator, with Dr. Ivan Emke, Associate Vice-President: Research at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, of Sub-node Six of the network. This report is part of the work of this sub-node, which focuses on communication practices and tools within the social economy.

Contents

Executive Summary/	Page 4
Introduction /	Page 5
Literature Review /	Page 6
Preliminary Research/	Page 10
Method /	Page 11
Sample Profile /	Page 14
Results /	Page 17
Discussion /	Page 25
Best Practices /	Page 29
References /	Page 33
Appendix A: The Survey /	Page 35

© Community Sector Council, 2011

1/ Executive Summary

A "webinar" is an online presentation that uses visuals, the presenter's voice, and interactive elements to bring groups together in real time for training, information, and collaboration without the costs of travel.

The CSC surveyed 94 webinar users to ask them what kinds of content work well and which do not, how they like to schedule and be notified of webinars, and what technical issues they were facing. We also asked a number of demographic questions to build a profile of webinar users, reviewed the literature on the subject and interviewed several key informants.

Key Findings:

- Webinar users represented a good geographic cross-section of the Newfoundland and Labrador community sector albeit somewhat more urban than rural. Webinars are not used only by young or technically savvy people, nor are they reserved for rural organizations far from in-person training opportunities.
- Webinar users were very satisfied with their experiences so far; most had attended their first webinar within the past year.
- Avoiding the cost and inconvenience of travel is the biggest selling point for a webinar, but our respondents also liked the clarity, brevity (an hour or less is best), and the fact that webinars can be archived online for future reference
- Respondents were divided on the benefits of interactivity – topics that required less interaction were regarded as more suitable for a webinar. The webinar format itself somewhat trainer-centric; webinars are easier to use when most of the information is flowing in one direction.
- Webinars are medium-priority for most people. They like to hear about them between two weeks and a month in advance, and be reminded at least twice, but will also sometimes skip a webinar if something comes up.
- Technical difficulties are not a big factor. Most users had no problems, and they were rarely severe when they did happen. There are some minor irritations that are easily remedied
- Respondents regularly took in webinars from home, but that does not mean that they would like webinars to be held outside of work hours; weekends and evenings were not popular. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays were better, with late morning and mid-day the ideal time slots.
- Preparation is very important, both to build compelling slides and to avoid technical problems.

Webinars provide a vehicle for training and learning that might not be otherwise possible – although they do not replace in-person interaction. As a cost-effective and simple tool, their utility for social-economy organizations is clear.

2/ Introduction

The treasurer of a rural nonprofit connects with a professional accountant. A researcher in Newfoundland and Labrador presents results to colleagues all over Canada. A web designer in Los Angeles trains an intern in Cape Breton. All without a moment spent on the road. Webinars (a portmanteau of “web” and “seminar”) make these things possible.

Webinars (or web conferences, virtual conferences, web seminars, or virtual meeting) aim to approximate as closely as possible the experience of meeting in person. This is done by sending visuals over the Internet accompanied by voice transmitted either over the phone or online. (Stephens and Mottet, 2008) Webinars began in the late 90s as simple text-based chat programs, but have taken advantage of the spread of broadband Internet access to expand their offerings to slides, desktop sharing, audio accompaniment and video feeds.

Webinars are now widely used in the private sector for marketing presentations and employee training. They are also used in the education and community sectors to keep widespread groups of professionals up to date on developments in their fields, to pass on skills between organizations, or to allow

access to experts who might be on the other side of the continent or the planet.

The benefits of being able to train and inform people without the time and cost of physical meetings are particularly relevant to social economy organizations. With scarce resources for travel and many small organizations in need of training, webinars provide an opportunity to share best practices and innovative ideas cheaply and easily. This is particularly useful for organizations that work in rural areas where face-to-face learning opportunities are less frequent.

Understanding how communication technologies like these affect the social economy is one of the four main research directions of the Social Economy and Sustainability (SES) research network, led by Mount St. Vincent University. This network is a group of researchers from academic institutions, community organizations and various levels of government, who have come together to explore the Social Economy in Atlantic Canada.

One of the partners in the SES network is the Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC). The CSC initiated a webinar program in September, 2009 to respond to the challenges that many sector organizations face in getting access to important information.

Having administered its own webinar series, the CSC was well-placed to gather information and opinions on webinars from the people who had participated. This study briefly surveys the existing research on the subject, reports the results of an online survey of past participants in CSC webinars, and then suggests a set of best practices for organizations who wish to use webinars effectively to disseminate information and build connections within the social economy.

3/ Literature Review

Relatively little literature exists around webinars, with especially little written about the user experience and webinars in a social economy context. The biggest collection is in education and library science journals focusing on distance education in universities (See Bell and Shank, 2006; Reushle and Loch, 2008; Docherty and Falks, 2004). Most of these papers are how-to guides outlining the benefits of webinars to educators (Lietzau and Mann, 2009: 109). Libraries are noted as having a tradition of enthusiasm about new technologies and a commitment to educational outreach; the adoption of webinars within them has, however, lagged behind the private sector

(Docherty and Falks, 2004: 213). A number of key points emerge from the literature:

Low adoption rates for new technologies

To explain this educators often cite a lack of understanding as to how webinars differ from other online course packages, as well as a lack of confidence with new technology. These concerns echo those often raised in the nonprofit sector, where lack of training is a major factor limiting the use of information technologies (Hackler and Saxton, 2006: 12).

What are the benefits of webinars to the user?

Cost

The studies, including the few from communication and facilitation scholars, (See Mittleman et. al. 2000; Stephens and Mottet, 2008) share a broad consensus on the benefits of the webinar format. The first benefit noted is always cost savings. Webinars exist to get around both the money costs and missed opportunities of travel (Riddle, 2010:1; Stephens and Mottet, 2008: 89).

Live Conversation

A secondary benefit noted in the literature is the ability to communicate in real-time with the leader of the session and other participants (Lietzau and Mann, 2009: 109).

Recordability

The ability to replay the recorded versions of webinar sessions is also cited as one of the advantages of the format (Riddle, 2010).

Advantages over other tools

Webinars are seen as more effective learning tools than other methods of remote communication such as e-mail and telephone conferencing, but not as full substitutes for in-person meetings (Docherty and Falks, 2004: 225).

Advantages over live meetings

One area where webinars do compare favourably to physical meetings is in the experience for shy participants, who may find it easier to contribute ideas in an anonymous or distanced environment (Lietzau and Mann, 2009: 118). The presence (or any uncertainty about the possible presence) of a VIP in the online meeting will, however, still dampen participation in the same way it often does when the meeting is held in person (Mittleman et. al, 2000:8).

What are the drawbacks?

While webinars do offer some clear benefits over other kinds of remote communication, there are several ways that webinars compare unfavourably to in-person meetings.

Lack of cues

A lack of visual and verbal cues can make it difficult for presenters to gauge the interest of the audience (Bell and Shank, 2006: 52). Indeed, in a typical webinar there is no way for any participant to tell whether another person is actually present; without active “check-ins” by the facilitator it is easy for attention to drift (Mittleman et. al, 2000: 10).

Trainer-centric learning

The literature shows some concern with a lack of interactivity between teachers and learners. Although webinar software packages provide ways for participants to interact with each other (chat windows, open voice lines, and whiteboards), the format is still trainer-centric, with most of the information passing from the leader of the webinar to the participants (Stephens and Mottet, 2008: 89).

Lack of continuity

Many webinar sessions are one-off presentations rather than parts of a series. This can interfere with the growth of a bond between trainer and trainee. These bonds have been shown to enhance motivation and learning in the trainees (Stephens and Mottet, 2008: 89).

Lack of interaction

The webinar format can make it difficult for trainees to exchange information amongst themselves. That said, there is no solid empirical evidence that

more interaction leads to more learning in a webinar setting (Stephens and Mottet, 2008: 99).

Literature on Best Practices

Moving beyond academic studies, there are a number of “best practice” guides available, produced both by the webinar software companies themselves (See Molay, 2009), webinar hosts, and communications consultancies (See Wilder, 2010; Bovell, 2009). Most of these are targeted at a business audience, but the advice offered is widely applicable. There are also a few short sets of guidelines targeted specifically at the community sector – most notably a series of articles and webinars produced by the technology nonprofit TechSoup. (See Griffiths and Peters, 2009; Bealko, 2006). There is general consensus amongst these sources as to what makes an effective webinar.

Platform Choices

Different webinar platforms make different demands on the user’s system. Some require large files to be downloaded before they can be used for the first time; others don’t work on Macs or Linux computers. Many of the more accessible platforms use Java or Flash, Internet-based programming languages that work on all platforms. (Bovell, 2009).

From our survey

“It’s accessible to most, but not very participatory or conducive to networking as similar face to face seminars would be. No live interactions make it somewhat discouraging at times.”

