

April
2020

Implementing MEL during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Tools, Ideas & Reflections

Tanya Smith-Sreen, Program Officer, R&E, FHI 360

Yvonne Cao, Technical Advisor, R&E, FHI 360

Brian Dooley, Sr Technical Officer, R&E, FHI 360

Sarah Hughes, Senior Fellow, Mathematica

Introductions



Yvonne Cao
Technical Advisor
Research and Evaluation
FHI 360



Brian Dooley
Senior Technical Officer
Research and Evaluation
FHI 360



Tanya Smith-Sreen
Program Officer
Research and Evaluation
FHI 360

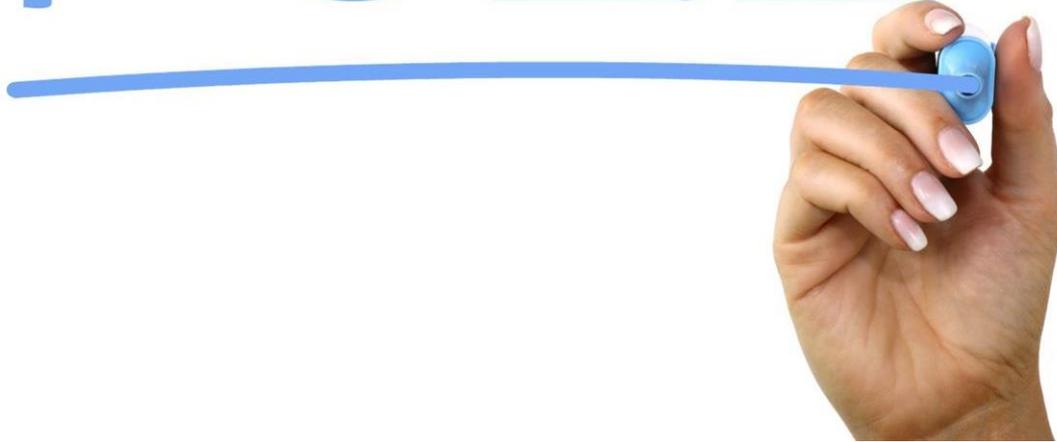


Sarah Hughes
Senior Fellow
Mathematica

Outline for Today's Webinar

- 1. Guiding Questions for Adapting MEL Plans**
- 2. Technology Options for Data Collection**
- 3. Best Practices for Remote Data Collection**
- 4. Discussion and Q&A**

POLL



General Guiding Questions for Adapting MEL Plans

General Guiding Principles

1

Minimize the risk of transmission

2

Communicate with technical and operational teams

3

Communicate with funders

Modifying our MEL plans: guiding questions

1 What indicators are impacted?

Issue	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targets and Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modify targets /scenario planning• Modify indicator definitions so that new activities can count towards the indicator

Modifying our MEL plans: guiding questions

1 What indicators are impacted?

Issue	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targets and Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modify targets /scenario planning• Modify indicator definitions so that new activities can count towards the indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data collection<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mode of data collection• Timing of data collection• Sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Switch from in-person to remote data collection (embedding into online platforms)• Delay data collection activities• Reconsider the sample design➔ what does it mean for interpretation and comparability of your data over time?

Modifying our MEL plans: guiding questions

1 What indicators are impacted?

Issue	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targets and Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modify targets /scenario planning• Modify indicator definitions so that your new activities can count towards the indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data collection<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mode of data collection• Timing of data collection• Sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Switch from in-person to remote data collection (embedding into online platforms)• Delay data collection activities• Reconsider the sample design➔ what does it mean for interpretation and comparability of your data over time?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New indicators to capture outputs and outcomes of new activities• Sentinel/contextual indicators for context monitoring to capture changing environment

Modifying our MEL plans: guiding questions

2

What evaluation activities or research activities are impacted?

Questions

- What is the “new” intervention, and will it lead to the same outcomes using the same logic model?

Considerations

- Reviewing the Theory of Change to map out any changes in outputs/outcomes and ensure that research/evaluation questions are still relevant
- Delaying follow-on surveys to allow sufficient time to elapse to measure changes in outcomes

Modifying our MEL plans: guiding questions

2

What evaluation activities or research activities are impacted?

Questions

- What is the “new” intervention, and will it lead to the same outcomes using the same logic model?
- If findings show no effect, is it because of the quality of the intervention vs. because of external circumstances due to the pandemic?

Considerations

- Reviewing the Theory of Change to map out any changes in outputs/outcomes and ensure that research/evaluation questions are still relevant
- Delaying following-on surveys to allow sufficient time to elapse to measure changes in outcomes
- Measuring fidelity of implementation and intermediate outcomes to show whether intervention had an impact along the theory of change
- Identifying other unintended (negative or positive) consequences

Modifying our MEL plans: guiding questions

2

What evaluation activities or research activities are impacted?

Questions

- How are data collection activities impacted?

Considerations

- Adjustments for qualitative data collection and to survey instruments (IRB)
- More emphasis on desk research (e.g. contextual assessments such as GESI analyses, RERAs etc)
- Use of informal platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook for collecting beneficiary feedback

Modifying our MEL plans: guiding questions

3 What can we learn from this pandemic?

Modify or
develop a
learning
agenda

Illustrative learning questions:

- How are projects adapting in response to COVID-19? What projects are more successful in adapting than others and why?
- How are project modifications affecting different sub-populations differently? How does access to mobile technology affect different regions and subgroups?
- Are there circumstances and project activities we can take advantage of to set up experiments? For instance, if the project is now modified to reach beneficiaries in a phased approach, can we take advantage of it to conduct a rapid feedback impact evaluation?

