



Virtual Program Developer Guide

Introduction

birch

Bundle of Interventions, Resources, and Culture Hub



PROGRAM DESIGN

This **Virtual Program Developer Guide** was developed in consultation with Indigenous service providers who have successfully delivered virtual mental health programming in their communities. The goal of this guide is to share successful strategies and useful information for those who may be interested in learning more about how to develop useful, safe, and engaging virtual mental health programming.

This section will review the potential strengths, considerations, and opportunities for virtual care services. It will discuss in more detail how this Guide was developed, including previous research, community consultation, and recommendations supported by Thunderbird Partnership Foundation.

For more resources, please visit the BIRCH website at birchbundle.ca



THIS GUIDE IS FOR YOU

This guide is intended to provide you with culturally-relevant information that can support the development of virtual mental health programming that is based on your community need.

The suggestions provided in this guide are intended for those who are considering a “DIY” approach to program development. This guide is intended for folks who may not have pre-existing knowledge of technology, delivering programming in a virtual space before, or know much about how to adapt current programming to a new format.



Virtual services can increase the range of useful supports available in our communities.

We aim to provide you with some additional considerations, recommendations, and proposed options to increase engagement in a virtual space, ways to increase confidentiality, and how to connect with other folks doing similar work.

In This Guide

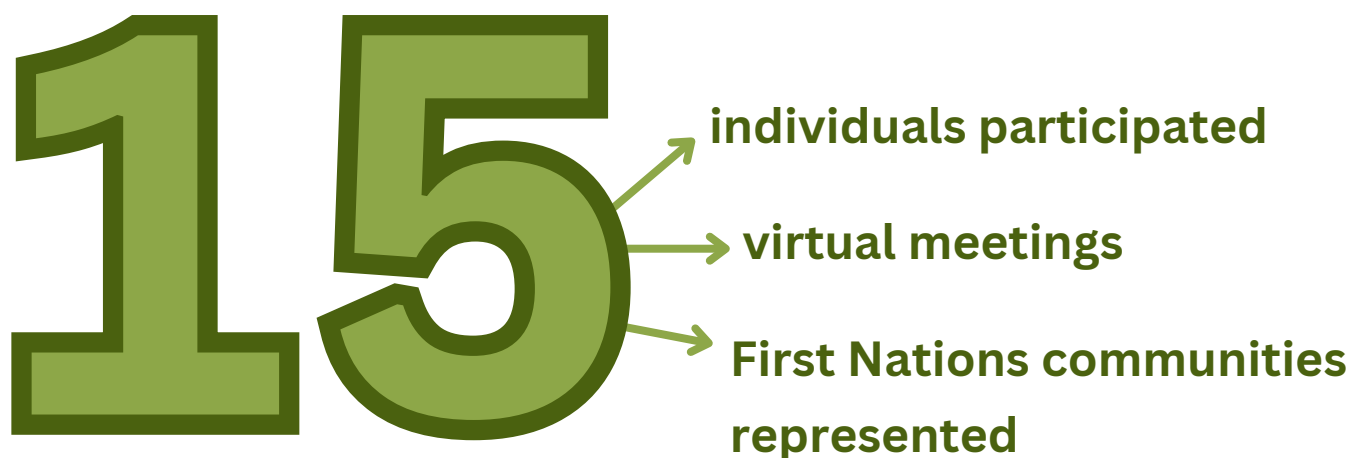


GUIDE

DEVELOPMENT

This guide was informed by a First Nations-led National Virtual Treatment Hub Working Group, supported by Thunderbird Partnership Foundation. This working group was formed when addiction treatment centres were mandated to be closed in response to public health pandemic protocols.

This was a space for First Nations program providers to regularly discuss how to implement virtual services to meet the mental health needs in their communities.



This guide is devised from the collective knowledge and shared experiences of this group, which we continue to be grateful for.

GUIDE DEVELOPMENT

Developing culturally-relevant and safe virtual services has been a priority of Thunderbird Partnership Foundation for many recent years.

Indigenous communities are often early adopters of technology as they attempt to connect community members with difficult to reach social, health, and educational programs and services.



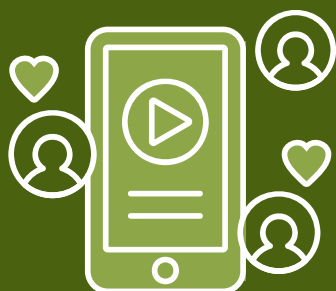
2020

Formed Virtual Hub working group in response to treatment centre closures



2021

Preliminary evaluation of available Indigenous-led virtual care supports



2022

Program (BIRCH) development and evaluation funded



Public Health
Agency of Canada
Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



Explored wise practices of providing cultural teachings in a virtual space

2024

2025

Launch of BIRCH development and evaluation

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For more information:

- [eHealth Youth Recommendation Report](#)
- [Wise Practices Scoping Review](#)
- [Expanded 2024 Review](#)
- [Wise Practices for Virtual Care \(launched in 2021\)](#)

LESSONS LEARNED

What We Did

Scoping review of available published literature for eHealth with Indigenous youth

Preliminary consultation with Indigenous virtual service providers

Consultations about wise practices for sharing cultural teachings in a virtual space



What We Found

Few programs are developed specifically for Indigenous youth

Virtual programs can be safe, feasible, and effective when Indigenous-led

Sharing cultural knowledge virtually is viable when done with appropriate consent and contextual considerations

Takeaway Message

Available programs need to be reviewed for cultural safety and relevance

Ways to increase sustainability, and engagement in programs will improve program success and reach

Ways to protect cultural knowledge can continue to be explored with communities. There is not a one size fits all approach

WHY GO VIRTUAL?

Virtual programs can provide accessible treatment through alternative approaches to mental health care that can address existing gaps in communities. Although virtual programs are not ever intended to replace existing community services, they can be another option in a spectrum of services available in community.

There are many benefits to virtual programming. The next section will cover the selection to the right.