Avoiding technical difficulties

Technical difficulties in webinars are anecdotally common; audio and video feeds are especially vulnerable to interruption. Every guide to webinars stresses the importance of a “dry run” that lets the presentation team check for technical glitches in the presentation. (Anderson, 2010; Bell and Shank, 2006: 52). No dry run can eliminate every glitch, and all guides point to the need to have at least two leaders – someone leading the presentation itself and a moderator who can handle technical problems as they occur. (Molay, 2009: 7; Anderson, 2010). Ideally, these two should be working on separate networks so that one can take over a webinar in progress if the other experiences connection problems (Molay, 2009: 6).

Presentation Slides

With most webinars using PowerPoint slides, the principles of good slide design – minimal text and clear

organization – hold true. (Griffiths and Peters, 2009). Visuals should be used to add things to the presentation that the speaker cannot convey through voice, such as photographs of the presenters, views of the presenter’s screen that provide examples of how to accomplish a task, or explanatory graphs (Griffiths and Peters, 2009).

Presentation Timing

A webinar presentation should be scheduled with adequate time allowed for set-up, questions, and audience polls, if that feature is enabled (Bovell, 2009). Different guides suggest different maximum lengths for webinars; the answers range from one hour to two hours. The size of the intended audience also matters, since the level of interactivity that is possible with a small group will may be chaotic if used with a large one (Maine, 2010).

Facilitator Skill

The absence of visual cues and uncertainty about the level of attention from participants characteristic of webinars presents a challenge to webinar facilitators. Enthusiasm, energy, and varied voice tone from the presenter are all very important (Molay, 2009: 10). It is also important that the presenter try to engage the audience members as individuals by checking in on them regularly and asking targeted questions. (Mittleman et. al, 2000).

Gaps in the Literature

The consensus on how to run an effective webinar is largely based on anecdotal evidence gathered by people putting on webinars, designing the software for them, or advising organizations doing these things. There are no systematic studies or surveys of webinar users, with the only formal studies having been done on groups of university students. This is somewhat surprising, since almost all webinar packages facilitate the gathering of feedback data from users when the webinar is completed. There is also very little written on the use of webinars within the community sector.

Looking over what has been written on webinars, a number of questions about the webinar user experience stand out as unaddressed:

- 1) What types of content do webinar participants want to receive? What do they feel is suitable for the webinar format?
- 2) How do users want to hear about, register for, and schedule webinars?
- 3) How much of an impact do technical problems and aptitudes have on the effectiveness of webinars?
- 4) Who is using webinars? Which groups could be benefitting from them?

The literature also stresses the importance of interactivity to keep audience members engaged. This study examined that claim, and examined the questions above through a survey of webinar participants.

4/ Preliminary Research

In addition to the existing research on webinars, we also had access to the feedback data collected by evaluation questions at the end of CSC webinars. These webinars covered a variety of topics, including insurance, fundraising, volunteer management, and creating a culture of innovation.

The questionnaires appeared in the closing screen of each presentation, were optional, and consisted of several statements with responses on a 5-point scale, as well as open-ended questions. The chart below shows the average responses for the 5-point scale statements:

Not all participants received the same set of questions, as they were edited over time by webinar organizers. This is the source of the variation in the size of the sample from statement to statement.

Table #1

Statement	Number of Responses	Average Response (out of 5)
My knowledge increased as a result of this session	49 (Sample n = 72)	3.80
This session was valuable to me	49 (Sample n = 72)	3.67
The webinar format was effective	49 (Sample n = 72)	3.80
Session materials were presented clearly	99 (Sample n = 153)	4.41
I intend to share information from this session with others in my organization	50 (Sample n = 81)	4.74
I was comfortable with this format.	50 (Sample n = 81)	4.8

The feedback surveys also included several open-ended questions:

- Please provide your feedback on how we could improve this session

- What did you like most about this session?
- What would you change about this session?
- Any other comments?

The responses from these questions were aggregated to see whether there were any repeated critiques or positive responses. Although not systematic, this did provide a sense of what our user concerns might be.

Positive Responses

The positive responses from the open-ended questions indicated that respondents were very happy with the clarity of the content and presentation of CSC webinars. They also indicated that the lack of required travel was important, along with the opportunity provided for discussion. Equally frequently, respondents cited the clarity and pleasantness of the presenter.

Critiques

Two critiques of the webinar format came up most often. The first, that there were problems with sound, reflects several technical issues. Internet speed restrictions can lead to audio being choppy. Variations in microphone quality and use are also factors, with some presenters frequently louder than others due to the microphone they are using. When the webinar host uses a telephone conference for its audio component, the audio can also be

interrupted by beeps that play each time someone enters or exits the teleconference.

Presentation length was also critiqued; several users said that the presentations were too short and that the introductions at the beginning were too long. Some users also noted their desire for a wider range of examples, more visuals, and more time to solve technical problems at the beginning of each session.

On the basis of this feedback and the literature, we included several questions in our survey that explored the impact of technical problems as well as the session length that respondents preferred.

5/ Method

Since webinars happen online, an online survey was the obvious choice to gather feedback from people who had already participated in them. User feedback was also notably absent from the literature on webinars, and a survey suited our desire to build up a demographic picture of webinar participants.

We also conducted key informant interviews with five people who had registered for one of the CSC's webinars but not actually attended. These interviews discussed the factors that interfered with their attendance with the aim of identifying any barriers that stood in the way.

We chose a mixed design for the online survey, with a total of 34 questions

divided between scaled, multiple-choice and open-ended question types. The survey was divided into four distinct sections that were displayed as separate pages when respondents clicked through it (See Appendix A).

Section 1: Webinar Basics

Ten questions aimed to identify how familiar the respondents were with the webinar format, how they would like the registration and reminder process to work, and what their general feelings were about the merits of webinars.

Section 2: Webinar Content

Respondents were asked to rate how they felt about the webinars they had attended, indicate what type of material and what level of interaction they wanted to see in webinars, and to indicate whether the organization they worked with planned to deliver webinars in the future.

Section 3: Technology

We tried to gauge the comfort level with technology necessary for participation in a webinar; two questions also focused on the type and impact of technical difficulties.

Section 4: Respondent Profile

Respondents were asked what type and size of organization they worked with, their role, age, and gender. We recognized that asking more “personal” questions is more acceptable to respondents after they have built up trust in the survey by

From our survey

“[I like] accessibility to new learning, ease of sharing information, the ability to participate from local offices, learning from innovators across the country and worldwide.

I don't like the lack of discussion. Maybe more time could be factored in for questions to be posted on the chat panel and addressed by presenters.”

answering other questions (Iarossi 2006, 74-78).

The survey closed by sending respondents to a thank-you page that included an invitation to participate in further discussion groups on the topic. None of the respondents chose to volunteer, which guided us towards hosting a webinar rather than an in-person meeting as a way of reporting and gathering input on the findings of the survey.

The webinar was held several weeks after the survey closed, attracting 25 participants. When surveyed after the session, those who responded all indicated that the conclusions about best practices developed in this report fit with their experiences using and hosting webinars.

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame for this study was made up of individuals who had participated in one or more webinars hosted by the Community Sector Council NL between September 2009 and February 2011. In total, there were 18 such sessions. Six of them were held as part of the Atlantic Charities Learning Exchange (ACLE) program, which has been running webinars on charitable compliance and fundraising practices. Another group of webinars was under the banner of the Raising Insurance Skills and Knowledge (RISK) program, which provided information about insurance for community sector groups. The rest were webinars hosted by the CSC around social enterprise and innovation.

When registrants signed up for these webinars, their e-mail addresses were collected. The lists of addresses were aggregated, with the addresses of registrants who didn't actually attend their webinars moved to a secondary list. An average of 36 percent of the registrants fell into this category.

After filtering for duplicates we were left with a list of 221 individuals who had attended at least one webinar, and 38 individuals who had registered for one or more and attended none. Five of these non-attendees were interviewed as key informants.

Each person on the attendees list was sent an e-mail message that invited

From our survey

"I think webinars are great! Especially for rural areas, however some work needs to be done to help people get more familiar or comfortable with using this technology. Some great rural leaders are not comfortable with this and are missing out."

them, by name, to participate in the survey followed by two reminders. After filtering out emails that bounced back, we were left with 211 messages successfully sent.

Response Rate

The survey was open online for 13 days. In total, we gathered 94 responses, an overall response rate of 45 percent. The completion rate (based on the respondent clicking through to the "Thank You" screen) was 90 percent. All questions on the survey were optional, so the actual number of responses for a given question ranged from 69 to 94. Five questions were completed by all respondents

Although it is difficult to generalize about online survey response rates (academic studies and survey companies cite acceptable response rates from 15 to 55 percent), the response rate for this study was one of the highest that the CSC has had for an online survey. A couple of factors might explain this:

Pre-existing relationships

Invitations were sent to people with a pre-existing relationship with the CSC. The invitation stressed the practical outcomes of the research: improved webinars from the CSC and other community sector organizations.