Modifying our MEL plans: guiding questions

3 What can we learn from this pandemic?

Consider adding questions to existing survey instruments to better understand impact of COVID-19 on beneficiaries and use this information to inform project design

Examples of impact on FHI 360's projects

Indicators and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of indicators and targets with consortium partners and grantees • New indicators/targets for COVID-related activities • Scenario planning with different sets of target based on possible timing of end of social distancing
Data Collection Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delaying end-of-school year EGRA to beginning of next school year • Delaying until activities resume, especially when document verification is required, or no phone numbers are immediately available
Data Collection Mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper training attendance sign-in sheets → Zoom registration data • Interviews at media outlets → remote media monitoring of print sources • In-person FGD → Online video-based FGD • In-person surveys/assessments → Online surveys/assessments (SNA, capacity assessment) • More SMS/IVR surveys
Shift to more learning/prep activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeper analysis of existing data and more “pause and reflect” • Refining data collection instruments to ensure they’re ready when social distancing measures are lifted (e.g. plan for learning assessments to better meet students’ needs)

Technology Options for Data Collection

Options for data collection

- In person:
 1. Offline Mobile Forms
 2. Paper Data Collection
- Remote by text:
 1. Online Survey
 2. SMS Survey
- Remote by voice:
 1. Phone calls
 2. IVR (Interactive Voice Response)

How to choose the right technology

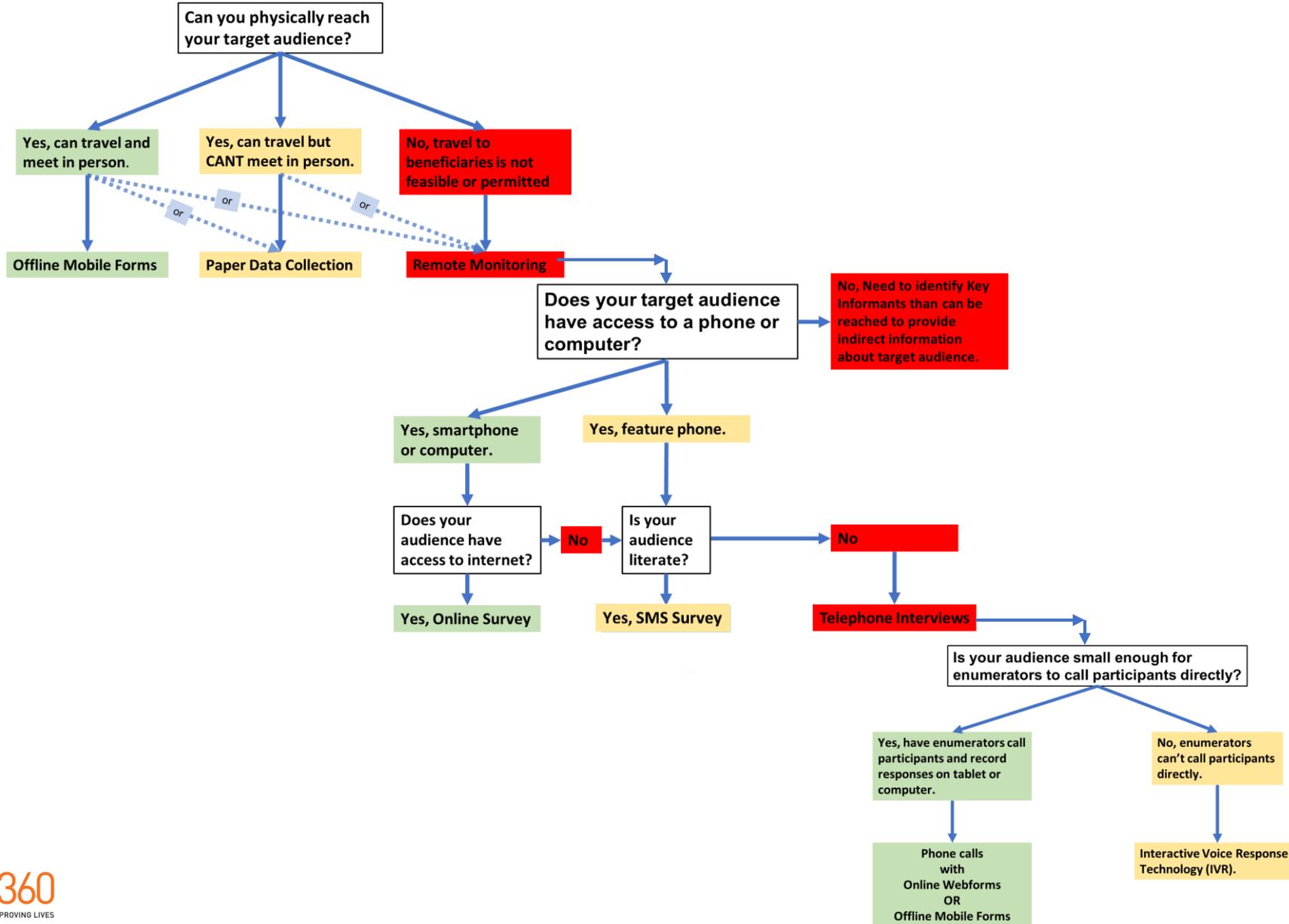
1. Can you physically reach your target audience?
2. Does your target audience have access to a phone or computer?
3. Is your audience literate?