Availability



Convenience



Continuity



Privacy



Outreach



Flexibility



Client-led

01. Availability

Virtual care expands access to mental health services, particularly for individuals who can't travel to receive services or who live in areas when in-person or other types of mental health care may not be available. Virtual services can provide an option of mental health care to people in rural and remote areas, or who have trouble with transportation.

02. Convenience

Virtual care can offer services at times when individuals need to access it. Certain services can be available 24/7 to provide immediate support for individuals as needed. These programs often have no wait list for services, meaning those who want to be engaged can be enrolled relatively easily.

03. Continuity

Virtual services can be integrated with other available programs to support prevention, continuing care, or even early support for program goals. Virtual services can complement other programs available in community.





04. Privacy

Virtual care can provide a discreet route for individuals seeking substance use support to access support privately, without having to let people know they are seeking services in their community. People can access services in the comfort of their own home.

05. Outreach

Virtual care can allow providers to a broader reach and can extend teachings to more people with relatively less demands on program providers. This reach can be done in a relatively cost-effective way when compared to other types of mental health program formats.

06. Flexibility

Virtual programs sometimes have less rigid program structures, with less program “rules” and requirements for participation for those who uses these services. This means that people can access care how they want to, with less program demands or needs.

07. Client-Led

Virtual programs are often client-directed and focus on self-management of mental health symptoms. This can build individual confidence, capacity, and ownership over one’s mental health journey, in a space where one learns at their own pace.

VIRTUAL PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

Although there are many benefits to virtual programs, there are some considerations when implementing such supports in this way.



Here are some considerations that have been brought forward by community members doing this work:

01. Privacy

People need to know what happens with their information provided in the program and who has access to it over time.

02. Safety

Ways to identify and protect people who are at risk for safety concerns need to be embedded in virtual programs.

03. Engagement

Engaging users by sharing information in meaningful ways and personalizing program content is helpful.

04. Relevance

Program content needs to fit the needs of the people using it. People with more complex needs may not be a good fit for virtual services.



**Communities must lead
the development of virtual
programs to create programs
that are culturally-safe
and relevant.**

CONCLUSION

Developing virtual mental health programming can be a way to extend and provide available services among Indigenous-led treatment programs



Virtual services can be useful

- Accessibility
- Flexibility
- Personalization



Some considerations are necessary

- Privacy
- Safety
- Relevance



Thoughtful development is required

- Program design
- Content creation
- Evaluation

The next modules of this guide will focus on ways to increase the relevance, safety, usability, and uptake of virtual programming that can be delivered by Indigenous communities. These guides aim to share some of the teachings learned from other Indigenous service providers who have successfully implemented virtual services.

Thank you

for your continued support of the BIRCH program.

We hope you find this resource guide useful.



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Program Design

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PROGRAM DESIGN

This section describes elements of program design within virtual programming to support you to develop a virtual program.

Implementing a virtual program requires a cohesive and strategic framework. This guide will help you identify

- potential intended populations
- a platform to host your intervention
- program goals
- highlight additional considerations like budget, staffing, and long-term program sustainability



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In This Guide



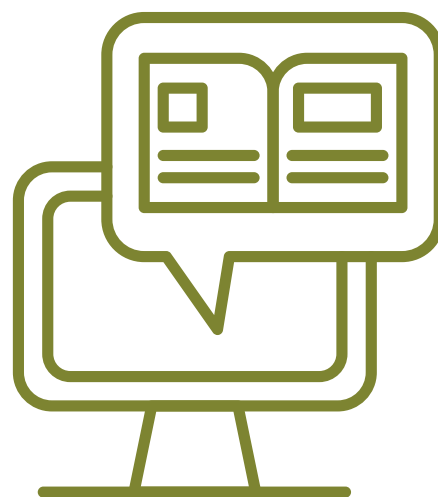


PROGRAM DESIGN

Some considerations during initial program design include:

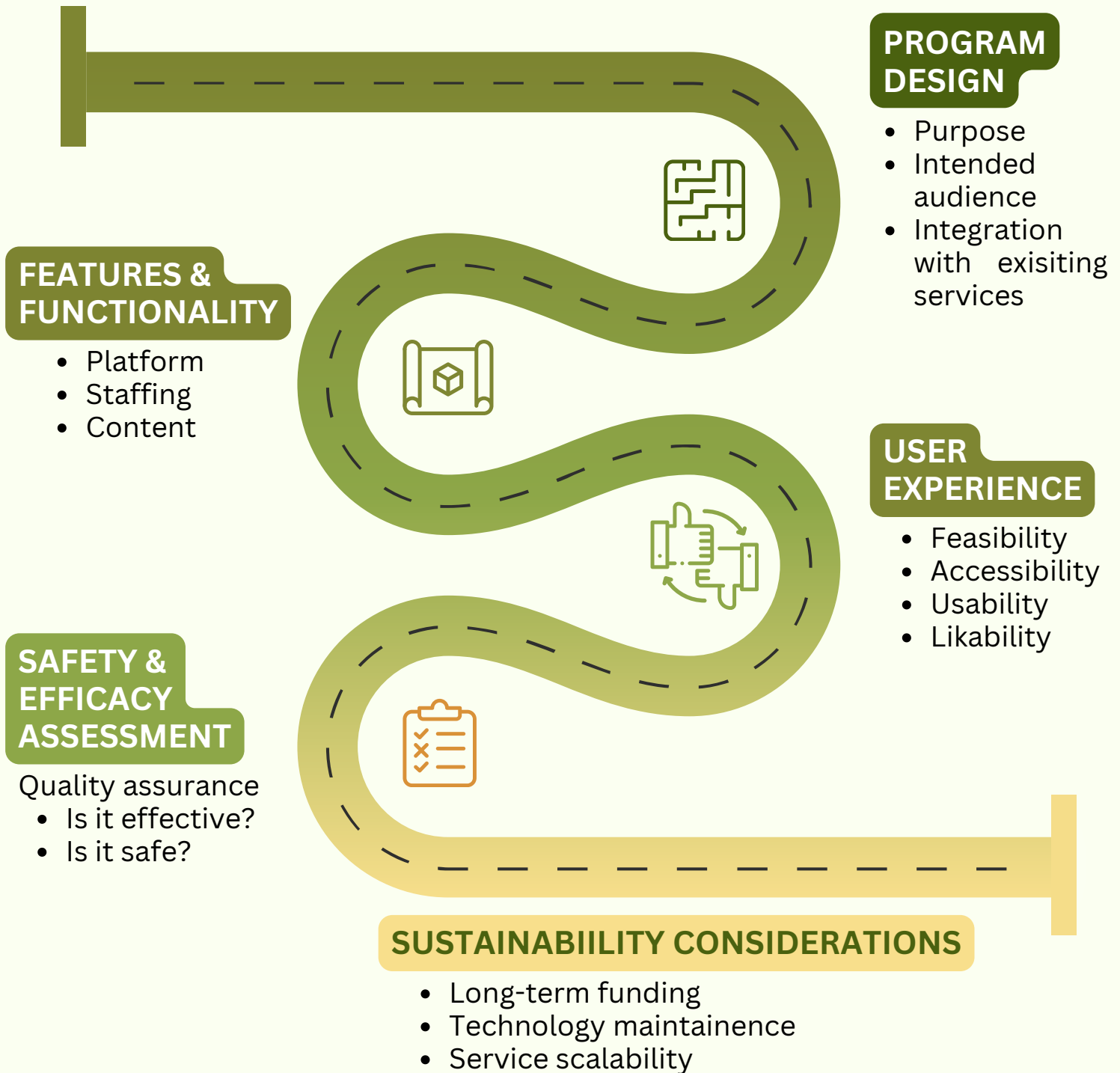
- Purpose & need assessment
- Defined target audience
- Integration with existing services

