

# Webinar Tool Selection for Online Training

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Consortium

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**Task:** Identify a suitable webinar tool for connecting geographically dispersed participants for online training that isn't a barrier to learning or participating.

## Criteria

The needs and requirements of the webinar tool were simple but specific. The biggest hurdle for users accessing a webinar is getting connected; many tools require software to download and run natively from the user's machine. The requirements, first and foremost, are to make it as easy for the end-user as possible, so a browser based and plugin-free (ideally) tool was the first qualifying criteria.

It was defined that following criteria for the tool must be met:

- Video and audio served through the browser
- Minimum 20 participants
- Easy switching between multiple presenters
- Option for having numerous presenter/participant videos on screen at one time
- Interactivity for participants: chat, desktop sharing, PowerPoint presentation, video

Additional, non-essential criteria:

- Record webinar
- Mobile access
- Additional interactivity: whiteboard, polls

## Process

The process began by consulting and seeking the input of those who had previously conducted webinars or are experts at knowledge management and applicable tools. This information was gathered through online communities and networks, namely [CGIAR Yammer](#), [Dgroups Web2ForDev](#) as well as Wiki's on [Knowledge Management for Development](#). Individuals were also contacted directly via email, and input was received and collected.

Web research using Google, blogs and other means turned up many, many tools applicable for webinars, online collaboration, or video calls. All inputs from the broad search were immediately short-listed based on the basic criteria, and those meeting the criteria were added to the list. The full list of tools that were assessed were not recorded, as the majority of them did not meet the basic criteria.

In total, there were 11 tools and products selected that met the criteria, and a Google Drive spreadsheet was created to record and analyze each tool (see Appendix). Each tool was researched based on the basic criteria, additional criteria, and full list of specifications and features. This created a clear picture of which tools should proceed to the testing phase.

The final five tools that were considered for testing were:

- [BlueJeans](#)
- [Watchitoo Classinteract](#)
- [WizIQ](#)
- [WebEx](#)
- [AnyMeeting](#)

Weekly meetings were held between Samuel Stacey and Peter Casier to monitor progress.

## Testing

There were a total of three rounds of testing that ensued with different group sizes present. Unfortunately, due to a lack of a testing environment and no response for a testing platform, Watchitoo Classinteract did not proceed to the testing phase.

The first round, considered to be a qualifying round, involved testing each of the four tools for usability, and quality. The one-on-one test was designed to match researched criteria and the sales pitch by each of the tool's websites to ensure that they 'worked as advertised'. Each of the four tools passed and went to the next round of testing.

The second round involved 3 participants and a presenter, and detailed feedback from each of the participants was recorded. The participants were joining the test from: Belgium, Denmark, Ethiopia and Malaysia.

### BlueJeans

- Simple to download and install plugin
- On screen instructions were provided
- Simple user interface; easy to find chat, screen sharing buttons as well as change the video layout between presenter, presenter as main window and participants as smaller windows, all videos equally divided
- Only group chat, no private chat
- Mute and stop video buttons logically beside each participant
- Master control for host of all participants video and audio
- Ability to upload video and/or PowerPoint presentations to system for easy access and synchronized viewing among all participants when needed
- View full-screen option
- Sending and receiving video at full HD 720p
- No added features such as whiteboard, polls or hand raising
- Recording available via an easy to access button
- Great audio and video quality, no viewing or hearing problems reported by participants
- Overall conclusion: simple, visually appealing, easy to use, does what it needs to do

## WizIQ

- Slow to get connected reported the participants, needed to download a plugin and numerous forms to fill in to 'sign-up' before getting connected
- An abundance of tools: whiteboards, drawing, smileys, fill, colors, shapes, etc. A comment was that it looked very 'childish'
- New tabs created for each whiteboard, PowerPoint presentation, YouTube video which was easy to use and intuitive
- Great audio and video quality no issues hearing or seeing participants
- The host and participants are able to use drawing tools, however master control resides with the host
- Private and group chat
- Can record video and audio
- Easy to switch between tabs/windows of content
- Overall conclusion: has some interesting and potentially useful features, however there was too much going on and in the end appeared to be a novelty tool rather than a true business tool

## Webex

- Simple to get connected, but more challenging to download and install software as it runs from a separate application and not within the browser
- There were many delays with audio and video, sometimes difficult to hear and see the participants
- PowerPoint presentations natively shared with participants, allows for annotations and notes to be made directly on the PowerPoint and saved later
- The chat was available for private and group, but for some was difficult to figure out
- Can record video and audio
- Overall conclusion: didn't like the whole platform, audio, video and features, and doesn't meet the basic requirement to not install software.