Technology Decision Tree

In Person

Remote
by text

Remote
by phone



Accessibility

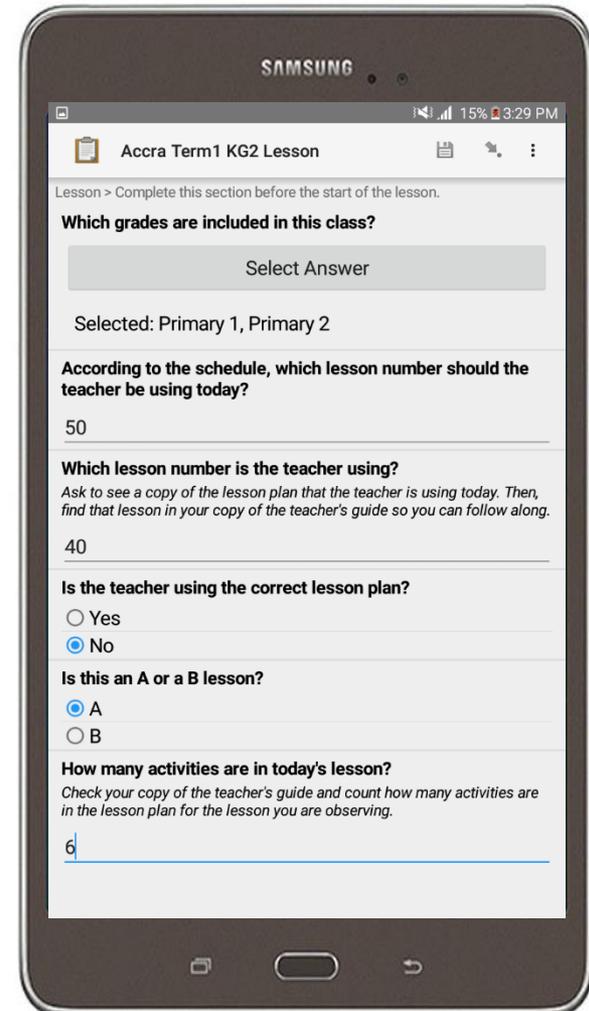
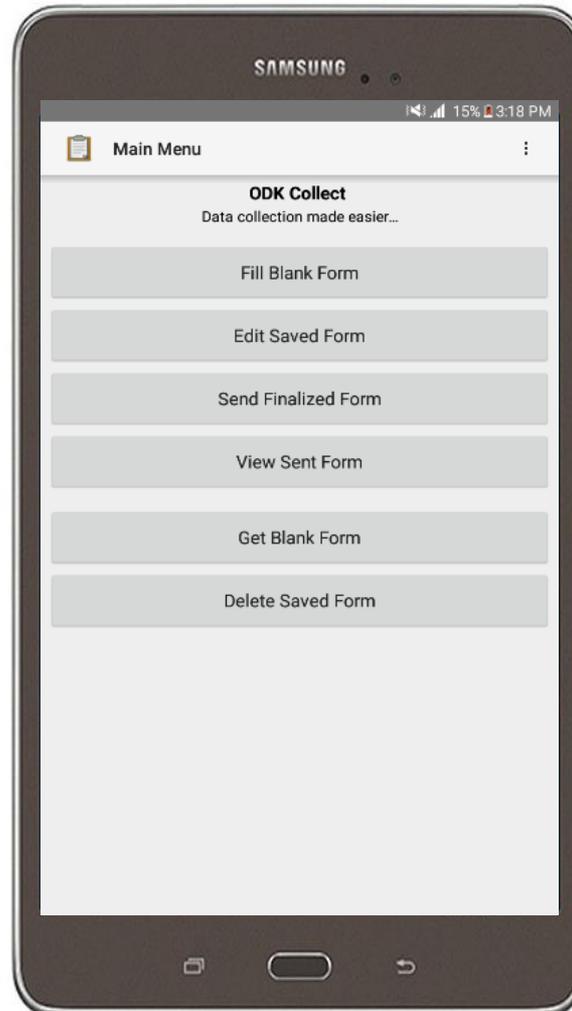
Can you physically reach your target audience?

Yes, can travel and meet in person.

Offline Mobile Forms

Offline Mobile Forms

- Software can be installed on any smartphone or tablet
- Data is entered and stored offline and uploaded at a later time.



Offline Mobile Forms: Technology

- **ODK (Open Data Kit)** is the primary open source software for mobile data collection.
 - SurveyCTO, KoboToolbox and several other companies base their products on the ODK technology
- **SurveyCTO** adds the ability to use iOS (Apple) devices, and a simple built in dashboard to view a summary of results
- **Kobo** offers a free service up to 10,000 uploads per month

	Uploads per month	Device Type	Setup Required	Server	Cost
ODK	Unlimited	Android	Yes	Any location	\$50-\$150 / month
Survey CTO	20,000	Android or iOS	No	AWS Europe or USA	\$220 / month
Kobo	10,000	Android	No	AWS USA	Free

Data Servers and Security

- [GDPR stands for General Data Protection Regulation](#) and is a new comprehensive data protection law in the EU that replaces existing laws to strengthen the protection of personal data and the rights of the individual.
- Data hosted by Kobo and SurveyCTO is in compliance with GDPR.
- Data is hosted by Amazon Web Services (AWS). The free instance hosted by Harvard Humanitarian Institute is physically located in the United States of America, while SurveyCTO allows you to host the data in the USA or Europe.
- Kobo or SurveyCTO will never access your data unless you have given them explicit access to it. However, once uploaded data will be stored 'in the clear' on the server filesystem or within its database, which means that Kobo/SurveyCTO server administrators could potentially access it.
- To have complete control and ownership of your data, you are also free to install your own instance of ODK on your own private server.

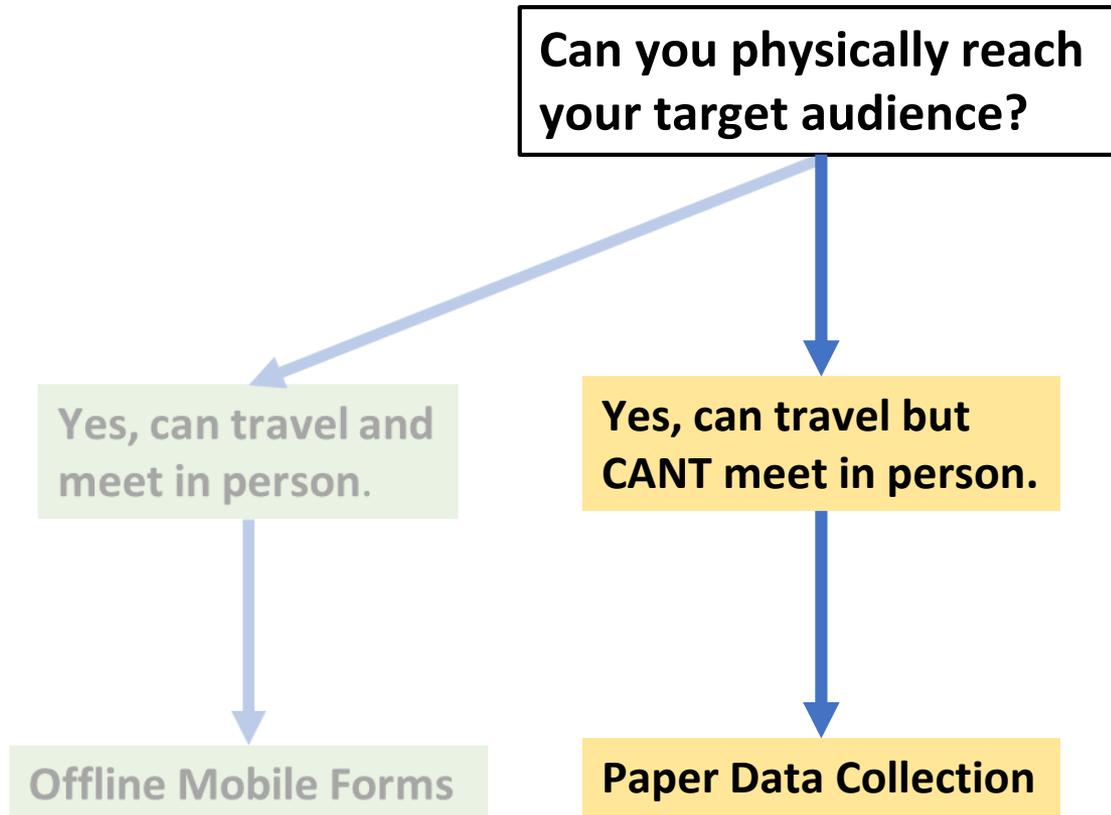
Cloud Server Options

- A private ODK server can be installed on any cloud provider
- FHI 360 and the countries we support often use AWS or Microsoft.
- The monthly cost of the server depends on the amount of storage needed, and the length of the contract.