Be clear about the program you want to develop. **Think** about the strengths and limitations of these approaches, and how a virtual program can support your specific goals. **Consult** with your community and those who would be the target audience to share perspectives on what is needed in community.



Virtual programs are often one option of many. Consider how virtual programs can fit into your existing service model. Good programs are those which link to other services.

VIRTUAL PROGRAM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS





PROGRAM DESIGN

SERVICE INTEGRATION

- Integrating your eHealth program with other services can help your participants move from one service to another.
- Decide if your program is the starting point, a stop along the way, or a follow-up to other treatments.
- This clarity helps you design a program that complements and strengthens your services, ensuring participants have a seamless and supportive experience across all your offerings.

Define Target Program

SMART GOALS



S

SPECIFIC

Clearly define what you want to achieve, including who is involved, where it will happen, and what it entails

M

MEASURABLE

Include specific criteria that allow you to measure progress and determine when the goals have been achieved.

A

ACHIEVABLE

Ensure the goal is attainable with available resources and time.

R

RELEVANT

Make sure the goal is worthwhile and matches your program's mission and the needs of your target population.

T

TIME-BASED

Set a realistic deadline by which the goal should be achieved.

Who is Your Program For?



Starting a great eHealth program is like preparing for a community gathering.

First, you need to know who's coming to the circle - those are the folks you're helping and who may be the intended participant of your program.

You need to understand what they need, what they like and the wisdom they carry. You listen to their stories, talk with them, and learn about their journeys.

This way, you can create a gathering space that feels welcoming and respectful to everyone.

By shaping this digital gathering place with care and attention to everyone's unique paths, you make it a place where people can share, learn, and support each other.

This approach helps weave stronger connections and trust, making the eHealth program a comforting fire where everyone feels they belong and stay warm together.

WHO IS YOUR PROGRAM FOR?



Know your community: Virtual programs may not be suitable for everyone.

01. Access to Tech

Think about individuals who already have access to the technology or already know how to use the intervention platform

02. Safety Needs

Those who have increased risk for safety concerns may not benefit. Often, virtual programs are designed for those with mild to moderate needs.

03. Open to Process

Think about individuals who may be more open to a technology based intervention. What processes can be put in place to reduce concerns with this process?

04. Service Needs

Think about how you will recruit participants to your intervention and how to best encourage people to participate. What are the gaps in existing services?

Consult with individuals in your community who you are aiming to support with your program.



SAFETY & EFFICACY

Programs are only useful when they share skills that work.



- Culture as treatment
- Community as culture
- Trauma informed

Participants must be safe when they are accessing content.



- Knowledge protection
- Participant health data
- Technology safety

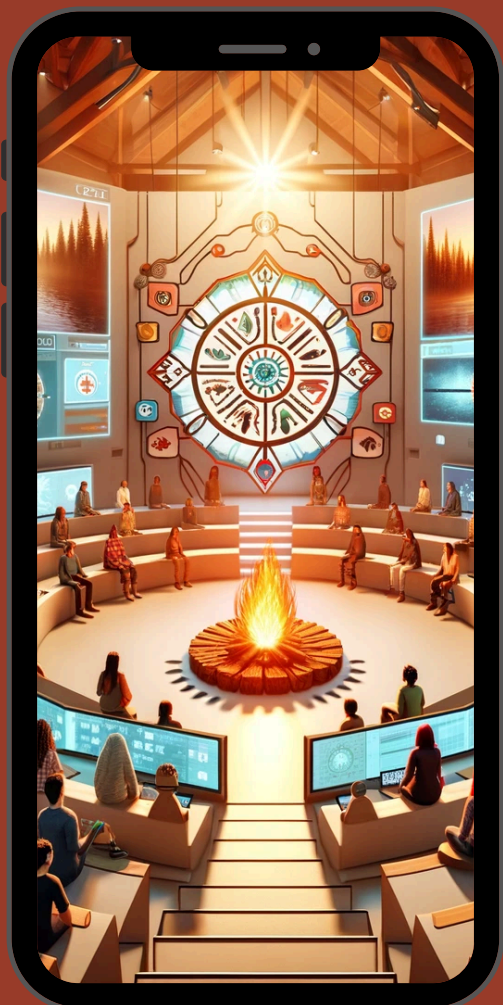
Participant safety and program efficacy must be consistently assessed throughout program development and ongoing implementation.



These aspects must be centred in program design.