Personal invitations

Invitations were sent as personal emails with the name of the recipient used. There is evidence that sending survey invitations this way - as opposed to a "Blind Carbon Copy" message where recipients see "undisclosed recipients in the "To" field

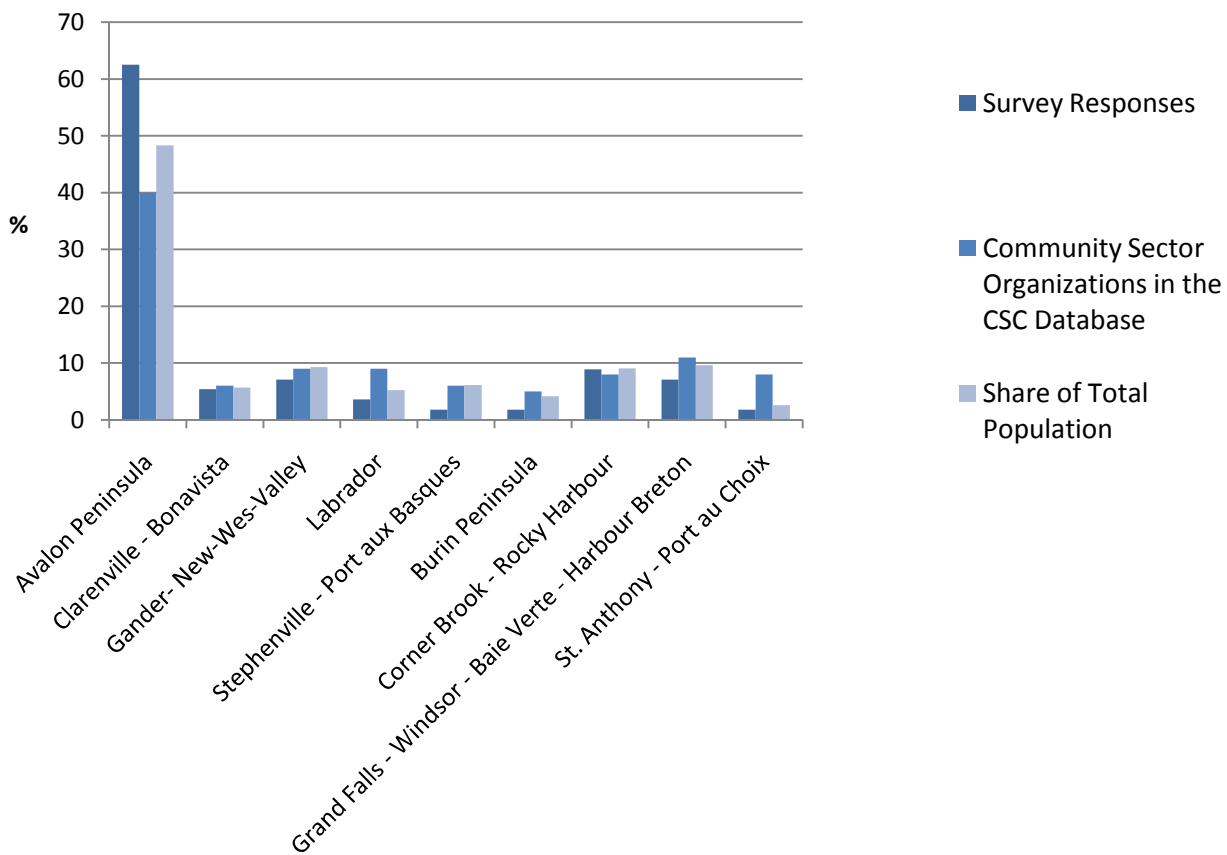
- can have a positive impact on response rates (Heerwegh et. al., 2005: 97).

6/Sample Profile

Of the 94 respondents to the survey, a large majority (86 %) provided their age, while a smaller number (73%) indicated their gender identification. Of the 81 people who indicated what province they were from, 58 were from Newfoundland and Labrador. All but two indicated what region of the province they were in.

(See Figure 6.1)

6.1 Regional Distribution in Newfoundland and Labrador



Regional Distribution

Our respondents were:

- From every region in NL
- Most often from the Avalon Peninsula

As Figure 6.1 shows, there were some differences between a region’s share of the provincial population, its share of the CSC’s database of organizations, and its share of respondents. Most notably, 62.5 percent of the survey respondents came from the Avalon Peninsula (the most urban part of Newfoundland and Labrador), even though the Avalon has only 48.3 percent of the province’s population and makes up about 40 percent of CSC’s database of community sector organizations.

This result raises an important point: that webinars are not just attractive to organizations in rural or isolated areas. Many of the participants in the CSC’s webinars are within an easy drive of the CSC’s offices, and indeed are often not far removed from the resources and experts that the webinars are trying to connect them with. It is worth remembering that there are significant costs whenever someone has to leave their office for a meeting. Even without a long trip, there is still time lost and frustration found in going across town, searching for parking, and trudging through the

weather. Webinars are not just an alternative for those who can’t get to a meeting in person.

Gender Distribution

Our respondents were:

- Mostly female

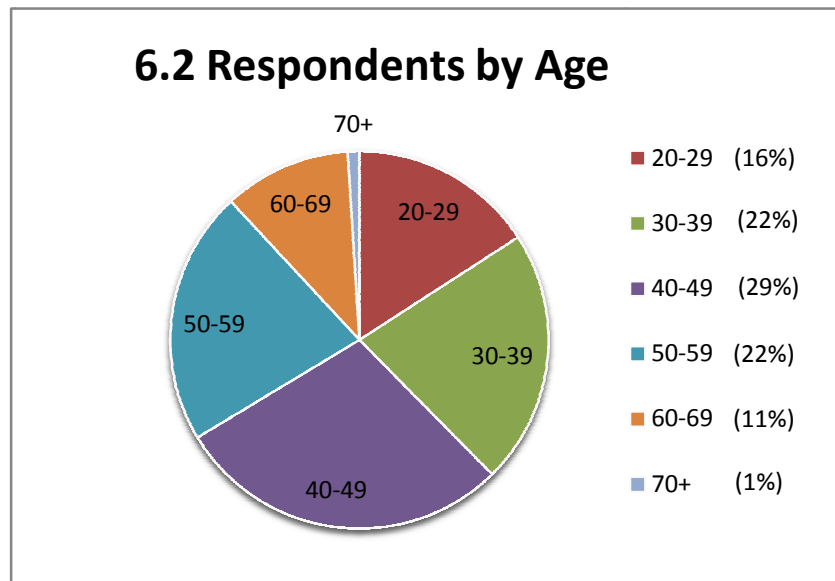
Of the respondents who identified their gender, 73 percent were female. When broken down by their role in the organization, 72 percent of staff identified as female. This is close to the figure for the Canadian nonprofit sector as a whole, in which women make up 74 percent of paid employees (HR Council, 2008: 17). Rural respondents skewed slightly more female, at 78.1 percent across all job types.

Age Distribution

Our respondents were:

- All at least 20 years old
- Mostly (63%) older than 40

The age distribution of our respondents (See figure 6.2) was of some



interest, with only 16 percent of the 83 people who gave their age being under 30. In contrast, more than a third (34%) of survey respondents were in the three cohorts of people over 50. The largest single age cohort was made up of people aged 40-49; these people made up 29 percent of survey respondents.

The impact this has had on adoption of technologies such as webinars is not clear; our over-50 respondents were actually more satisfied with the webinar format and the content they received than their younger counterparts. Those older respondents did indicate that they were less comfortable with computers and the Internet than our under-30 cohort, but the difference was small.

Of course, all our respondents were comfortable enough to participate in webinars and online surveys – this data doesn't speak to any barriers that age presents to the adoption of those media in the first place.

Organizations and Sub-Sectors

Our respondents:

- **Were largely paid staff**
- **Most often worked for small organizations**
- **Were most often from community and economic development groups**

Most of our respondents (85%) answered the question "If you work with a community sector organization, what is your role?" Of those, 16 percent were

From our survey

"[Webinars are] great ways to get good information and reduce travel and volunteer time. The problem is that some people that could benefit from this technology are afraid of emailing and the teleconference systems let alone participating in a webinar."

executive directors, 55 percent other staff, 18.8 percent board directors, and 12.5 percent other volunteers.

The organizations that our respondents worked with had an average of 18 staff and 66 volunteers. These figures reflect the impact of a couple of several unusually large organizations, as 58% of the respondents who gave their organization's number of employees had less than 5. Similarly, although the average number of volunteers was 66, half of the organizations who responded had 20 or less.

The respondents worked across a wide variety of sub-sectors, with the largest concentration (20 % of the 70 who answered the question) in community and economic development. There was at least one respondent for all but four of the organizational categories used by the CSC's database (See Appendix A, Section 4, Question 2). The missing categories were women's organizations, service clubs, justice/crime prevention/human rights groups, and funding resource groups.

7/ Results

Section 1: Webinar Basics

Most people are new to webinars

A large majority (72%) of those who answered the question reported that they first attended a webinar in 2010 or 2011. Although attendance at a CSC webinar was what got a respondent on the list for this survey, our webinars were not always their first experience with the format; 14.7 percent of respondents had attended their first webinar before our program began. Nobody had attended one any earlier than 2005.