Platform	Type	Months	Payment	Price	Monthly Rate
Linux/UNIX	t3.large	12	All Upfront	\$651	\$54.25
Linux/UNIX	t3.large	36	All Upfront	\$1,347	\$37.42
Linux/UNIX	t3.xlarge	1	Monthly	~\$140	~\$140.00
Linux/UNIX	t3.xlarge	12	All Upfront	\$1,302	\$108.50
Linux/UNIX	t3.xlarge	36	All Upfront	\$2,693	\$74.81

Accessibility



Paper Data collection

- Prepare paper survey tools
- Deliver paper tools to central collection point
- Coordinate with beneficiaries to stagger pick up of paper tools
- Arrange time for beneficiary to return paper tools to central location
- Project staff collect paper forms and return to home or office for data entry
- Enter data either through scanning technology or computer data entry

Data Entry

- Data entry of paper forms can be done by project staff in 4 ways:
 - Scanning “bubble” forms
 - Offline Mobile Forms
 - Online Webform/Survey
 - Excel template

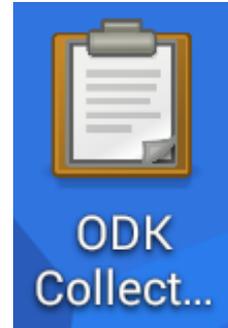
Scannable Paper

Remark Office OMR is the world's leading scanning software for collecting and analyzing data from plain paper OMR forms. The software collects data from paper forms containing bubbles (OMR), checkboxes, barcodes and printed text (OCR). This flexible and powerful software has been used to process tens of millions of forms since 1991, saving our users countless hours of time!

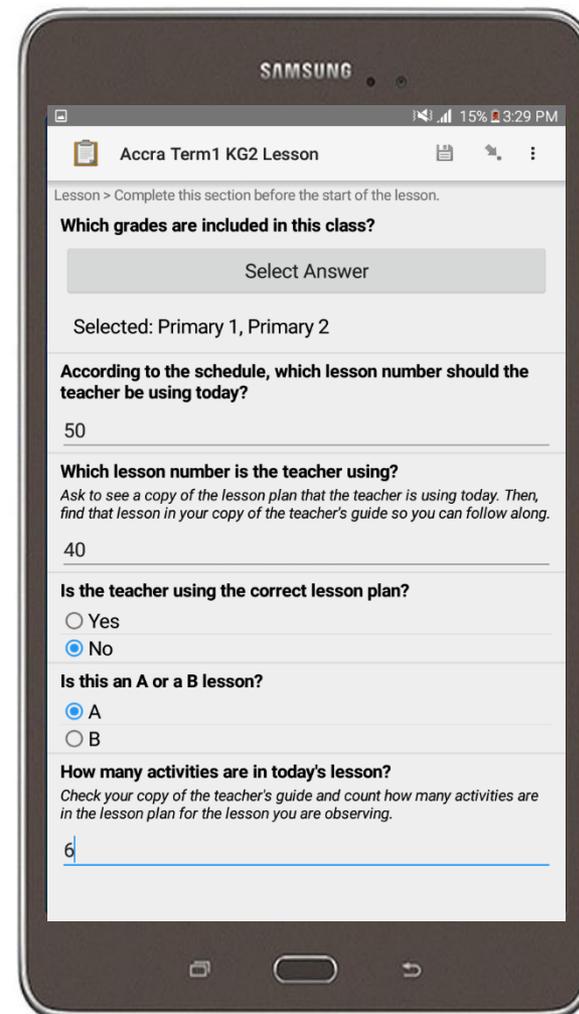
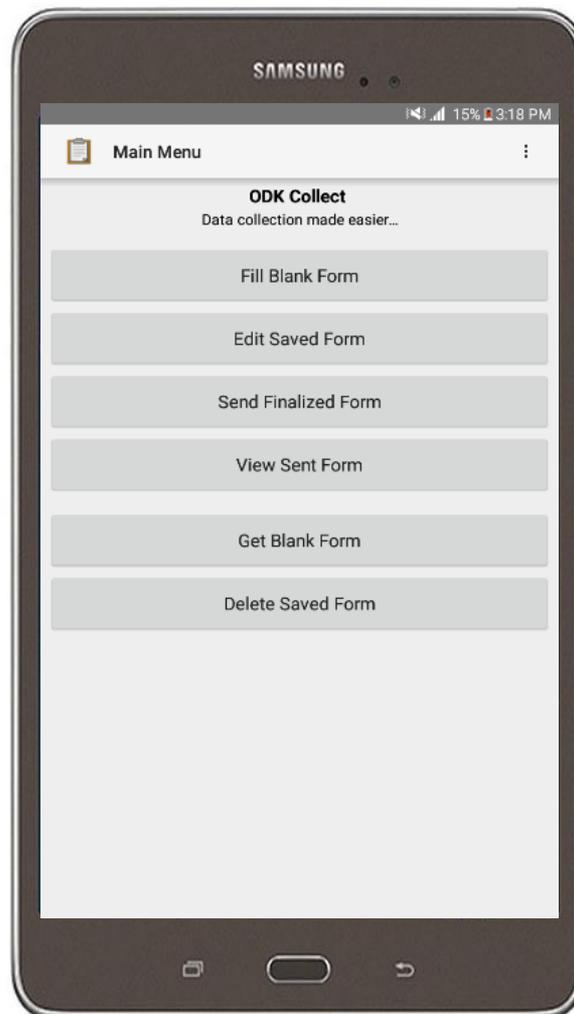


- ① Design and print your own forms using Microsoft Word or any other software
- ② Scan forms and use Remark Office OMR to recognize data
- ③ Analyze your data or export to the application of your choice!