SELECTING YOUR PLATFORM

Choosing the ideal virtual platform is like finding the perfect meeting place. It's crucial to think about what makes a space right for your needs.



The platform acts as your central hub, a digital home where all your content lives.

Weigh factors like

- security features
- confidentiality
- ease of navigation
- tools you may need
 - video sessions
 - resource sharing
 - one-on-one consultations

Be thoughtful when selecting your digital meeting place.

Ensure that everyone involved can connect and engage effectively, and you are able to showcase the benefits of your program using the platform you select.

SELECTING YOUR PLATFORM

The key is to match the platform with your program's specific requirements, your organization's workflow and style, and importantly, your privacy and security standards.

Slack

- ✓ Real-Time messaging in channels
- ✓ Integrated with many third-party apps and services

- ✗ Limited storage for free plans
- ✗ Learning curve for some features

Basecamp

- ✓ Excels in project management tools
- ✓ Document and file storage in visually appealing ways

- ✗ Limited integration options
- ✗ Learning curve

Zoom

- ✓ Widely used
- ✓ User-friendly
- ✓ Screen sharing and recording features

- ✗ Limited meeting duration
- ✗ Security may not comply with provincial health data needs

Dropbox

- ✓ Integrated with various software
- ✓ Rapid file sharing and storage
- ✓ Free version

- ✗ No video conference or messaging options

Microsoft Teams

- ✓ Integrated with other Microsoft software
- ✓ Video conference and chat features
- ✓ Collaborative document editing

- ✗ Significant computing resources (CPU and memory)
- ✗ Learning curve

Google Classroom

- ✓ Integrated with other Google software
- ✓ Assignment and project creation
- ✓ Collaborative document editing and marking

- ✗ Primarily focuses on education (limited non-educational features)

Trello

- ✓ Easy-to-use task management
- ✓ Manage multiple projects
- ✓ Fairly integrated with third-party apps and services

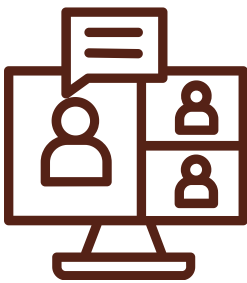
- ✗ Limited complex project management tools

Always research and explore the many platform options that exist. Look for reviews, case studies, or testimonials from similar organizations to gauge their effectiveness and user satisfaction.



FEATURES & FUNCTION

Virtual programs can show content in many engaging ways:



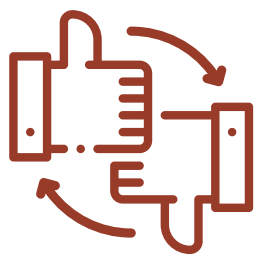
- Videos
- Live stream seminars & discussions
- Audio recordings

What are the ways you want to share your information?

Determine the process you want to share information and this can help you decide the technology platform you call home

Technological requirements for participants can include:

- Access to internet
- Cell or home phone number
- Computer with microphone, camera, and/or speaker
- Email address
- Processing power to play videos



USER EXPERIENCE

Engagement

- Ways to engage participants throughout the program
- Incorporate cultural and community knowledge
- Interactive lessons to build skills
- Create opportunities to practice new skills

Accessibility

- Create simple, easy to read content
- Use language that is easy to understand
- Considerations for colour-blindness and other visual processing differences

Participation

- Ability to provide real-time feedback and support
- Personalize content to individual needs
- How to encourage each participant to complete all aspects of the program

Engaging content creates better programs

PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY



Long Term Planning

Develop detailed plans outlining tasks, expectations, responsibilities, and timelines to ensure smooth coordination and execution of program activities. A well-structured work plan provides clarity and direction for the stakeholders involved, from recruiting and training staff, updating content, and maintaining technology used to share the program.



Outreach and Recruitment

Virtual care can allow providers to a broader reach and can extend teachings to more people with relatively less demands on program providers. This reach can be done in a relatively cost-effective way when compared to other types of mental health program formats. Think about how you will continue to recruit and promote your program long-term.



Financial Support

Budgeting can maintain a successful virtual program. This includes long-term costs like program design and platform acquisition and recurring costs like staff salaries, platform maintenance, user support, and promotional activities to keep the program visible and engaging.



Staff Considerations

Ensure all staff involved in virtual content creation and management are adequately trained and equipped for their roles. This includes not only technical skills but also an understanding of the sensitivities involved in virtual care. Recognize that creating and managing virtual content often comes with other duties. Establish realistic timelines for content development and maintenance, factoring in staff members' existing demands.

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Content Development

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CONTENT CREATION

This section focuses on ways to aid you in content creation for a virtual program. In shaping the content for your virtual program, it's important to recognize that not all in-person experiences translate seamlessly into a digital format and vice versa. Developing virtual content requires creativity and strategy to leverage the strengths of the technology you are using.

Your program may repurpose existing content for online use, introduce entirely new, tailored materials, or combine both approaches to enrich your user's experience.

The dynamic nature of virtual environments can make content more engaging: interactive webinars can replace traditional lectures, digital platforms can facilitate group discussions through forums or live chats, and personal counselling can leverage screen-sharing for a more collaborative, resource sharing experience. Creative innovation when adapting content can bridge the gap between physical and virtual spaces.



In This Guide



ADAPTING CULTURAL CONTENT TO A VIRTUAL SPACE

A crucial aspect of content development, especially within Indigenous programs is the respectful and accurate translation of cultural knowledge and practices to the virtual domain.

This process should involve close collaboration with the custodians of this knowledge:

- Community-specific Knowledge Keepers
- Educators
- Elders



For instance, a teaching shared by an Elder in a residential setting might be adapted to a virtual format through a carefully crafted video presentation, ensuring the essence and integrity of the teaching are maintained, with **permission from the Elder**.

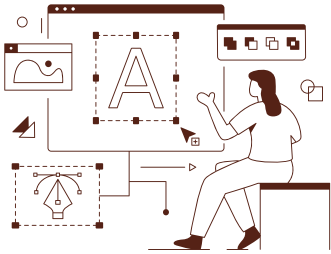
Not all cultural knowledge is appropriate to be shared virtually. Particular ceremonies and teachings are not to be shared.