The largest group of respondents (41.3 %) had attended a maximum of four webinars, although 16 percent of people had attended more than 10. The median year of first webinar attendance for both groups was 2010.

People often attend webinars from outside their office

While the office was still the most common place people were when attending a webinar (with 66% of our respondents

From our survey

"[I like that] I can stay in my office and not travel. I get the slides afterwards and usually get to download handouts."

having attended from there), half of our respondents had attended from home (some had done both). A few others had attended while on vacation, while at other offices, or at public access points.

Emails are the key

Webinar attendees typically heard about their webinar from email lists, with websites and personal email also used by 30 and 35 percent of our respondents, respectively. Print ads and phone calls had almost no impact, but 12 percent said they heard about webinars by word of mouth.

Give advance notice – but not too much

Most people wanted to hear about their webinars at least two weeks in advance, with more than a third (37%) wanting two weeks of notice and another third (34%) wanting between two weeks and a month. Very few people wanted less than a week or more than a month's notice.

Registration is no sweat – but people prefer email to website forms

A majority (60%) of our respondents preferred to register by e-mail, with the other 40 percent preferring to register through a website. Since registering by e-mail typically involves a staff person at the other end entering the details, this implies some extra work for hosts. When asked an open-ended question about the difficulty of the registration process, a large majority (82%) reported that it was easy or that they had no problems. A few reported that they

had encountered registration processes that were too long or failed to send a confirmation immediately.

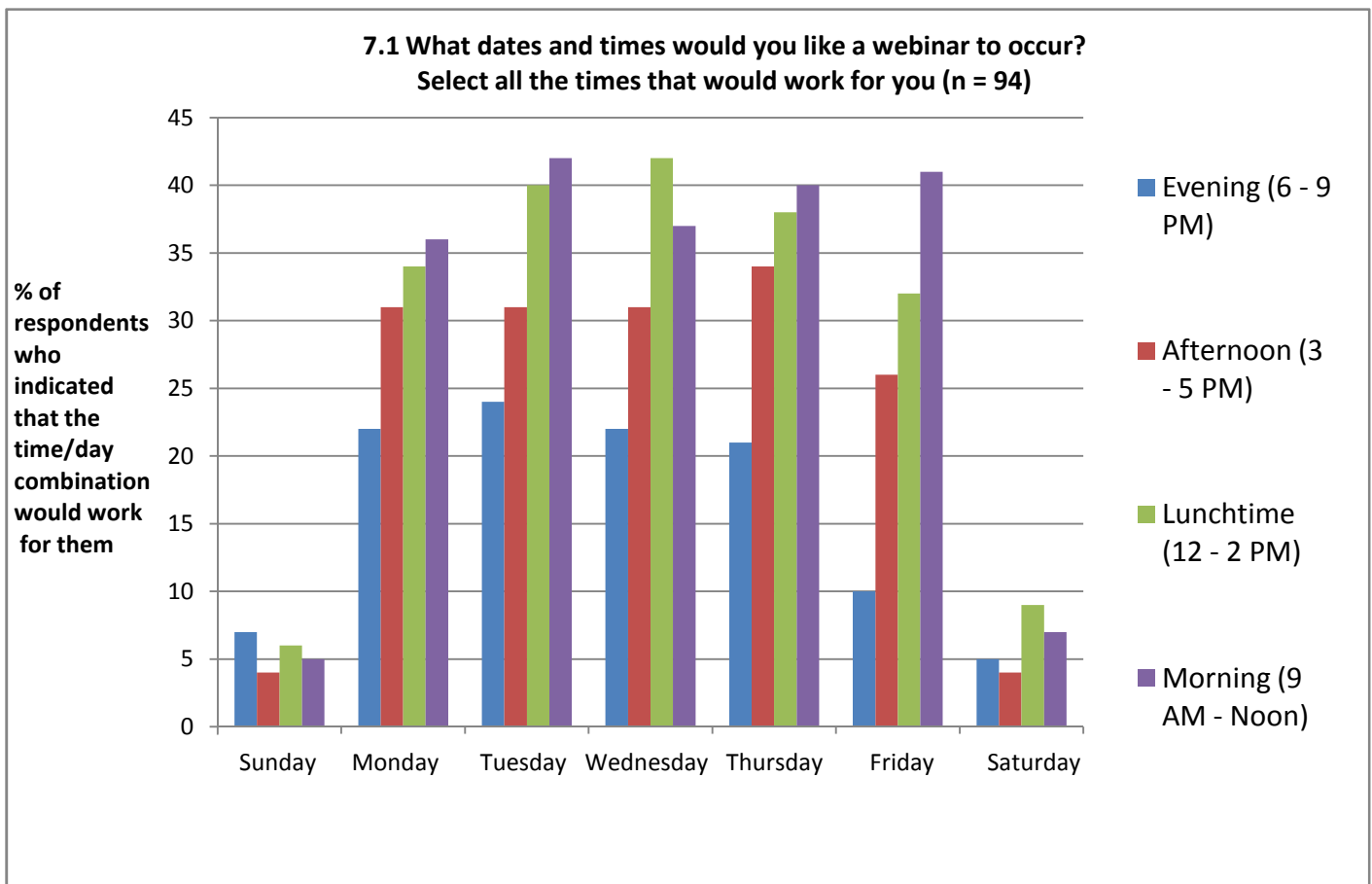
People prefer morning and midweek webinars

As shown below in figure 7.1, our respondents preferred to schedule webinars for weekday mornings (9-12) or lunchtimes (12-2), with the most interest in Tuesday mornings and Wednesday lunchtimes (although Friday morning also scored highly). Although many respondents attend webinars from home, that doesn't mean they want them to invade their

personal time – weekends and evenings were unpopular choices.

Automatic reminder messages are a good idea

There was a broad consensus amongst our respondents on reminders, with 76 percent of survey respondents wanting an email when they registered and another reminder two days before the webinar. About half of that group wanted a third reminder on the day of the session.



What do people like about webinars?

Our respondents liked

- **Not having to travel**
- **That content was informative and clear**
- **That the session was archived for future review**
- **That the sessions were short**
- **That webinars were cost-effective**

66 of our respondents answered an open-ended question about webinars: “What do you like most about webinars? What don't you like?” Their answers generated 120 discrete comments, as most respondents noted more than one thing. They were in much more agreement about what they liked about webinars than what they disliked, with 34 people citing the lack of travel and another 11 citing convenience. The points listed above were all mentioned at least 5 times.

What do people dislike?

Our respondents disliked:

- **When webinars lacked participation**
- **That it was hard to focus**
- **Audio problems**

The “don't like” responses were less numerous (31 negative comments out of the 120 responses) and more diverse, with 22 distinct responses (as opposed to 15 “likes”), none earning more than five repetitions. The factor cited most often was that the sessions weren't participatory

enough. Respondents also noted several times that it was hard to focus on a webinar, especially in a busy office environment.

There were also several problems with the audio side of webinars – our respondents disliked technical difficulties, distracting interruptions, uncomfortable headphones, and the need to dial in using a phone line.

Section 2: Webinar Content

Respondents were happy with webinar content

A large majority of respondents (89% of the 87 who answered the question) indicated that they were generally satisfied with the content of the webinars in which they participated; 69 percent registered “agree” and another 20 percent “strongly agree.” Nobody disagreed or disagreed strongly. Almost all respondents (92% of them) thought that the format had been suitable for the subject matter.

From our survey

“[I like] the ability to sit home and communicate and learn with others - great communication technique.

I don't like having to wear headphones; they can sometimes be boring and I'm easily distracted.”

Webinars should last up to an hour

There was wide agreement on the ideal length for a webinar, with 72 percent of question respondents indicating that between 30 minutes and an hour would be best.

Visuals matter most, Q&A the least

When asked about the three basic elements of a webinar – visual presentation, commentary, and questions – a strong majority (72%) thought that the visual presentation was “very important,” with the remainder indicating that it was “important.” Responses were slightly more divided on the importance of commentary, which 64 percent of respondents rated as “very important” and 35 percent as “important.” The least important element for our respondents was the ability to ask questions, with 17.2 percent indicating that they were “not very important.”

The Question of Participation

There was some ambiguity in our survey responses about the role participation plays in a webinar. On one hand, as we’ve seen, lack of participation was the most commonly cited complaint about the format. On the other hand, far fewer respondents felt that question-and-answer time was a very important element of a webinar when compared with audio and visuals. This ambiguity continued through the next set of questions, which

tried to address the widest gap we identified in both the literature and our own feedback: what types of content were suitable for the webinar format? To be able to set up closed questions on this topic, we first divided webinars into six broad categories:

- 1) Skills development
- 2) General information
- 3) Presentation of research results
- 4) Professional advice
- 5) Marketing
- 6) Group work

Our respondents thought that activities that needed more participation were less suitable for webinars

The three categories where respondents would prefer “lots of interaction” – group work, professional advice, and skills development – were also the three categories that earned the lowest “suitable” ratings when the participants were asked “What types of content are

From our survey

“[I like that webinars are] usually limited to 1 hour or less. The best ones are the ones you can stop/pause and then continue. Some you can go over either within a few days, or later for review.”

suitable for the webinar format?"