Offline Mobile Forms



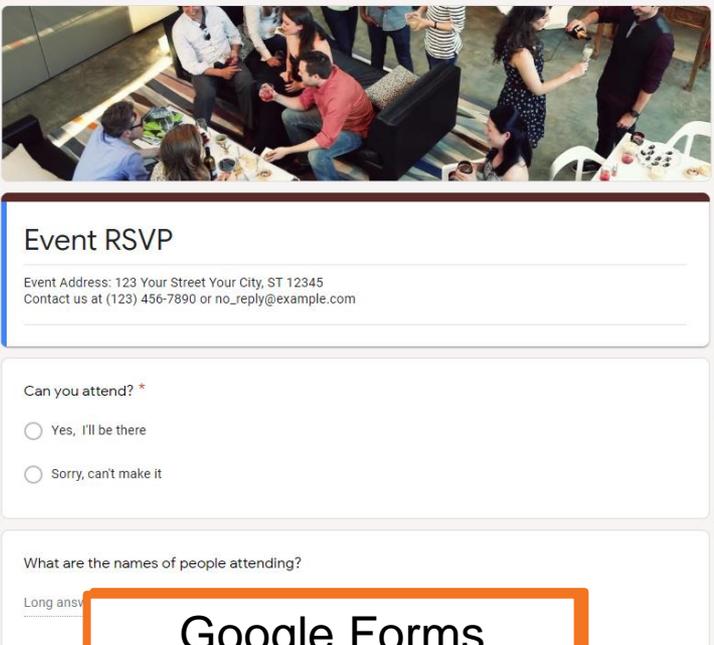
- The same software and tablets that your project previously used for in person data collection can now be used to enter data from paper forms.



Online Surveys

- Example Options:
 - **Google Forms** and **Microsoft Forms** are free options.
 - **SurveyMonkey** is well known and offers more advanced features, but costs between \$32-\$255 per month.
 - **Enketo** allows you to automatically turn an existing ODK form into a webform, and is free when you sign up for KoboToolbox.

Questions Responses



Event RSVP

Event Address: 123 Your Street Your City, ST 12345
Contact us at (123) 456-7890 or no_reply@example.com

Can you attend? *

Yes, I'll be there

Sorry, can't make it

What are the names of people attending?

Long answer

Google Forms

KoBoToolbox

T2E Lesson Observation

▶ Instructions for completing the Lesson Observation.

▼ Coaching

After a lesson observation, the mentor and mentee should have a one-on-one conference about the lesson. Remember, this is a conversation, not a lecture.

*Step 1: Teacher Reflection
How did you feel the reading lesson went?

Do not read these response options to the teacher. Allow the teacher to reflect, and then choose the option that best matches the teacher's response.

Very Poorly

Poorly

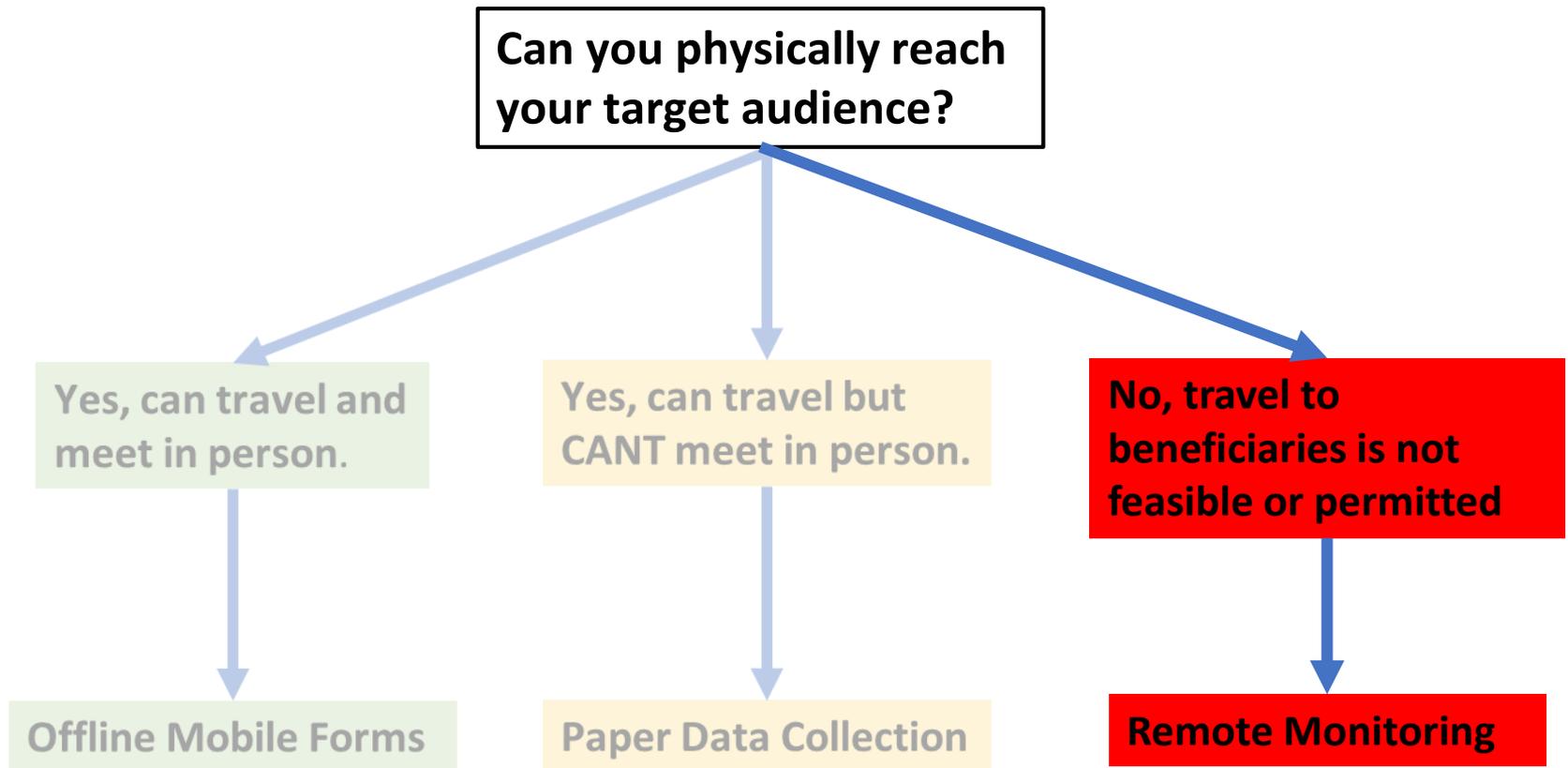
Well

Very Well

Step 2:
Now you
you the thing

Enketo through Kobo

Accessibility



Remote Monitoring: Access to Technology

Does your target audience have access to a phone or computer?