Transitioning cultural teachings to an online platform must be carefully discussed and potential risks and benefits must be navigated. While virtual delivery can extend the reach of these valuable teachings, it's vital to consider the cultural sensitivities around sharing certain knowledge publicly and to seek guidance from local knowledge keepers and Elders on appropriate practices.

**Honour your cultural
protocols and practices
and be mindful when
adopting content.**

CONTENT CREATION 101



Developing content isn't just about creating something visually appealing, it's about ensuring your materials are accessible, consistent, and aligned with your brand. These three pillars ensure that your content connects with your audience and communicates your message effectively

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility ensures your content is usable and engaging for everyone.

Key Tips for Accessible Content:

Use **alt text** for images to describe visuals for screen reader, have limited vision, or have dial-up internet. Alt text is text that displays on a screen when images don't load, or is read out loud by a screen reader to describe a photo.

Add **captions or transcripts** for videos and audio content. This is helpful for people with hearing loss, auditory processing difficulties, or who watch content without volume. Auto-generated captions can usually be enabled with minimum need for editing.

Ensure **text contrasts** well with the background (e.g., dark text on light backgrounds). When building text based content choose a clear, legible font and avoid overly decorative styles,

Use **plain language**, minimize the use of industry jargon and make sure to spell acronyms out the first time they appear.



The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are a set of recommendations for making Web content more accessible, primarily for people with disabilities, but are applicable to most web users including mobile phones and tablets. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21>.

Audio Eye is a tool designed to check the accessibility of colours used in design: <https://www.audioeye.com/color-contrast-checker>

Creating **emphasis in text** is important, however the use of **bold**, *italics*, and decorative fonts should be used sparingly in order to reduce visual clutter which makes it harder for some readers to focus on the text. Italicized text can be harder to read for people with dyslexia or visual impairments, as the slanted letters may appear distorted or blurred.

Screen readers don't always announce formatted text using bold or italic differently, and emphasis can be lost for users relying on assistive technology.

General Accessibility Tips for Emphasis

Prioritize Structure: Use headings, lists, and spacing for hierarchy and emphasis instead of relying solely on bold or italics.

Pair with Colour: Combine bold or italics with accessible colour choices to create visual contrast. Just ensure your colour choices meet WCAG contrast requirements.

Use Alternative Cues: Add words like “important” or “note” to emphasize content, so meaning isn't lost for screen reader users.

CONSISTENCY AND PLANNING

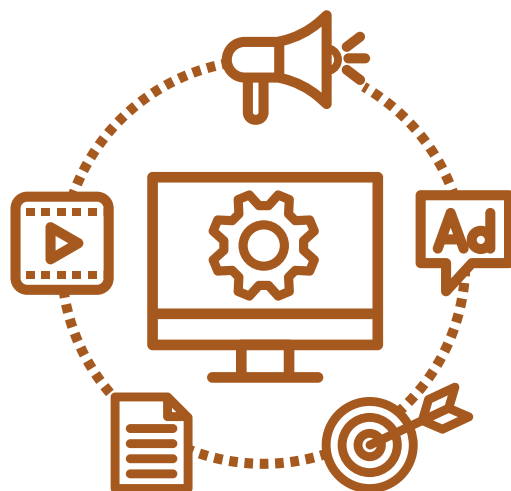
Consistency in your content strengthens your brand's identity and builds audience trust. When your materials look, sound, and feel consistent, your audience can easily recognize your practice and connect with its values.

How to Maintain Consistency:

- Schedule regular posts, newsletters, or updates. If you have an online course consider promoting it regularly, or updating content that could become outdated.
- Reuse and adapt existing content into multiple formats, such as turning a blog post into an infographic.
- Create a **brand guide** for colours, fonts, and imagery so that edits can be made easily.
- Create templates for commonly used formats like introductions or conclusions, or if you promote on social media.

BRANDING

Your content is an extension of your brand. It should reflect your mission, values, and personality while resonating with your audience. Thoughtful branding ensures that your content leaves a lasting impression.





BRAND DEVELOPMENT

Building a virtual platform means building a brand to show consistency and to connect with the people using your program. Before you begin to create your content and begin engagement it is important to develop your brand identity. Your brand identity is the foundation of how your audience perceives your practice. It's not just about logos and colors, it's about creating a cohesive experience that reflects your mission and values, and ensures you are recognizable regardless of the format or platform.

BRANDING: THE BIG PICTURE

Branding encompasses the overall image and reputation of your practice. It's the impression you create in the minds of your audience and the way your content, services, and communication align with your values.

- What is your mission? Why are you building your platform?
- What values do you want to reflect?
- How do you want your audience to feel when they interact with your content or services?

BUILDING A STRONG BRAND

Create a mission statement that clearly communicates your purpose. Align your branding with your intended audience's needs and preferences. Be authentic.

ACTION STEPS TO BUILD YOUR BRAND IDENTITY

1. Define your mission, goals, and values.
2. Develop a logo and select a color palette.
3. Create a brand guide for consistent use of visuals and messaging.
4. Identify your key platforms (online programming, social media, or audio formats) and tailor your branding to each one.
5. Gather feedback, refine, and grow your brand identity over time.





BRAND IDENTITY

LOGOS

A logo is the centerpiece of your visual identity. It's often the first thing people notice about your brand and should encapsulate your values and purpose.

Keep it simple and memorable.

BRAND STANDARDS

Brand standards ensure that your visual and written content remains consistent across platforms and materials (like print material vs online content). This consistency builds trust and recognition.

When building a brand guide consider:

- Logo placement
- Typography and font choice
- Tone and voice
- Imagery
- Use of colour

COLOUR PALETTE

Consistency in the use of brand colours is essential to build brand recognition and create a memorable brand identity.

Using consistent colours across designs, websites, social media, and clothing / swag can promote brand recognition and trust from your audience. Choosing a Palette:).

- Limit your palette to 3-5 core colors for consistency.
- Consider accessibility: Ensure text is legible against background colors.