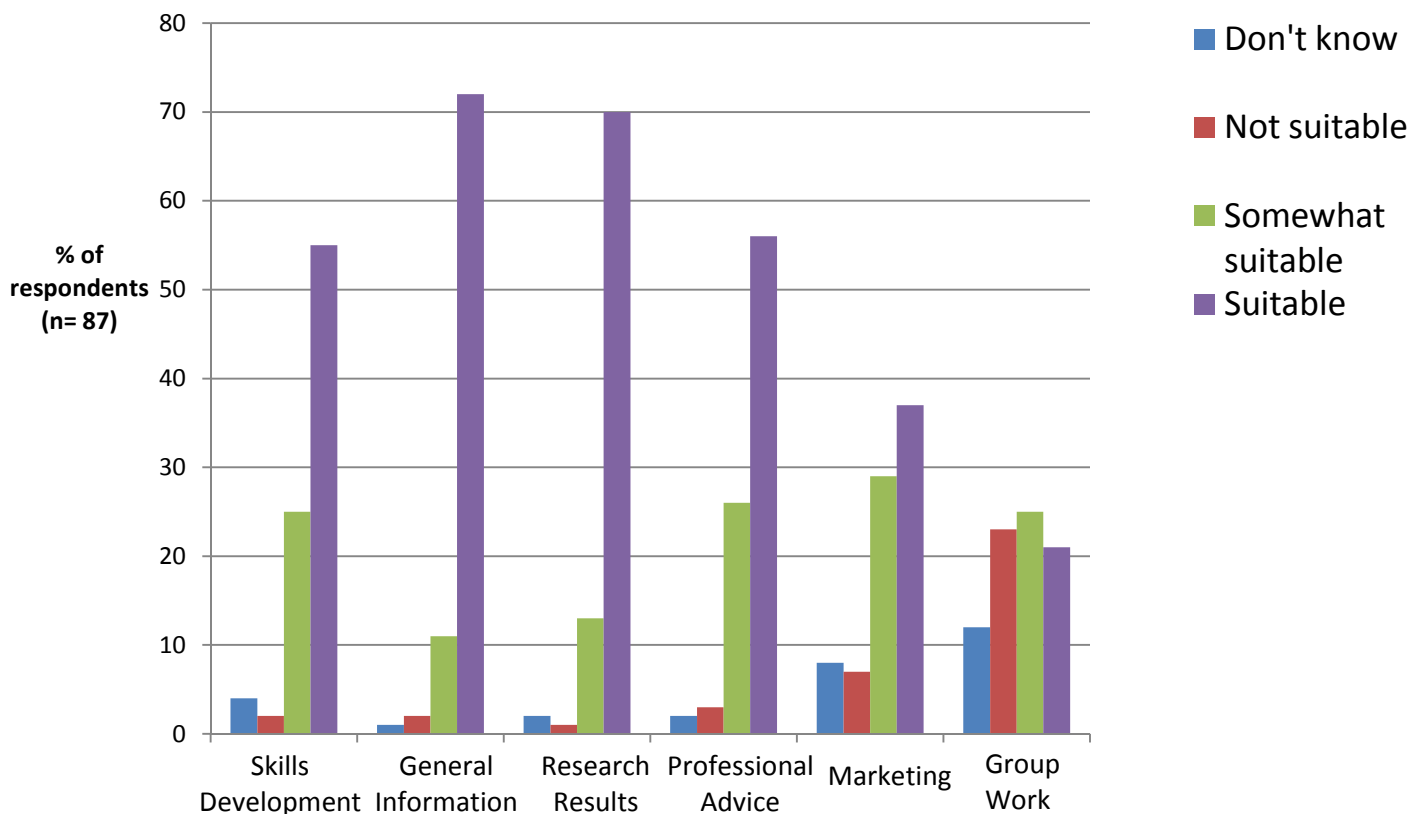
The highest "suitable" ratings (See Figure 7.2), chosen by more than 80 percent of the question respondents, were for "general information" and "presentation of research results." These are the two categories in which substantial interaction is least necessary. A smaller majority of respondents (64 %) thought that webinars were suitable for professional advice and skills development. In most of these cases, those who didn't choose "suitable" chose "somewhat suitable." Only marketing and group work earned more than a couple of

"not suitable" responses, with 9 percent thinking webinars were not suitable for marketing and 29 percent thinking them unsuitable for group work.

Interaction with the presenter is good - in moderation

Across all the categories except for group work and professional advice, a majority of respondents indicated that they would rather have some interaction with the presenter – defined as audience polls and typed questions – rather than either no interaction or lots of it (with the presenter asking them questions). In the case of

7.2 What types of content are suitable for the webinar format?



professional advice, more than a third of people wanted lots of interaction; in the case of group work, this went up to half.

Less enthusiasm about interaction with other participants

A plurality of respondents wanted “some interaction” with other participants, defined here as seeing the questions asked to the presenter by others. The other two categories were “lots of interaction,” defined as having an open chat room during the webinar, and “no interaction,” in which the attendees would be anonymous. Across all the webinar categories except for group work, many more people chose “no interaction” than chose “lots.”

Respondents who rated themselves as “very comfortable” with technology were much more likely to be planning to host their own webinars

Only 18 percent of our respondents planned to run their own webinars in the future, with another 18 percent saying they might and a third saying that they didn’t know. The respondents who planned to run their own webinars in the future were set apart from the group in several ways. They had, on average, been slightly more satisfied with the webinars they had participated in. Participants who planned on putting on their own webinar also rated their own comfort with technology much higher than those who didn’t. Younger people were slightly more likely to be planning a webinar – about 40 percent of

the group who said they were planning one was under 40, as compared to 30 percent under 40 for those not planning to hold their own.

Section 3: Technology

Webinar users have aptitude to spare – most rate themselves as more comfortable with technology than they thought was necessary to enjoy a webinar

A large majority (73 %) of those who answered the question reported that they were very comfortable with the Internet and computers; a slightly smaller proportion (67%) was very comfortable with audio headsets. Headsets were also the only category to earn more than 2 neutral or uncomfortable responses. There was broad agreement that participants needed only to be comfortable – not very comfortable – with these computers, the Internet, and headsets to participate in a webinar productively.

Technical difficulties aren’t a huge problem

Although comments about technical problems appeared in answers to open-ended questions, and were often mentioned anecdotally, a majority (57 %) of our survey respondents said that technical difficulties had no effect on their experiences with webinars. Only 6 percent were seriously affected, and nobody we surveyed had been prevented from accessing a webinar by technical problems

Audio problems were the most common

Respondents who reported technical trouble were asked what those troubles were: 83 percent cited problems with sound or audio equipment. The other relatively common problem was an inability to type questions – 29 percent of people who reported technical troubles cited this one. Less frequent problems included:

- Software glitches
- Disappearing comment boxes
- Problems getting past their office firewall
- Lost connections
- Beeps from the phone system every time someone came in or left the teleconference line

Webinars are predominantly used on Windows computers

The vast majority (95.5 %) of respondents used a Windows computer to access the webinar, with a few Mac users and one Linux user also responding.

Cross-Tabulations

After being collected, the results were cross-tabulated by age, gender, rural/urban location, the organizational role of the respondent, and by how many webinars that they had participated in. A few interesting results emerged.

Older respondents were largely similar to the group as a whole

The age of the respondent had little effect on most of the survey responses, with the

From our survey

“I like the ability to be exposed to experts on various topics from all over the continent, that they are free, short, no travel, and not time consuming. [I like] notes,, slides, transcripts and recordings available afterwards .”

exception being comfort with technology (older respondents were slightly less comfortable) and whether their organization planned to put on webinars (a majority of respondents over 50 planned not to). Those 50-and-over respondents also tended to work with organizations that had fewer employees and volunteers than their younger counterparts.

Fewer rural respondents logged in from home

While 60 percent of urban respondents had accessed webinars from home, 45 percent of rural respondents had. This may be related to the scarcity of broadband connections in many rural areas, especially in residential settings.

Rural respondents: more comfortable with technology, yet less likely to be planning webinars of their own

About 80 percent of rural respondents considered themselves “very comfortable” with technology, compared with 67 percent of their urban counterparts. Fewer rural

respondents, however, were planning to run webinars on their own, with 50 percent indicating “No”, as opposed to 29 percent of urban respondents.