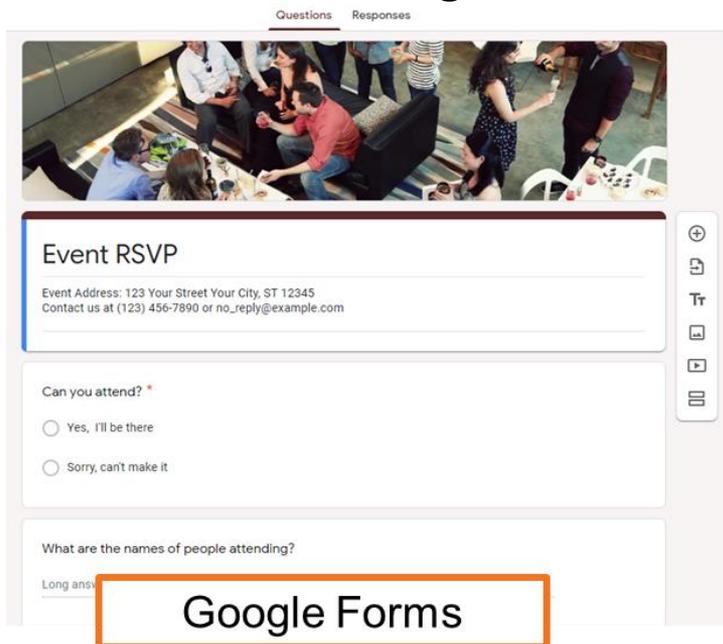
Yes, smartphone or computer.

Does your audience have access to internet?

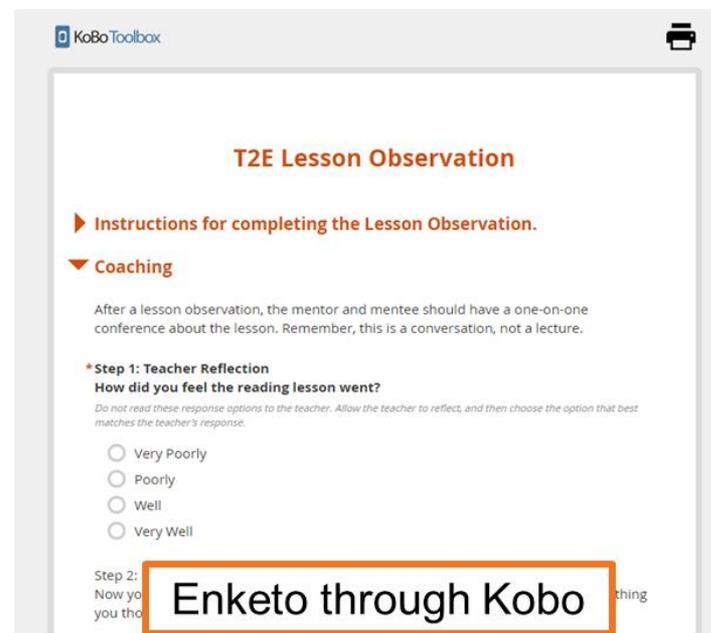
Yes, Online Survey

Online Surveys

- The same technology recommended for data entry of paper forms can be used to collect data directly from your audience
 1. Shorten the URL of your survey link using bit.ly
 2. Share the bit.ly survey link with your audience through existing communication channels, such as WhatsApp, email, SMS or a project website
 3. Send reminder messages to those who do not complete the survey