Tools to Help:

- Adobe Color
- Coolers



TIPS FOR BUILDING CONTENT

PLAN YOUR CONTENT IN ADVANCE: programs and platforms shouldn't be developed on the fly. Have a clear plan and goal.

DRAFTS AND EDITS: Keep a document or notebook with lists of content ideas, what works for you, what doesn't work for you, and a loose timeline of your plan.

MANAGE YOUR TIME: Use the scheduling function, or a scheduling app to have content post at set times. If you are updating programming, have a plan when you begin to edit.

PRIORITIZE QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

High-quality content connects with your audience and builds trust.

- **Thorough research:** Ensure your information is accurate and evidence-based.
- **Engaging delivery:** Use storytelling and relatable examples to connect with your audience.
- **Brand alignment:** Develop a unique voice and tone that reflects your values.
- **Editing and proofreading:** Look for typos, duplicated content, and seek out the perspective of other people.



PLANNING CONTENT

Planning is the backbone of effective content creation. It bridges the gap between identifying the right format for your content and ensuring it meets your audience's needs. By building a solid plan you can stay organized, maintain consistency, and align your efforts with your practice's goals. Thoughtful planning also allows you to adapt the lifespan and relevance of your content. Ensure that the resources and materials you have available are current, relevant, and align with your values.

BUILDING A CONTENT CALENDAR

Consistency is key to engaging your audience. A content calendar helps you:

- Plan a publishing schedule to maintain regularity
- Highlight key dates, such as holidays, events, or milestones for the people who use your platform
- Organize topics, deadlines, and responsibilities

TOOLS FOR CONTENT CALENDARS:

No fancy tools are needed to build a content calendar, some people prefer to use pen and paper, others use things like a word document, google document, or notepad.

There are many software options available for content planning:

- Trello
- Asana
- Google Sheets / Excel
- Loomly
- Facebook Business Suite
- Brandwatch / Falcon

EXPLORING CONTENT FORMATS

Content formats should align with your goals and audience preferences. Some options include:



When selecting a format, consider your resources, how you want them to be perceived, and your time frame for content creation. Using the same content in multiple styles can be a fun way to connect with different audiences.

CONTENT LONGEVITY

Choosing the right content format goes hand in hand with understanding whether your content should be evergreen or time-sensitive.



Evergreen content refers to materials that remain relevant and valuable over time, regardless of trends or seasons. It provides consistent value to your audience and helps establish your platform.

Choosing the right content format goes hand in hand with understanding whether your content should be evergreen or time-sensitive. Start by asking:

- **Is this content evergreen?** Will it remain relevant and valuable over time, or is it tied to a specific trend, event, or season?
- **What's the best way to deliver this content?** Consider your audience's preferences and the platforms they use most often.

Evergreen topics like stress management tips or ways to integrate culture work well as pieces of a course, blog posts, videos, or FAQs.

Time-sensitive topics like upcoming events, trending topics, and requests for feedback may be better suited for social media or newsletters.

MATCHING CONTENT TO A PLATFORM

Different platforms serve different purposes, and understanding these can help you make the most of your content.

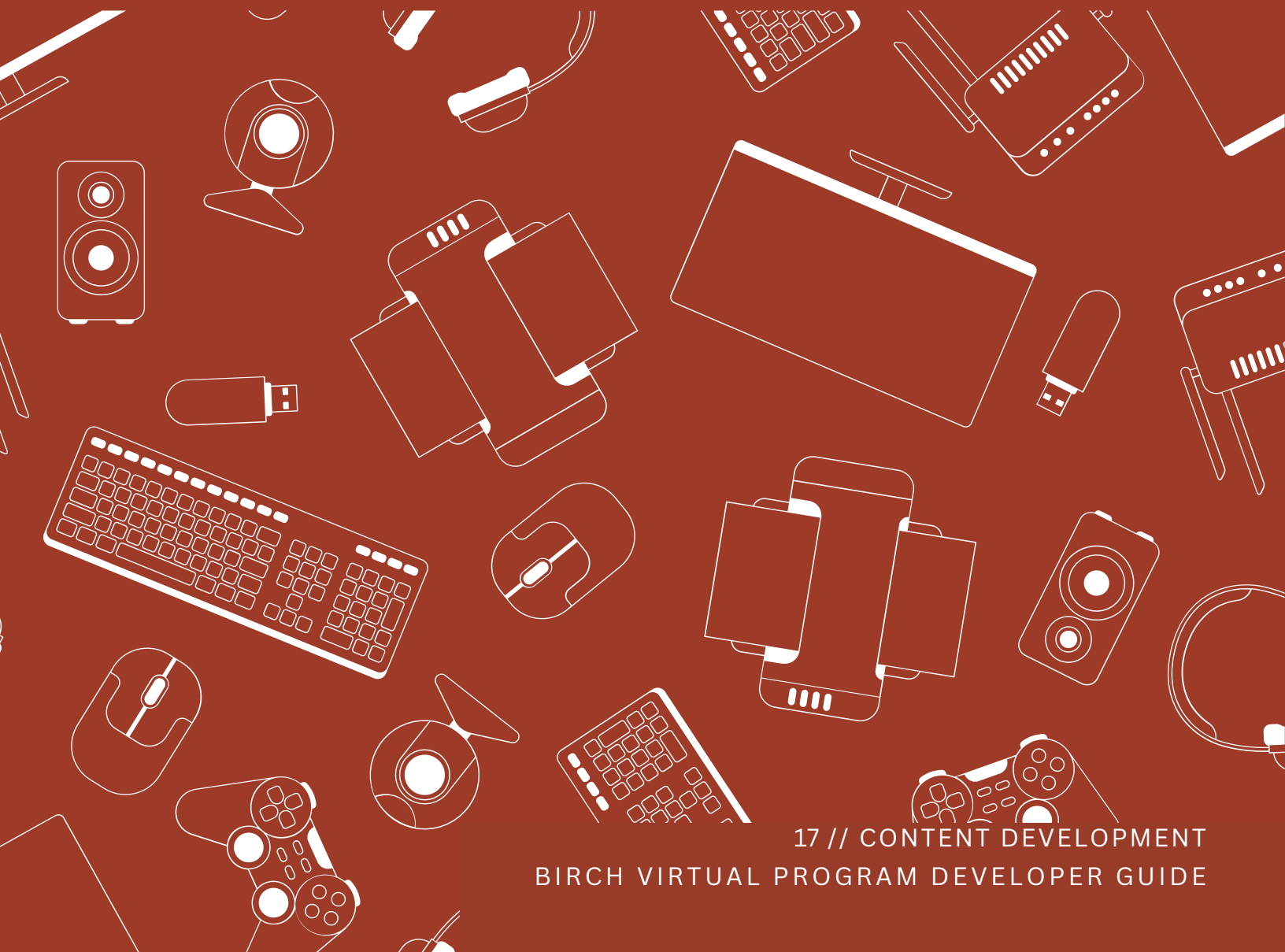
PLATFORM	BEST USE	EXAMPLE
Website / Learning Management System	In-depth content, services, contact info	Blog posts, booking system, evergreen content, online courses, templates and worksheets
Social Media	Engaging, shareable content	Short form videos (reels, tiktoks), trends, carousel posts.
Email / Newsletters	Direct communication, updates, exclusive offers	Monthly tips, event invites, zines
YouTube/ Podcasts	Long-form, visually/audio-rich content	Tutorials, interviews, vlogs.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

