



LISTEN4GOOD

TIPS FOR LISTENING DURING COVID-19

A Guide to Connecting With and
Identifying Client Needs At This Time

MAY 2020

Guide adapted from April 2020 webinar
View the full presentation slides [here](#)

WHY IS LISTENING CRITICAL RIGHT NOW?

At Listen4Good, we are focused on elevating client voice and helping organizations to integrate client feedback into their decision-making at multiple levels.

We recognize we are at a unique time where COVID-19 is not only affecting the health and safety of people and their loved ones, but it is also fundamentally affecting the health, safety, and economic viability of the communities that are served.

Despite these challenges, we think listening is particularly important at this moment for a number of reasons:

- Organizations can't always presume to know what their clients needs are. Individuals likely have differing needs, and needs may also be changing over time.
- The interconnectedness of people's needs is especially apparent as resources and supports get stripped away. Understanding needs beyond your traditional programming may be necessary at this time.
- Fostering a connection in crisis is critical. In a time of crisis, we all benefit from connecting as humans to each other and feeling supported.

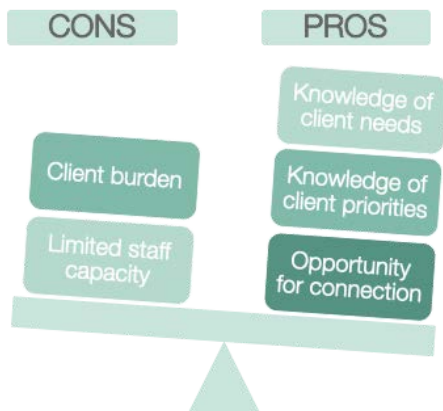
Connecting with clients can take many forms. It can include informal conversations and sharing information — both of which are always good to do. But can also include additional data collection, or opportunities for input.

Begin by asking yourself:

- Why do we want to connect?
- Why are we gathering input at this time?

BEFORE GETTING STARTED

Knowing if it's the right time to ask feedback requires weighing a few factors.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE SENDING FEEDBACK

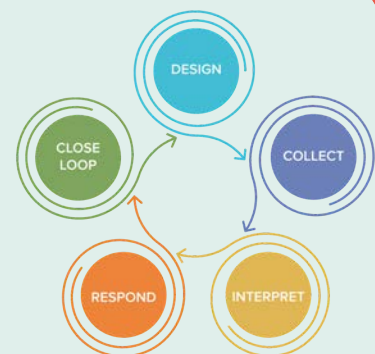
- Do your clients have the (time, emotional, etc.) bandwidth to respond?
- Does your staff have the bandwidth to collect feedback?
- Do you know how to contact your clients?
- Is your organization able to respond to client feedback at this time?

STAY COMMITTED TO PRINCIPLES

If you are going to move forward with formally gathering input from clients we encourage you to focus on 3 key activities in particular:

1. Be thoughtful about design
2. Do something in response
3. Close the loop

You will likely simplify and accelerate the overall process for gathering and responding to feedback — and that is ok and totally appropriate for this time. We are not recommending laborious listening process — it's about staying focused, keeping an eye on actionability and remembering key principles like closing the loop.

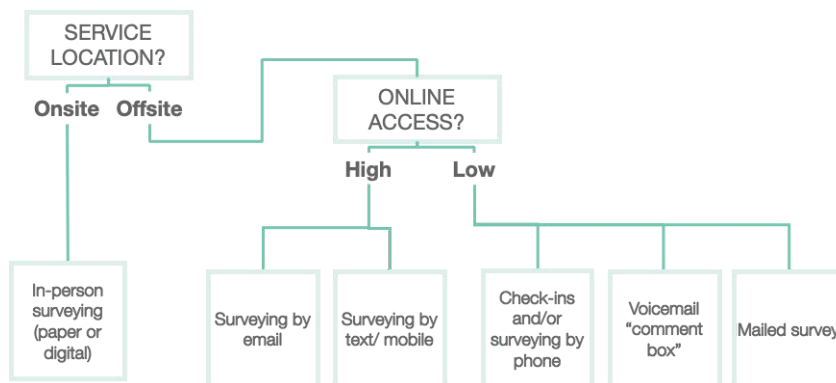


WHAT TO ASK AND HOW?

WHAT: When it comes to design, standard client experience feedback may not feel right – right now.

Rather, focus on ascertaining overall needs, consider looking at technology access, and strategies for staying connected. As organizations, we are going to have to make hard choices about where to put limited resources. Gathering input on planned changes can also be helpful. Over time, you can pivot back to more general client experience questions. To support your design efforts, we've drafted questions geared at assessing client needs, desired services, and access at this time.

HOW: You also have to adapt data collection to your setting. The following decision tree can help you decide what method may be most appropriate for your organization.



Pros and cons of each administration methods:

METHODS	PROS	CONS
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reaches many clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Limited opportunity for deep connection x Requires access to internet/email
Mobile/Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reaches many clients (especially given smartphone penetration – 81% of adults in 2018¹) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Limited opportunity for deep connection x Requires access to internet x Technologically challenging for some
Phone calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Offers chance to connect 1:1 in conversation ✓ Most accessible ✓ Potential to leverage volunteer(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Time intensive
Voicemail "Comment box"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Accessible ✓ Limited staff time needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Limited opportunity for deep connection
Mailed survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Accessible to those uncomfortable with or unable to access technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Cost of postage x Staff capacity to mail
In-person surveying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Accessible to those uncomfortable with or unable to access technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Requires in-person input

1. "Pew: Smartphone penetration ranges from 24% in India to 95% in South Korea," VentureBeat, Feb. 2019.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION EXAMPLES



CONNECTING BY PHONE

- **Our House:** Offers children and families experiencing homelessness tools, support, and education, including temporary residences
- **Method:** Offsite staff called current and former non-residential clients to learn how they're doing and share information about available resources.



SURVEYING BY EMAIL

- **DonorsChoose:** Connects teachers in high-need communities with donors who want to help
- **Method:** Surveyed clients (teachers) asking what they needed in light of school closure. Based on results, began piloting new program that helps get resources directly to students at home who need it.



Closing the Loop

Finally, no matter your input, if you ask people for feedback we always encourage you to close the loop. This doesn't have to be onerous or fancy but it's about telling people — what you heard, and what you are doing in response to what you heard.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This guide was adapted from a webinar held in April 2020:

- [View the webinar recording](#)
- [View the full presentation slides](#)

To support input efforts, L4G has pre-templated COVID questions focused on client needs, desired services, and access. You can access the questions [here](#).

For tips on creating remote surveys, see the [60 Decibals Remote Survey Toolkit](#).

For tips on how to close the loop, [see this blog post](#).