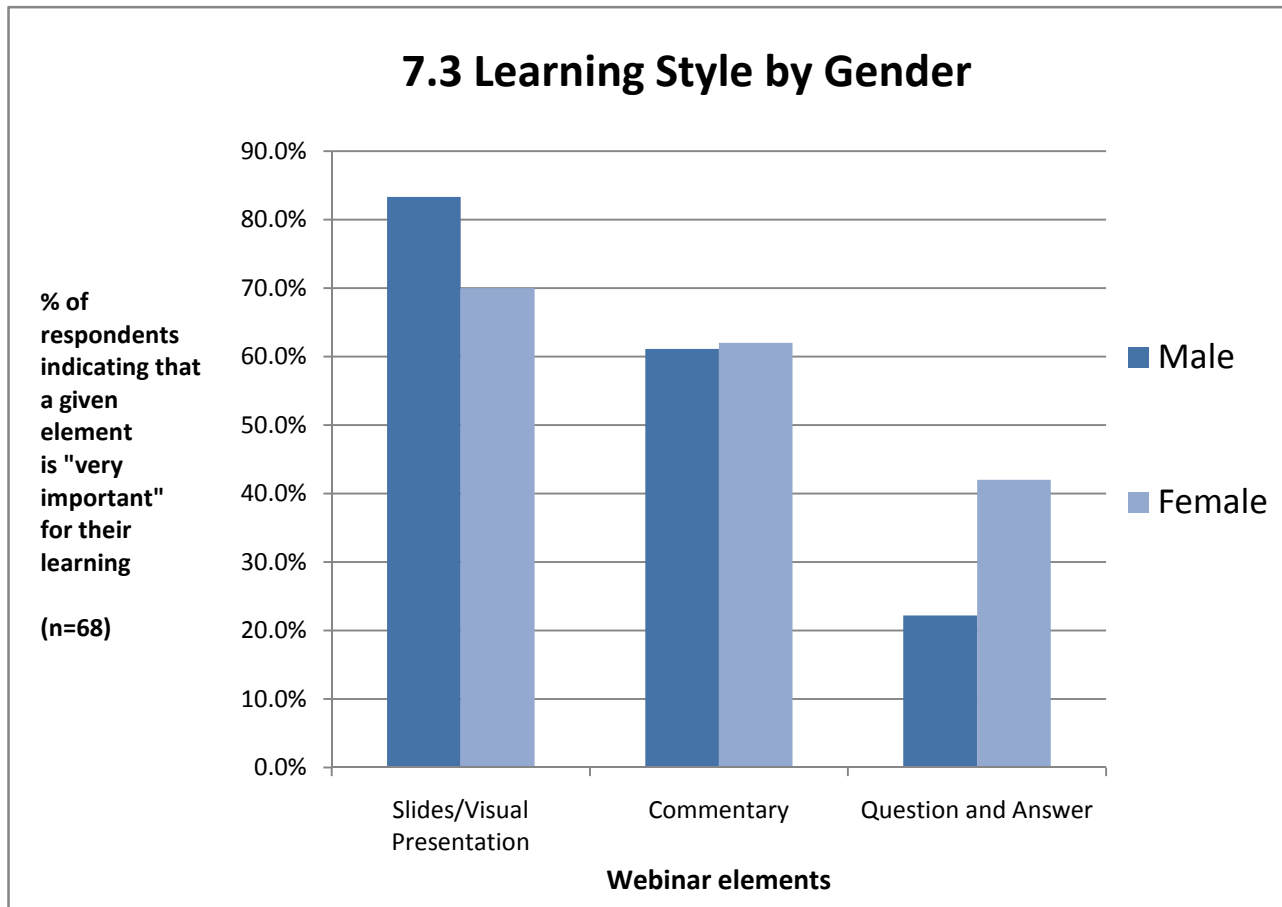
Learning styles differ between men and women

When asked about what elements mattered for their learning, women put less emphasis on the visual presentation and more on the question-and-answer element of webinars. (See Figure 7.3) Since our respondents were predominantly female, this suggests a bit more emphasis on Q&A. Women were also slightly more comfortable

than men with computers and the Internet, and significantly (19 % more) comfortable with audio headsets.

Board directors are less enthusiastic about webinars

We also took a look at how our data broke down when it was divided by the type of role the respondent held with their organization. Unsurprisingly, executive directors and staff tend to use webinars from the office, while volunteers and board members more often work from home. Across most of our types of webinar (research results, informational, skills



development, professional advice, marketing, and group work), directors made up the smallest proportion of respondents indicating that the type was suitable for a webinar. Often operating farther than staff and volunteers from the day-to-day training and support offered by their organizations, board members may find webinars harder to access effectively.

Key informant interviews

As the survey was in progress, we also completed a series of five interviews with people who had registered for CSC webinars but not attended them. None of the respondents indicated that they had forgotten or that more reminders were necessary. They said, instead, that other things had come up in their schedule. In a couple of cases these were unexpected events such as weather, while in a couple others it was simply another appointment that filled the same time slot. This serves as a reminder that webinars are not always a high-priority schedule item.

8/ Discussion

To conclude this report, we return to the knowledge gaps we identified coming out of the literature review:

- 1) What types of content do the recipients of webinars want to receive? What do they feel is suitable for the webinar format?
- 2) How do users want to hear about, register, and schedule their webinars?
- 3) How much of an impact do technical problems and aptitudes have on the effectiveness of webinars?
- 4) Who is using webinars? Which groups could be benefitting from them?

The participation question

Many authors in the literature reviewed stressed the importance of interactivity for keeping people engaged; it was not, however, clear that interactivity was an effective learning aid. Our study reinforced these two points. On one hand, respondents frequently cited the need for more participation, and relatively few of them had a preference for a completely passive experience. At the same time, the more interactive a given type of webinar was, the less our respondents cited it as suitable for the webinar format.

There are a number of reasons why this might be the case. First of all, audience participation in webinars can be a challenge. If the presenter wants to get vocal feedback, they need to juggle the “mute” function on the voice line, which isn’t always a smooth process. The normal process for typed questions, in which a moderator reads the question and passes it to the presenter, is simpler; typed questions

are, however, somewhat more vulnerable to being missed by the presenters.

Building an engaging and participatory webinar can also involve a great deal of work for the presenter. They need to prepare questions in advance, and hazard guesses as to the level of interest at the time – without visual cues, the presenter does not have a lot to go on. It is also important to remember that webinars don't always have the full attention of their participants.

A great advantage of webinars is their low cost – in travel, time, and money. Low cost, though, can at times mean low investment. Some webinar providers handle this by charging; it is harder to justify sending emails and chatting with officemates if they are a distraction from a paid session. Charging for webinars, though, often runs contrary to the values of community sector organizations. A free webinar is more accessible, but it puts demands on the presenters to make slides interesting, their examples relevant, their voice tone varied, and the Q&A flowing.

Building an engaging and participatory webinar can also involve a great deal of work for the presenter.

Providing for a few well-placed spaces for questions and prompt, informative answers is more important than opening every communication channel available to hosts.

At the end of the day, the interactive element of a webinar will always be subject to constraints; as both our respondents and the literature noted, the technology is generally more suited for teaching than it is for unstructured group collaboration.

Providers can get around some of these constraints with more technology – chat rooms and video feeds, for example. That, though, limits the audience to the more technically savvy (and those with high-speed connections). While our respondents rated their computer skills fairly highly, they also noted to us in their open-ended responses that many people who could be using the technology are not yet doing so. It is probably best to keep it simple.

Taking all of our survey results and feedback together, the final word on interactivity is that quality matters more than quantity. Providing for a few well-placed spaces for questions and prompt informative answers is more important than opening every communication channel available to hosts.

Knowledge Gap 1: Who is using webinars?

In their age and gender distribution, our participants looked like the community sector at large. This is reassuring –it means that information presented this way is accessible to the people who need it – not just the young or technically savvy.

The large proportion of our users who came from urban areas, especially the area around St. John's, was something of a surprise. More community sector organizations in the CSC's Newfoundland and Labrador database come from outside of the Avalon Peninsula than within it, and indeed it would seem that webinars are an ideal tool for rural organizations to access the resource and knowledge base of the city.

The picture, it seems, is more complex than that. Exploring barriers that keep people from using webinars was beyond the scope of this survey; based on the literature and our experiences in Newfoundland and Labrador, it seems likely that a combination of patchy broadband access and lack of training lies at the root of this. The other side of rural under-representation in our sample is urban over-representation; many urban organizations still clearly saw the value in participating virtually. Webinars clearly have the potential to expand the interaction between organizations from the same physical area.

Knowledge Gap 2: Technology

Our survey suggested that while technical problems do happen, they are not often serious. Only 6 percent of our respondents indicated that technical troubles had serious effects on their experiences in webinars. More often, they are simply an annoyance. With most of the complaints coming in being related to sound, it is also relatively easy to deal with many of them; the final section of this report -- on best practices -- will discuss how. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of our users were using Windows machines; Macs are not particularly common in offices, and are still a minority in the home. This does suggest that compatibility does not need to be the highest priority when choosing a webinar tool (though most, by now, work cross-platform).

On technological aptitude, our study suggested a number of conclusions. Our respondents generally considered themselves more comfortable technologically than someone would need to be to participate in a webinar. This suggests that more work could be done to draw in those who are less comfortable with technology but can still handle the simple demands of a webinar.