## AnyMeeting

- Easy to get connected, no plugin to download
- Useful feature-set, share screen, YouTube video, PowerPoint presentation, all natively within the browser
- Interface wasn't as intuitive as expected, and many mouse-over effects didn't work as easy as they should
- Video and audio wasn't very good, sometimes hard to hear, and only 2 videos available on screen at a time
- Chat option, group and private
- Able to poll participants and receive instant results
- Overall conclusion: A good tool but a little clunky and not as intuitive to use

At the end of the second round of tests it was immediately clear to those that participated which was the best tool. BlueJeans came out on top for usability, video and audio quality, easy to access, browser based, simple tools but useful. In the end

all the participants decided to debrief using BlueJeans rather than the last used tool, AnyMeeting.

## Final Test

As a final test to validate the decision to proceed with BlueJeans, a larger group was invited to test its ability to handle more participants, as the expected group sizes will be 10-15 participants. In total, there were 7 people involved in the final validation test, and results were mixed.

One key finding from this last testing phase was the difference that local connection speeds had on the video and audio quality for the group. Clicking on each participant gave you a bar representing connection speed, similar to that of mobile phones, with more bars meaning good internet quality, and fewer bars representing poor internet quality. The speed of those connecting greatly affected the over-all experience of the group.

The 7 participants were connecting from all over the world: Sri Lanka, Italy, Colombia, Indonesia, India, Belgium and Malaysia. The beginning of the call was difficult; some couldn't get connected because of access speeds, and some video and audio wasn't available simply due to connection speeds. Some participants complained of not being able to follow along with the discussion.

Subsequently, all videos were turned off except for the 2 presenters, and this greatly increased everyone's connection and video and audio quality increased for all participants. For some, it was simply the time of day, for others, this was the standard speed they could expect. An interesting note: for all participants, bandwidth increased over time, and the longer the call went on, the better the video and audio quality was for all participants.

Overall, the final test was a success and everyone loved the simplicity and ease or accessibility of BlueJeans. There were, however, a couple of remarks about the lack of 'hand-raising' tools, to signal the attention of the presenter, and no private chat. It was decided that the overall usability of BlueJeans diminished the need for these features.

## Concluding remarks

The most crucial recommendation for using BlueJeans is to ensure that the presenter has a good, high-speed internet connection, preferably hardwired (LAN) instead of WiFi, with good 'upload' bandwidth. Ultimately, the presenter's connectivity greatly determines the overall quality of the webinar.

## Appendix

Webinar Tool	Browser based?	Installation?	Max Participants	Easy switching?	Multi cameras?	Record?	Mobile?	Interactivity?	Additional Features offered	Cost	Suitable?
<a href="#">Google+ Hangouts</a> (see also <a href="#">WebinarsOnAir</a> )	Yes	First use plugin, apps require installation by all users	10 (with Webinars on air, you have an unlimited number of attendees, but their videos are not shown)	yes	yes	no, only available on live broadcast	yes	App installation: Webinar on Air. Offers chat, polls, Q&A, attendees can 'raise their hand', share desktop live, social media integration, virtual whiteboard, slideshare presentation.	Downside to the additional interactivity features is that it requires the user to download and install the apps to enable them. It is simple to do, however another step in the process. Hangouts requires a plugin for first time use. Plus side is that it works for everyone that has a Google login, which is pretty much everyone.	Webinar on Air starts from \$20 per month for 25 participants	No
<a href="#">Blue Jeans</a>	Yes	yes, 4.1mb download	25 all with videos shown on screen	**need to test**	yes	yes	yes	Video can be shown, upload to Blue Jeans pre hangout. Group chat. Presentation slides.	Can be used across multiple platforms. If there is no video, or participants are unable to access video, there is an audio only option. Security and sign in to restrict participation.	**requested**	looking good
<a href="#">Watchitoo</a> <a href="#">Classinteract</a>	Yes	no (maybe plugin?)	25 with all videos on screen	**need to test**	yes	yes	yes	Video, presentations, documents, images. Q&A. Chat. Whiteboard. Screen sharing. Polls.	Purpose built for education purposes, single sign on for platform. Student interaction across webinar. Cloud Storage 5GB.	**requested**	looking good
<a href="#">WebEx</a>	Yes	yes, install a plugin	up to 1,000 participants, up to 6 live video feeds of participants	**need to test**	no	yes	no, not with the training center product	Polls, threaded Q&A, group or private chat, enables for 'breakout sessions', share multimedia (video and presentations), whiteboard, attendee response for M&E,	eLearning product, designed for online teaching. Cloud system, easy to access. No document library.	CGIAR has license	looking good, except for the multi video support

