

Consultations

What it is

A consultation is often an on-wiki, very open discussion about a specific topic. Some examples might be gathering input on the direction of an organization or gathering input on whether a certain policy should be passed. Typically, opinions are welcome from anyone.

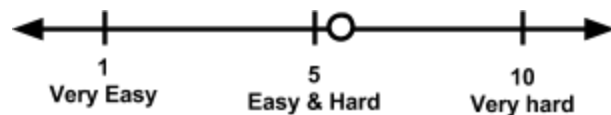
How input is gathered

Input for consultations are typically gathered from the wiki, although an in-person and on-wiki hybrid can be designed. The conversations are often open public forums where everyone can participate. A survey can also be used alongside a consultation to invite people to submit comments anonymously.

How a decision is reached

Decisions from consultations are made from the consultation organizers. Typically, they are not a vote. Instead, the conversation is summarized to identify what are the major themes of the overall feedback that might help inform a decision.

Ease of implementation¹



Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Open in terms of participation and kinds of feedback (not all forced choice)*Theoretically open to all voices*Possible to build good relations if you have open communication at all stages*Translations can be prepared ahead of time, and the simple questions are easy to translate*No special tools/software needed*Statistical skills not needed* Very much in line with wiki/open culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Sorting/assessing feedback can be difficult*Some participants can be too vocal and not represent everyone*Less anonymous: folks can take advantage of openness and effectively shut out some voices*Can be difficult to have representation from multilingual*Participants might not represent the contributors you want to serve.*For organizers: need to know how to design pages, do communications, analysis, etc.*For participants: very open and takes considerable volunteer time. Surveys are easier for giving input, but less rich information.

¹ Ease of implementation is *highly dependant* on the complexity of the tool. With a smaller audience, it can be easier to do. With a larger audience, translation, and more stakeholders involved can make any tool more complex.

Surveys

What it is

A survey or a survey questionnaire is a structured format for gathering feedback using different kinds of questions to gather input. Surveys can be done online or in-person. They can be open to everyone or targeted (via mailing lists or usernames). Surveys can gather very specific information: attitudes, opinions, knowledge, awareness, behaviors, activities, and personal attributes, such as demographics.

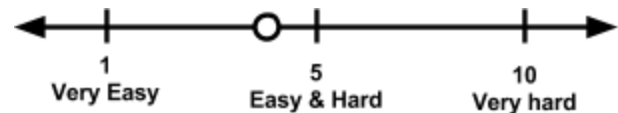
How input is gathered

To gather input from a survey, first the audience and questions need to be identified, as well as the goals. Surveys can be used as a voting tool as well. They can also be used to learn whether people have strong opinions about certain topics, akin to political polling.

How a decision is reached

Decisions from a survey come through the data that is received and any analysis that needs. The data collected through a survey might also be used to make decisions for which the survey was not originally intended.

Ease of implementation²



Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Reaches lots of people with little resources*Can use sampling so not everyone needs to participate*Allows for privacy*Personalized target audience*Identify demographics and check representation*Every voice is heard*The participants feel involved*Easy to analyze results online: data already entered and easy to organize	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Difficult to ask the right questions for giving input.* If open questions: difficult to analyze* If multiple choices: possible ideas are left out* Translation can complicate the survey* May need specialized software* Sometimes responses don't make a difference* Difficult to get a global meaning from some responses* Survey burnout

² Ease of implementation is *highly dependant* on the complexity of the tool. With a smaller audience, it can be easier to do. With a larger audience, translation, and more stakeholders involved can make any tool more complex.

Community Wishlist

What it is

A community wishlist is used to decide where to spend resources (e.g. time or money). It uses a combined proposal and voting process. Within Wikimedia, the community wishlists have been used for determining what tools and other technical needs an organization should work on.

How input is gathered

The community wishlist begins with a proposal submission process. Participants or teams must complete a form that explains the problem/issue that needs solving. Then proposals are sorted based on capacity (e.g. what issue they are solving). Finally, a vote is held by a broad community in order to choose which proposals will be worked on. In Wikimedia, those who can participate has been traditionally based on edit count.

How a decision is reached

Decisions from a community wishlist is based on a vote of the proposals. Once the voting is completed, decisions about resourcing are based on various factors, including how complex the problem is and who might already be working to solve the problem.