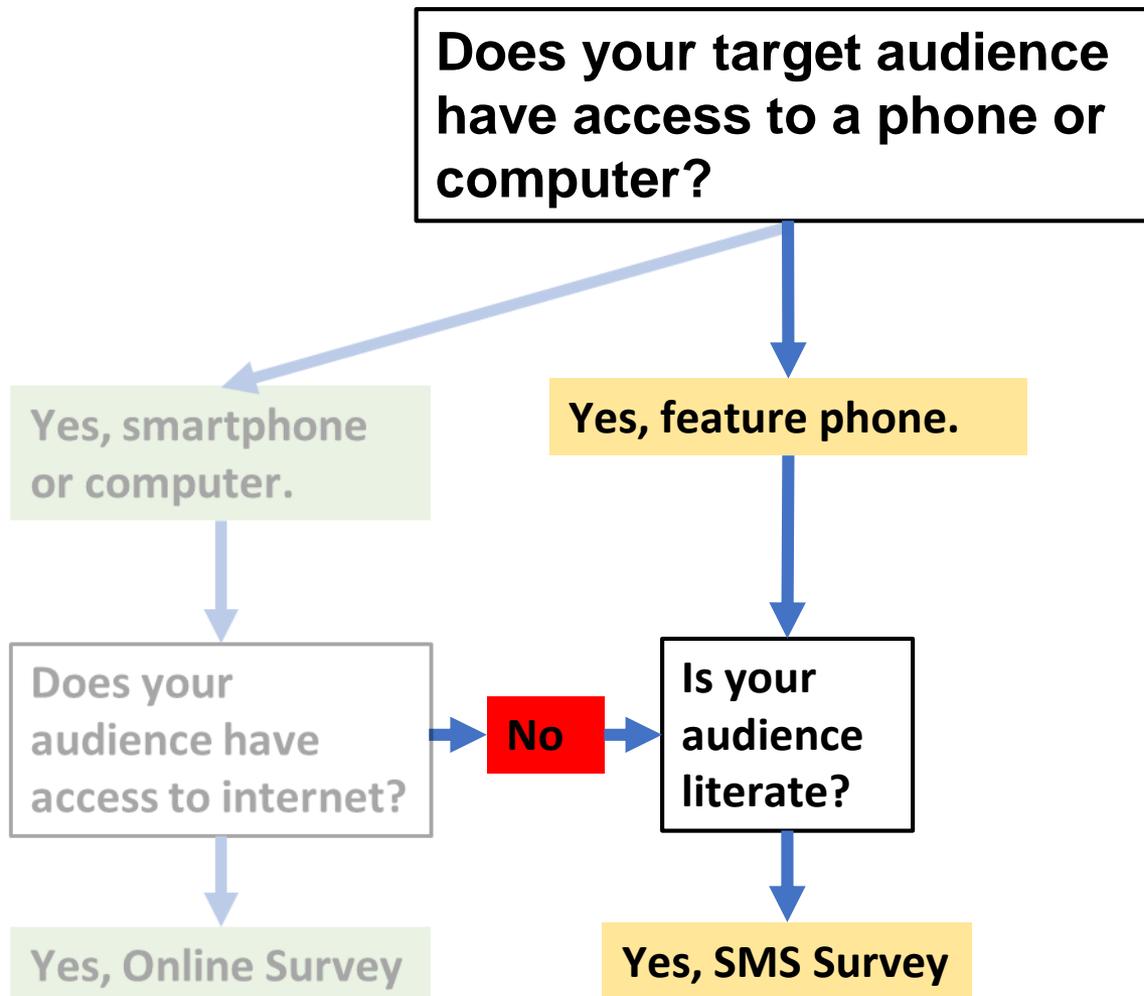


The screenshot shows a Google Form titled "Event RSVP". At the top, there are tabs for "Questions" and "Responses". Below the title is a header image of a group of people sitting around a table. The form contains the following text: "Event Address: 123 Your Street Your City, ST 12345" and "Contact us at (123) 456-7890 or no_reply@example.com". A question asks "Can you attend?*" with two radio button options: "Yes, I'll be there" and "Sorry, can't make it". A second question asks "What are the names of people attending?" with a text input field. A label "Google Forms" is overlaid in an orange box at the bottom of the form.



The screenshot shows an Enketo survey titled "T2E Lesson Observation". The survey is displayed on a mobile device interface. The title is "T2E Lesson Observation". Below the title, there are sections for "Instructions for completing the Lesson Observation." and "Coaching". The "Coaching" section contains the text: "After a lesson observation, the mentor and mentee should have a one-on-one conference about the lesson. Remember, this is a conversation, not a lecture." Below this, there is a section for "Step 1: Teacher Reflection" with the question "How did you feel the reading lesson went?". The question is followed by a list of radio button options: "Very Poorly", "Poorly", "Well", and "Very Well". A label "Enketo through Kobo" is overlaid in an orange box at the bottom of the survey.

Access to Technology



SMS Surveys

- Structured SMS*

PHARM#22#0#105#0#10

keyword
(customizable)

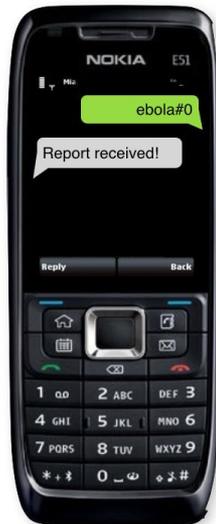
Drug B
quantity
dispensed

Drug D
quantity
dispensed

Drug A
quantity
dispensed

Drug C
quantity
dispensed

Drug E
quantity
dispensed



- Interactive SMS*

Hi! I wanted to ask you about your recent visit to our office. Reply with OK to continue, or EXIT to cancel at any time. [this is only a test, by the way!]

ok

Great. First, can you please reply with your age in years? (reply with a number between 18 and 100)

4

Sorry, your answer must be between 18 and 100. Please try again.

42

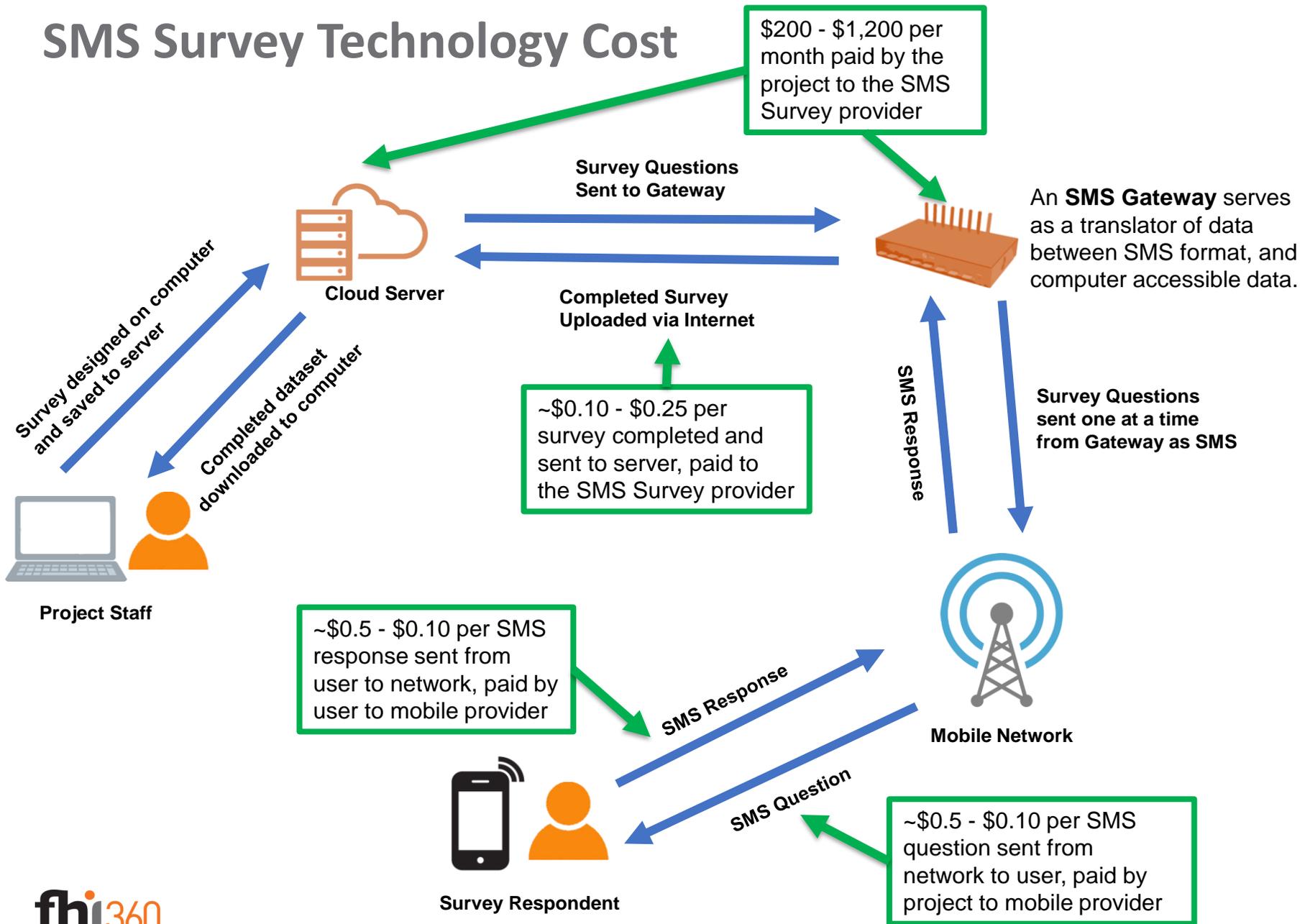
Thanks. Now, please rate your satisfaction with your visit by replying with a number from 1-3 (1 = very satisfied and 5 = not at all satisfied).