Webinar Tool	Browser based?	Installation?	Max Participants	Easy switching?	Multi cameras?	Record?	Mobile?	Interactivity?	Additional Features offered	Cost	Suitable?
<a href="#">vyew</a>	Yes	no (maybe plugin?)	150	**need to test**	up to 15 participants	yes	no	Public and private chat, white and annotations, filter whiteboard by user, hand raising tools, polls/quiz, additional plugins like graphing calculator and equation editor,	VOIP option, free branding and color customization available, embed sessions in a web page, no conersion required for uploaded documents,	\$20 /month	ok, worth testing, limited video support for up to 15 people
<a href="#">WiziQ</a>	Yes	no	unlimited	yes, but need to test	up to 6 participants	yes	yes, tablet	document sharing, multimendia sharing, presentations, videos, screen sharing, whiteboards, text chat group or private, can split large groups into smaller breakout sessions for P2P learning	email reminders and scheduling, co-branding options, share presenter notes from powerpoint, video optimized for bandwidth limitations, participants can be passed the control so they can share their own desktops or write on the whiteboard, attendance reporting, embed on website	\$19 / month	looking good, but only 6 participants on video at a time
<a href="#">Web Gathering</a>	Yes	maybe, not specified	unlimited, cost per user	**need to test**	not specified	yes	no	polls, threaded comments, public and private chat, video upload, shared screen, collaboration on documents,	potentially good in low bandwidth locations, facilitated by web gathering, not manageable by us	quote per session, cost per participant	aimed at online conferences rather than webinars, so probably wouldnt suit our purposes

Webinar Tool	Browser based?	Installation?	Max Participants	Easy switching?	Multi cameras?	Record?	Mobile?	Interactivity?	Additional Features offered	Cost	Suitable?
<a href="#">GoToWebinar</a>	Yes	no (maybe plugin?)	up to 1,00 participants	instantly change presenters, transfer keyboard and mouse control, need to test	up to 6 cameras at once	yes	yes	desktop sharing, application sharing (not support on OSX), multiple monitor support (not supported on OSX), drawing whiteboard tools (not support on OSX), group and private chat, mac and pc support, Q&A, polls, 'raise hand',	automatically adjusts camera for low bandwidth, registration and schedulign tools, reminders, deliver audio through mic and speakers, customised branding, post session survey and reports, archive webinar recording	\$139 /month	lack of OSX support rules out this tool
<a href="#">Blackboard Collaborate</a>	Yes	no (maybe plugin)	unlimited	**need to test**	yes, up to 6	yes	yes	WMV video playback support, chat, VOIP audio, whiteboard, app sharing,	breakout rooms, cloud based audio plaback for mps and mp4, low bandwidth support, linux support,	**requested**	aimed more at institutions rather than individuals, so may be expensive
<a href="#">Zoho Meeting</a>	Yes	no (maybe plugin?)	up to 100, extra \$\$ for participants	switch presenter,1 video at a time **need to test**	no	no	no	give control of screen to participants, chat, screen sharing,	embed on a website, post session reports, customized branding, google apps integration,	25 participants = \$24 per month	not as feature rich in the online interactivity or multi video support, so not as useful for our purposes
<a href="#">Any Meeting</a>	Yes	yes, install a screen sharing plugin, 1.1mb	up to 200 participants	**need to test**	yes, up to 6	yes	yes	share screen, share docs pdf and ppt, powerpoint support in app, polls, Q&A, chat, note taking support, file sharing	scheduling and email invitations, online sign up, customised branding, post webinar surveys and reports,	\$18 /month for 25 participants	looking good, but only 6 participants on video at a time