

## Online Tools to Keep Your Collaboration Ticking

The goal of your collaboration may be simple—to *reduce substance use and improve health outcomes*—but how you actually get the work done may prove far more complicated. Collaborative work involves—by definition—multiple people working together. And the logistics involved in doing so can either make or break a group’s success.

The Internet is teeming with user-friendly tools to help your team function more efficiently. This resource describes some of the logistical challenges that can compromise group function, and some of the tools available to make gathering, sharing, and communicating as a group more straightforward.

*[Please note that the examples presented are for descriptive purposes only and do not imply endorsement by SAMHSA’s Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies.]*

### Scheduling Meetings

Most prevention practitioners don’t work a typical “9-5” schedule, and it’s reasonable to assume that your partners won’t, either. Crazy schedules can make finding a common meeting time challenging. Fortunately, many online tools are available to help you collect input from multiple members on optimal meeting dates and times. With a few strokes of the keyboard, you can avoid the exchange of multiple emails—or the disappointment of scheduling a presentation that few can attend. Free online tools such as [Doodle](#) and [When is Good](#) allow members to share their availability in a centralized location so that preferred meeting times become clear.

### Convening Online Gatherings

Faced with shrinking travel budgets and jam-packed schedules, more prevention professionals are gathering in cyberspace. The internet has made it easy to “meet up” with people online, offering elements such as virtual “whiteboards” and screen-sharing capabilities to simulate the in-person experience. Free online tools, such as [join.me](#) and [Google Hangouts](#) make it easy for groups to connect online; most include video conferencing and screen-sharing capabilities.

## Sharing Resources

Prevention may be about people, but there sure is a lot of documentation involved! And every document—be it a grant proposal, assessment tool, or public service announcement—will at some point need to be shared across partners—for review, editing, or simply to keep people up-to-date. When exchanged over email, these files are frequently buried or lost. Tools like [box](#) or [Dropbox](#) prevent inbox overload, promote easy online file storage and sharing, and help to keep everyone on the same page.

## Coordinating Efforts

Simply adding a calendar function to your website can help ensure all partners know about—and can plan around—important group and project activities. Online tools like [Localendar](#) and [30 Boxes](#) allow you to develop a virtual calendar to share within your group or the greater public.

## Managing Meeting Minutes and To-Do Lists

Meetings, whether in-person or virtual, are where most collaborative work takes place. Many online tools exist to streamline the process of capturing and disseminating meeting agendas, key decisions and action items. To take some of the time and effort out of managing minutes and to-do lists, consider using online tools like [Minutes.io](#) or [After the Meeting](#).