Knowledge Gap 3: Registration, scheduling, and reminders

We found that webinars occupied a medium-priority position for our

respondents. Very few wanted to hear about them more than a month in advance, with the “sweet spot” being set at two weeks’ notice. When we interviewed five people who had registered but not actually attended their webinars, they all cited the same reason – something else came up in that time slot. This is something that all webinar providers will face.

Knowledge Gap 4: Suitable Content

It is possible to draw a picture of what the largest numbers of our respondents thought best suited the format: a short presentation of one hour or less that presents general information or research results, with engaging slides and good commentary. Our respondents were less committed to the importance of question-and-answer sessions, though most did prefer the ability to at least type them in. They were also less sure of the suitability of other types of content to the format, though only “marketing” and “group work” had a majority of people indicating anything other than “suitable.” There was little interest in extensive interaction with the other participants.

Summing it all up

This study points to a clear way to think about how to use webinars. They work as complements, not supplements, to in-person meetings or unstructured online discussions, as they are more a teaching tool

Thinking about webinars as complements, not substitutes, for in-person meetings also makes clear one way they add value in the social economy. Instead of moving content from a meeting to the Internet, webinars can add an extra stream of information that the participants might otherwise go without.

than a tool for collaborative work. With this understood, it is possible to start thinking about the place that webinars could occupy in the social economy. From what we heard from respondents, it could be a significant one.

With organizations in the sector facing so many common challenges, webinars really do have the potential to save a lot of time and work. Framing a set of ideas as a short, focused presentation that is valuable even without the back-and-forth of an in-person meeting can be a useful exercise for both presenter and audience.

Thinking about webinars as complements, not substitutes, for in-person meetings also makes clear one way they add value in the social economy. Instead of moving content from a meeting to the Internet, webinars can add an extra stream of information that the participants might otherwise go without.

Only 18 percent of our respondents said they were planning to host their own webinars. It seems highly unlikely that only this 18 percent has knowledge worth sharing with the sector. There is clearly room for more training on the nuts-and-bolts of presenting a webinar, and for more study as to what barriers are keeping people from participating in them.

The limitations of this study must also be noted. The sample size, at 94, was quite small. Because the survey was a lengthy and exploratory one, we also left every question as optional. In the end, only five were answered by every respondent. As the last section in the survey, the demographic questions got fewer responses, making the cross-tabulations by them relatively vulnerable to the impact of only a few respondents' choices.

This survey also can say nothing about the many social-economy actors who have not used webinars, or indeed about webinar users elsewhere; although our results did not clash with the literature that is out there, there is not much of it to compare against.

It is here that several future research directions emerge. Knowing more about the social-economy participants who do not use webinars would help organizations hosting them understand how to make them more accessible. More studies such as this one, gathering feedback from users, would also

help deepen the understanding of what works and what doesn't for the format.

Although participants indicated that they were usually satisfied with their learning from webinars, there is not very much literature that attempts to track how effective a tool they actually are compared to other tools (such as conference calls or pre-recorded training materials). Further research in this area would be very useful.

That said, for many social-economy organizations questions around webinars are more practical. With that in mind, we will turn to our final component, a list of best practices for webinar hosts that reflects the consensus in the literature and the feedback this survey has given on it. This list is also available from CSC as a separate document: "So, You Want to Run a Webinar?"

<http://communitysector.nl.ca/webinarbestpractices>

9/ Best Practices

While a webinar is a discrete event, conducting one is very much a process. The best practices here are presented in chronological order.

Step 1: Choose Your Platform

There is a wide variety of webinar platforms out there, with more emerging all the time. GoToWebinar, Adobe Connect,

and WebEx are the most common.

Whichever one you use:

- **Choose early.** Every platform provider offers solid tutorials that can get you started, but you should give yourself at least a month to familiarize yourself before launching webinars of your own
- **Avoid products that require software downloads for attendees.** Some workplace computers won't allow downloads or installations without a password. Many webinar platforms use Java ® or Flash ®, which is built into modern web browsers and avoids the need for new software.
- **Get a platform that allows voice to be sent online (Known as VoIP).** This allows your participants to listen in without tying up a phone line. It also makes it easier to record the webinar with audio.

Step 2: Build your presentation

Most webinars are centered on PowerPoint® slideshows, and for good reason; while it is possible to share anything on your desktop, it can be frustrating for participants to wait while the host loads documents or web pages. There are a few principles to keep in mind:

- **Keep text to a minimum and keep the font sizes big.** The text should only be a guide to your remarks.
- **Use lots of big, bright visuals, but ensure that they illustrate your point.** Pictures of the presenters are an excellent idea, as they help build a bond with the audience.
- **Use lots of slides.** This is where webinar presentation slides differ from in-person ones. With slides your main way of keeping the presentation active, using a few more will keep your audience focused.
- **Avoid anything too complex, especially the first time around.** Webinars are better suited to clear, concise presentations of fact than they are to group discussions or complex skill-building.

Step 3: Think about timing

Webinars should be short and focused.

Most of our survey-takers preferred an hour or less. That generally means about 40 minutes of content, 5 minutes of setup and explanation, and 15 minutes for questions.

Be sure to include:

- **An explanation of how the webinar will work.** Keep this short – people dislike long introductions.
- **Time for questions.** Put these in the middle of the presentation, as well as at the end.

- **A few questions that you can set up as polls (where the audience clicks their vote).** They'll give you structured feedback and get people involved in the talk.
- **A time for your webinar earlier in the day and in the middle of the week.** We found the most interest in sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings and lunchtimes.

Step 4: Invite people

The “sweet spot” for doing this is between two weeks and a month before the event. A few things will help you maximize your audience:

- **Keep your e-mail invitation short,** with a brief summary of the topic and a large, bold link to your registration page (which your webinar platform will help you set up).
- **Be aware of the deadlines for inclusion of your invitation on mailing lists.** These lists are the way most of our respondents heard of webinars, but they often only go out every two weeks or even monthly.
- **Ask for as little information as possible when people register.** Their name, their e-mail address, and (possibly) their organization is all you should normally need. More questions will scare people away.

Step 5: Set up your space

You need to have the right physical and virtual space to run a webinar well. Here's what you need:

- **A room behind a closed door.** You will need a quiet space to work from when you are presenting.
- **A wired Internet connection.** Wireless networks can sometimes drop connections or cause fuzzy audio.
- **A clean virtual desktop.** When you turn desktop sharing in your webinar software, the users will be able to see everything on your screen. Make sure to close all windows except for your presentation files.

Step 6: Find a partner to moderate

The moderator takes questions and handles any technical troubles, letting you focus on your voice and your slides. Ideally, the moderator should be in a different space, using a different Internet connection. This ensures that if one connection has problems, someone will still be there to interact with the participants.

Step 7: Practice

Do a “dry run” of your webinar well before the presentation. Ask a few friends to participate, ideally using different kinds of computers and Internet browsers. Have them alert you if they notice:

- **Audio problems.** Some breakup is inevitable when sending audio online, but things like beeping noises on login or overly quiet vocals can be solved, either by calling the teleconference provider or moving the mic closer to the presenter.
- **Interface problems.** Make sure they can always see the space for typing questions.
- **Delays.** Slow connections lag when you click from slide to slide.

Step 8: Present

On the day of the webinar, log in early to make sure everything is up and running and that you are there to welcome the participants. The most important thing you can pay attention to during the presentation is your voice.

- **Speak loudly and vary your tone.** Your audience can't see you, so your voice has to hold their attention.

- **Speak slowly.** Especially over VoIP, vocals get a bit garbled. Slowing down your speech a little bit helps.
- **Answer questions as they come up.** This keeps the audience engaged. If you can't get to a question, set it aside to answer after the webinar is over.
- **Check in with your audience.** Asking them questions directly will focus their attention on the presentation.

Step 9: Follow-up

Post-webinar contact is very important, especially if the webinar itself was a one-off event. You need to:

- **Answer any questions** you didn't get to during the presentation.
- **Send out a link** to an archived recording of the webinar as soon as possible. Our respondents loved having access to this.
- **Send out any additional resources** you mentioned in your presentation.

Putting together a solid webinar is largely a matter of common sense and preparation. Keep it simple, keep it clear, and keep the process as organized as possible and your audience will thank you.