FROM IDEAS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Now that you've explored the foundations of content formats, styles, and branding, it's time to bring those elements together into a cohesive content development strategy. Understanding your audience, selecting the right platform, and maintaining a consistent brand identity are just the beginning.

Content development is where your ideas come to life—transforming concepts into tangible resources.



CREATING CONTENT

By combining and translating information from various sources, you can create materials that are tailored to the specific needs of your audience. Whether you aim to educate, entertain, or share insights, creating high-quality content enhances your reach and impact.



Remember to keep your content accessible, aligned with your brand, consistent, and thought out.

BEFORE DIVING IN, CONSIDER:

- **What is the purpose of your content?** Are you looking to educate, raise awareness, share other content, or offer support?
- **Who is your target audience?** What challenges do they face, and how can your content address them?
- **What type of content does your audience typically consume?** Videos, blogs, infographics, or more engaging interactive content?
- **Where does your audience spend time online?** Identifying the right platforms will help you meet your audience where they are. Consider websites, social media platforms, and forums. If you are building a course consider how it will be advertised, and the learning curve it may take participants to adapt to the platform.



INCORPORATING BRAND IDENTITY WITH CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Your brand identity should adapt to each platform while remaining cohesive. Different platforms have unique audiences, so understanding where and how to engage is essential.

Adjust content tone and style to match the platform's audience (e.g., professional for LinkedIn, casual for Instagram). Use platform appropriate visuals and content formats.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

VOICE AND TONE

Define how your brand “speaks.” Are you empathetic, professional, casual? Create examples of on-brand and off-brand messaging.

VISUALS

Use consistent styles, such as minimalist illustrations or high-quality photography. This can change for different content mediums, or platforms.

TYPOGRAPHY

Select fonts that align with your brand personality (e.g., serif for professionalism, sans-serif for modernity). Ensure readability across devices.



CONTENT DEVELOPMENT: WRITTEN CONTENT

Examples: courses, blog posts, newsletters, email blasts, post captions, FAQs, etc.

ACCESSIBILITY

- Stick to plain language and simple sentences
- Keep font size above 12 pt.
- Avoid long blocks of text
 - Break it up with bullet points, headers, and formatting.
- Remember image descriptions for any graphics or photos added

BRANDING & DESIGN

- Use your brand voice consistently
- Add a logo or branded graphic at the beginning or end if applicable
- Include branded headers and footers in documents and PDFs
- Use consistent fonts and colours
- Make use of white space

TOOLS

Text editors, like Microsoft Word, OneNote, Google Docs, NotePad, are great for editing text and building the text components of non-text based content.

Apps and websites like Grammarly, or the built in grammar and spell check functions in text editors are helpful.

Learning Management Systems (LMS) are tools that are useful to host online courses or programs.



CHOOSING YOUR TOOL

Selecting the right Learning Management System (LMS) to deliver engaging and effective online courses. An LMS helps organize course materials, track learner progress, and facilitate interactive learning.

FEATURES TO LOOK FOR

- **User-Friendly Interface:** Ensure both course creators and learners can navigate the platform with ease.
- **Customization & Branding:** Look for options to align with your professional brand and personalize the user experience.
- **Content Formats:** Choose an LMS that supports videos, quizzes, downloadable PDFs, and interactive modules.
- **Assessment & Tracking:** Features like progress tracking, automated grading, and certificates can enhance learner engagement.
- **Community & Engagement Tools:** Discussion forums, live sessions, and messaging can help foster collaboration.
- **Accessibility & Mobile Compatibility:** Ensure the platform meets accessibility guidelines and works on different devices.

PRICING AND BUDGET

LMS platforms range from free options to subscription-based services. Some platforms have free versions to play around with. Try some different ones out before making a decision.

Consider:

- Free vs. paid plans
- Transaction fees on course sales
- Scalability as your course grows



VISUAL CONTENT

Often used on social media, as content for websites and courses, additions to workbooks or worksheets visual content comes in a variety of formats.

Some examples are:

- **Photos:** behind the scenes, before and afters, user generated content
- **Infographics:** data visualizations, step-by-step how tos, quick tips
- **Illustrations:** digital art, logos, icons
- **Quote graphics:** inspirational quotes, testimonials, success stories
- **Carousels:** a specific type of post used on Instagram and Facebook that have multiple photos together as slides. Multi-slide tutorials, storytelling posts, FAQs in bite sizes.
- **Diagrams and Flow Charts:** Decision trees, mind mapping
- **Seasonal and Event** based graphics for promotion
- **Collages or Mood Boards**

ACCESSIBILITY

- Choose high contrast colour combinations for text and backgrounds, use Audio Eye to check if the colours are compatible
- Use alt text to describe images
- Avoid using colour to convey information, add labels, patterns, or symbols

BRANDING & DESIGN

- Stick to your brand's colour palette
- Add logo, watermarks, or header and footer to all stand alone visual media
- Simple is better, avoid overloading with text or visuals
- Be consistent with font and design elements and styles

- Stick to one or two fonts per design
- Use templates to maintain consistency, and speed up creation



Editing programs often have pre-built templates to start out with. When you have found a groove with your designs and content you can create your own templates to use.