Ease of implementation³



Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Easy to post in any language* Helps create focus based on popularity* Easier to implement when done in just one language* Puts heads in one central place so community members can rank/prioritize collectively* Iterative cyclical process with feedback loop - process improves based on input* Supports knowledge sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">*Some people may feel they don't have knowledge to participate*Newbies are disadvantaged because it takes time to learn wiki skills*Effective communications are needed to get people to the list*Hard to categorize and shape ideas - have to ask a lot of questions to understand the wishes*One loud voice can sway results even if not representative (e.g. canvassing in many places)*Smaller communities/groups disadvantaged*People are specialized in various categories and creates silos across capacities

³ Ease of implementation is *highly dependant* on the complexity of the tool. With a smaller audience, it can be easier to do. With a larger audience, translation, and more stakeholders involved can make any tool more complex.

Interviews

What it is

An interview is a way to get information from one or a group of people by having a one on one conversation. The type of information received is often useful to really dive deep to learn about motivations, interest, and other information that can be difficult to capture through something like a consultation or survey.

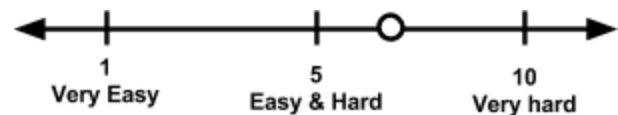
How input is gathered

A few individuals are selected to have a conversation. Questions are created to help guide the conversation. The interviewer is able to ask clarifying questions during the interview to try to understand the interviewee.

How a decision is reached

Interviews or groups of people who organized the interviews would typically make the decisions. The interviews can be qualitatively analyzed to determine general themes and perhaps what actions might be appropriate to take, or what additional studies could be employed.

Ease of implementation⁴



Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* In-depth; broad, can give yourself a lot of new ideas* Can ask questions or ask for clarification when discussing live* Can stay on-topic using a set list of questions* Targeted at people /org involved in a topic* Interviews with a beer :) Information - builds trust* Flexible; close to natural communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Can take a lot of time to do surveys and analyze results* Documentation* Too much input* Limited number of participants ; not easily comparable* Can create discomfort

⁴ Ease of implementation is *highly dependant* on the complexity of the tool. With a smaller number of people to interview, it can be easier. With more people, it can be much harder. Translation can also make interviews very challenging.

Mailing lists

What it is

A mailing list is a space for people to communicate and exchange information online.

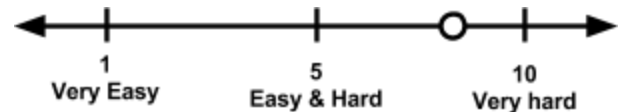
How input is gathered

If someone has a problem or question they need to solve, they can pose their question or idea anytime on a mailing list and people can provide input on that mailing list thread.

How a decision is reached

Decisions would be made based on the feedback that one receives from the mailing list. It could be possible to qualitatively code feedback that is received before making a decision.

Ease of implementation⁵



Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* It is very easy to send an email that many people will see.* Can get a lot of input quickly.* Can be used as a way to get attention for <i>other</i> community listening tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Many ideas are shared so it can be difficult to come to a decision.* Conversations become between a few people.* Mailing lists can deviate from initial discussion* Discussions can get messy* Difficult to follow and keep up with the conversation* Too much input and not focused* Often there are limited number of participants* Cannot translate the conversation

⁵ Ease of implementation is *highly dependant* on the complexity of the tool. With a smaller mailing list, it can be easier to do. With a larger mailing list, it is very very complex.

Committees

What it is

A committee is a formal body of people who have been chosen to help make decisions about something. An example would be an event committee or a committee that makes decisions about policies, or issues that might come up.

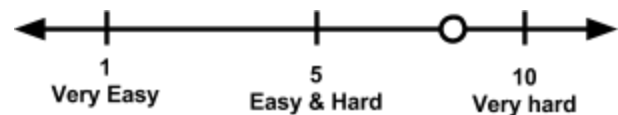
How input is gathered

Committees have various methods to collect information in order to make a decision. They can seek secondary information (e.g. publications) or they can use other listening tools (surveys, interviews) to help help them a decision.

How a decision is reached

Decisions might be based on a majority vote or by consensus of the committee, depending on the rules that govern the committee.

Ease of implementation⁶



Benefits	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Pooling of knowledge and experience* Can increase motivation among its members as being part of a community or organization* Committee members can be eyes and ears within their communities and other spaces to help inform decisions.* Having a dedicated group people who can put in time and effort to collect needed information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Need to organize meetings to hold discussions.* Convening meetings can be expensive if travel is involved.* Decisions could be made that no one is happy with because everyone compromises* A few vocal committee members might dominate the whole group

⁶ Ease of implementation does not get easier with the size of the committee. What makes committees harder or easier is the size of their mandate. Organizing an event = easy. Making policy = harder.