4

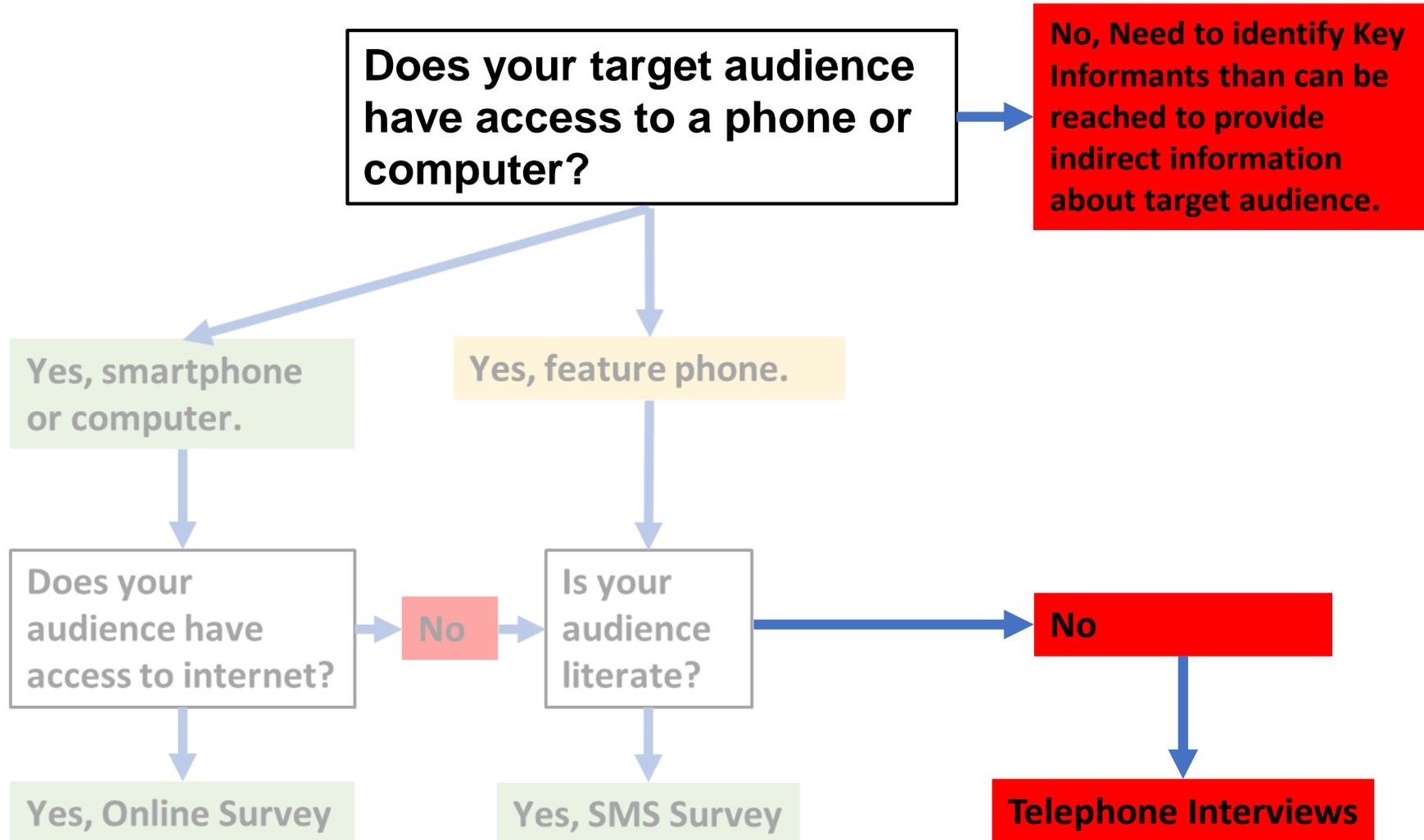
Ouch! Sorry that you were not very satisfied! Can you tell us why? Please reply with any text.

very long waits, rude staff

SMS Survey Technology Cost



Access to Technology



Phone Survey Capacity

Is your audience small enough for enumerators to call participants directly?

Yes, have enumerators call participants and record responses on tablet or computer.

**Phone calls
with
Online Webforms
OR
Offline Mobile Forms**

No, enumerators can't call participants directly.

Interactive Voice Response Technology (IVR).

Basic Data Collection Platforms*

	Scannable Paper	Offline Mobile	Online Webform	SMS	IRV	Cost [^]
Remark Office						\$1,195
ODK						\$50-\$150 / month
Survey CTO						\$220 / month
KoBoToolbox						Free
Enketo						\$29 / month
Google Forms						Free
Microsoft Forms						Free
Survey Monkey						\$32-\$225 / month

Advanced Data Collection Platforms*

	Scannable Paper	Offline Mobile	Online Webform	SMS	IRV	Cost [^]
Frontline SMS						\$200 / month + SMS costs
RapidPro						\$0.02/SMS + SMS costs
Magpi						\$500 / month + \$0.25/survey + SMS costs
Ona						\$200 / month + \$0.10/SMS + SMS costs
CommCare						\$1200 / month + \$0.01/SMS + SMS costs
DataWinners						\$399 / month + \$0.10/SMS + SMS costs

THANK YOU!

Contact us!

- Yvonne Cao: ycao@fhi360.org
- Brian Dooley: bdooley@fhi360.org
- Sarah Hughes: SHughes@mathematica-mpr.com

Additional Resources

- [Best practices for conducting phone surveys](#)
- [Mobile phone surveys for understanding COVID-19 impacts: Sampling and Mode](#)
- [Impact evaluations in the time of COVID-19](#)