8/ References

Anderson, M., (2010). Tips for Effective Webinars. eLearn Magazine, Retrieved from http://www.elearnmag.org/subpage.cfm?article=64-1§ion=best_practices

Bealko, L., (2006). Running Effective Online Trainings. TechSoup Retrieved from <http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/training/archives/page10104.cfm?cg=searchterms&sg=webinar>

Bell, S. and Shank, J., (2006). Conferencing at Your Computer: The Ins and Outs of Virtual Conferences. *Library Journal*, 131, 50-52

Bovell, M., (2009). That Was a Bad Webinar, Wonder Why? eLearn Magazine, Retrieved from http://www.elearnmag.org/subpage.cfm?section=best_practices&article=55-1

Community Sector Council NL (2011). So you want to run a webinar? Retrieved from http://communitysector.nl.ca/sites/default/files/fact_sheets/2011/webinarbestpractices.pdf

Docherty, Karen J. and Faiks, A. H., (2004). Webinar Technology. *Science & Technology Libraries*, 25, 211- 226

Griffiths, K. and Peters, C., (2009). 10 Steps for Planning a Successful Webinar: Tips for Organizing and Producing Online Seminars for Your Nonprofit Organization. *TechSoup*, Retrieved from <http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/training/page11252.cfm>

Hackler, D. and Saxton, G. (2006). The Strategic Use of Information Technology by Nonprofit Organizations: Increasing Capacity and Untapped Potential. *Public Administration Review*, 67, 474-487

Heerwegh, D., Vanhove, T., Matthijs, K., and Loosveldt, G., (2005). The Effect of Personalization on Response Rates and Data Quality in Web Surveys. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8, 85-99

HR Council for the Voluntary and Nonprofit Sector (2008). Toward a Labour Force Strategy for Canada's Voluntary & Non-profit Sector. Retrieved from http://hrcouncil.ca/about/documents/HRC_LFS_Report3.pdf

Iarossi, G. (2006). *The Power of Survey Design: A User's Guide for Managing Surveys, Interpreting Results, and Influencing Respondents.* World Bank Publications

Lietzau, J.A. and Mann, B., (2009). Breaking out of the Asynchronous Box: Using Web Conferencing in Distance Learning, *Journal of Library & Information Services in Distance Learning*, 3, 108-119

Maine Commission for Community Service, (2010). Best Practices for Interactive Webinars. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/files/webinar-planning-advice.pdf>

Mittleman, D., Briggs, R., and Nunamaker, J., (2000). Best Practices in Facilitating Virtual Meetings: Some Notes from Initial Experience. *Facilitation*, 2, 5-15

Molay, K., (2009). Best Practices for Webinars: Increasing Attendance, Engaging Your Audience, and Successfully Advancing Your Business Goals, Adobe Inc. White Papers, Retrieved from http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/webconferencing/pdfs/Best_Practices_for_Webinars_v4_FINAL.pdf

Reushle, S. and Loch, B., (2008). Conducting a Trial of Web Conferencing Software: How, Why, and Perceptions from the Coalface. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 9, 18-28

Riddle, J., (2010). The Tech Effect: Through the Computer Screen – On the Other Side of a Webinar. *Internet @ School*. Retrieved from: <http://www.Internetatschools.com/Articles/Column/The-Tech-Effect/THE-TECH-EFFECT-Through-the-Computer-Screen--On-the-Other-Side-of-the-Webinar-68107.aspx>

Stephens, K., and Mottet, T. (2008). Interactivity in a Web Conference Training Context: Effects on Trainers and Trainees. *Communication Education*, 57, 88-104

Wilder Research, (2010). Tips for Conducting Effective Webinars. Retrieved from <http://www.wilder.org/download.0.html?report=2303>

Appendix A: The Survey

Survey: Webinar User Experiences

1. Webinar Basics

The Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC) wants to know about experiences of webinar users within the social economy. The data gathered in this survey will help the community sector use webinars more effectively.

The survey consists of 4 pages:

1. Questions about how you hear about and register for webinars
2. Questions about webinar content
3. Questions about technology
4. Basic questions about you and the organization you work with.

None of the questions are mandatory, but please answer as completely as you can. This survey should take about 10 minutes. Feel free to preview the questions using the "Next Page" and "Previous Page" buttons below.

Any identifying information will be kept separate from survey data. If you have questions or comments, please contact Josh Smyth at joshsmlyth@csc.nf.net or call 1-866-753-9860.

Thanks for your help!

1. Approximately when did you attend your first webinar? Enter the month and the year (if you can remember).

Date

2. Please estimate how many webinars you have participated in. This includes, but is not limited to, those hosted by the Community Sector Council NL.

0 to 1
 2 to 4
 5 to 9
 10 to 20
 20 +

3. From what location(s) have you participated in webinars? Check all that apply.

At home At another office
 At your organization's office At a public access point (such as a CAP site or cafe)

Other (please specify)

Survey: Webinar User Experiences

4. How do you normally hear about upcoming webinars?

- Websites
- E-mail lists
- Personal e-mail
- Print Ads
- Phone call
- Word of mouth

Other (please specify)

5. How much advance notice would you like for a webinar?

- Less than a week
- 1 week
- 2 weeks
- 2 weeks- 1 month
- 1 - 2 months
- 2+ months

Other (please specify)

6. What days and times would you prefer webinars to occur? Select all the times that would work for you.

	Morning (9 AM - Noon)	Lunchtime (12 - 2 PM)	Afternoon (3 - 5 PM)	Evening (6 - 9 PM)
Sunday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

7. Which method of webinar registration do you find most convenient?

- On the Web
- By e-mail
- By phone

Other (please specify)

Survey: Webinar User Experiences

8. Please elaborate on your experiences with webinar registration. Has the process been easy, difficult, or somewhere in between? What would make it smoother?

9. How would you like to be notified about webinars you have registered for?

- An e-mail confirmation when I register, with no reminder email
- An e-mail confirmation when I register, then a reminder message two days before the webinar
- An e-mail confirmation when I register, a reminder two days before, and a second reminder on the day of the webinar.
- An email confirmation when I register, then a single reminder on the day of the webinar.

Other (please specify)

10. What do you like most about webinars? What don't you like?

2. Webinar Content

Non-profits use webinars to deliver many types of content with varying levels of participation. On this page we'd like to get a sense of how you felt about the content of the webinars you've already been a part of and what you'd like to see from webinars in the future.

1. How do you feel about this statement?

"I was generally satisfied with the content of the webinars I participated in."

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Agree strongly

Survey: Webinar User Experiences

2. How do you feel about this statement?

"For most of the webinars I participated in, the webinar format was suitable for the subject matter."

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Agree strongly

3. How long do you prefer to spend in a single webinar session?

- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 to 59 minutes
- 60 to 89 minutes
- 90 to 120 minutes
- More than 120 minutes

4. Please indicate how important these webinar elements are for your learning.

	Very important	Important	Not very important	Don't know
Slides/Visual Presentation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presenter's commentary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Question & Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. What types of content are suitable for the webinar format?

	Suitable	Somewhat suitable	Not suitable	Don't know
Skills development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presentation of research results	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Survey: Webinar User Experiences

6. Please indicate how much interaction you would like to have with the presenter in each type of webinar.

	No interaction (just listening)	Some interaction (audience polls and typed questions)	Lots of interaction (polls, typed questions, and responding to questions from the presenter)	Don't know
Skills development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presentation of research results	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>			

7. How much interaction would you like to have with the other attendees of each type of webinar?

	No interaction (attendees are anonymous)	Some interaction (seeing their questions to the presenter)	Lots of interaction (visible questions and an open chat room during the webinar)	Don't know
Skills development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presentation of research results	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Does your organization plan on running its own webinars in the future?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Don't know

3. Technicalities

Webinars depend on technology; this page is here to discover what works, what doesn't and how much training you need to benefit from them.

Survey: Webinar User Experiences

1. How comfortable are you with these technologies?

	Very comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable
Computers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phone/audio headsets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. How comfortable with each of these technologies should someone be to participate productively in a webinar?

	Very comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable
Computers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phone/Audio headsets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. How much of an effect have technical difficulties had on your webinar experiences?

No effect

Some effect

Serious effects

I could not access the webinar

4. If technical difficulties were a factor, which difficulties did you experience?

Sound quality or volume problems

Content restricted by a firewall

Comment box disappearing

Inability to type questions or comments

Software crashes

Other (please specify)

5. What kind of computers have you used when participating in webinars? Check all that apply.

Windows

Mac

Linux

Don't know

Other (please specify)

Survey: Webinar User Experiences

4. Wrap Up and Profile

Thanks once again for your feedback.

We'd like to know what kind of organization you work for and your role there.

1. If you work with a community sector organization, what is your role? Check all that apply.

- Executive Director
- Staff
- Board member
- Volunteer
- N/A

2. In what sub-sector does your organization concentrate most of its efforts?

Choose an area of focus

Sub-Sector:

Other (please specify)

3. What province or territory are you located in?

Select a Province/Territory

Location:

Outside of Canada (Please specify)

4. If you are located in Newfoundland and Labrador, please select your region.

Select a Region

Region:

5. Please estimate the number of people who volunteer with your organization

Volunteers:

6. Are you in a rural or an urban area?

- Rural
- Urban

7. How many paid employees does the organization have? If none, enter "0".

Employees:

Survey: Webinar User Experiences

8. What type of organization do you work with? Check all that apply.

- Registered charity
- Federally incorporated nonprofit organization
- Provincially incorporated nonprofit organization
- Informally organized community group
- Government body
- Funding body

Other (please specify)

9. What is your age?

- 0- 19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70 +

10. What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

11. Thanks for participating! Do you have any other comments on your experiences as a webinar participant?