TOOLS



When designing visual content, it can be overwhelming to choose which tool to use given the range of apps, platforms, and design spaces available. Options like Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, Canva, Prezi, Adobe Express, and PowerPoint each come with their own set of features, benefits, and limitations.

It's important to consider your goals, budget, knowledge and time available when selecting a platform. Understanding each tool's strengths and limitations will help you make the right choice for your needs. Keep in mind that your content needs might evolve over time, and you may find it beneficial to experiment with a few different tools to see which works best for your style and workflow.

While some tools have intuitive interfaces and can be picked up quickly, others might take time to master, especially if you're looking to create high-quality, professional visuals. Each tool has its own merits and there isn't a one size fits all. Choose the tool that works best for you and your goals.

CHOOSING YOUR TOOL

ADOBE SUITE

Ps

Ae

Ai

Photoshop, Adobe Express (formerly Adobe Spark), and Adobe Illustrator

Adobe products offer high-end features for professional-grade design, but they often come with a learning curve and associated fees. Adobe has a free 7 day trial period where you can get to know the programs.



Adobe Creative Cloud programs are between \$14.99 - \$30.99/month each, or the entire Creative Cloud Suite is \$69.99+ a month



Photoshop has a steep learning curve

Express is intuitive and has a gentle learning curve

Illustrator has a moderate learning curve, and has a complex interface



Photoshop is best for professionals needing features like photo editing, retouching, and highly detailed visuals. Ideal for intricate designs that require a high level of customization.

Express is designed for content creation, like social media posts, marketing materials, and short videos. It is perfect for casual users who have beginner - intermediate skills.

Illustrator is perfect for logos, icons, illustrations, and vector graphics,



Adobe offers free tutorials and information about each program on their website. There are also many user guides, tutorials, and FAQs on YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook. Platforms like SkillShare and Coursera also offer both free and paid courses to learn these programs.

Canva is a web or app based design platform that allows users to create visual content.



Canva Basic is a free version of the program that has templates, graphics, and tools available.

Canva Pro is a paid version with additional features like design elements, brand kits, and download settings. Canva Pro is \$16.99+/month depending on how many users are on an account.

Teachers, non-profits, and some other professions can gain access to Canva Pro for free by providing ID.



Canva has a low learning curve, and is very beginner friendly. The template library, elements, fonts, and download options make it easy to design a variety of content. Most templates, elements, and designs are completely customizable.



Canva is best for quick and easy design work, like social media posts, videos, presentations, flyers, and posters. It is perfect for casual users who want quick and easy design without too much stress. An added bonus is Canva connects to social media platforms to schedule and build content within the platform.



Canva offers free tutorials within the platform. There are also many user guides, tutorials, and FAQs on YouTube and Facebook.

POWERPOINT

PPT

While PowerPoint is primarily designed for presentations, it has a wide range of design features—such as text boxes, shapes, image insertion, and design templates—that make it a viable option for creating simple graphics for social media, banners, and flyers.



PowerPoint is included in Microsoft 365 subscriptions. The online version is free with a Microsoft account, the desktop version requires a paid subscription.

Microsoft 365 starts at \$99.99/year.



PowerPoint has a low learning curve, and is very beginner friendly. It has a drag and drop interface, and many templates. It is easy to manipulate designs and has many templates.

PowerPoint designs can be saved as PNGs or JPEGs which makes it easy to upload to social media platforms.



PowerPoint doesn't offer the same level of design capabilities as Canva, Express, Illustrator, or Photoshop, but it does work to create basic social media graphics that don't require many components.



Microsoft offers free tutorials within the Powerpoint online and desktop versions. There are also many user guides, tutorials, and FAQs on YouTube and Facebook.

PREZI



Prezi is another presentation platform, similar to PowerPoint but with expanded editing options.



Prezi offers a free version with limited features, including a watermark on anything created in the platform. Paid plans start at \$12/month



There is a moderate learning curve, as it is designed to create non-linear presentations that are more visually appealing than traditional slide based formats.



Prezi is ideal for dynamic presentations that can tell a story. There are interactive and engaging visual elements.



LinkedIn Learning and the Prezi website are where you will find tutorials, resources, and assistance with learning how to use the platform.

VENNEGAGE



Venngage is a program designed for sharing complex data and building infographics, flowcharts, timelines, visual reports, and more.



Venngage has a limited free plan, and the premium, business, and enterprise plans start at \$10/month.



Venngage has a very low learning curve. It's highly intuitive, with drag-and-drop functionality and pre-designed templates that make it easy for beginners to create infographics, charts, and visual reports.



Venngage is ideal for creating infographics, data visualizations, reports, and presentations. It's great for users who need professional-looking visuals quickly without requiring advanced design skills.



Venngage has tutorials and guides on its website, along with examples of best practices. Additional tutorials can be found on YouTube.

Some tools are free or beginner-friendly, others require a subscription or have steeper learning curves, so it's important to find the platform that aligns with your design needs and skill level. While this list is a good starting point, there are many different tools available that are worth trying.



AUDIO CONTENT

Examples: podcasts, voice overs, vlogs, recorded webinars, social media stories, e-learning content.

ACCESSIBILITY

- Provide written transcripts for audio content when applicable
- Add subtitles or transcription to online content
- Keep verbiage concise to maintain engagement
- Speak clearly
- Limit jargon, and explain acronyms
- Invest in a microphone
 - There are clip on microphones starting at \$25 that are decent quality. High quality desktop microphones can go for \$150+
- Limit background music, or use audio adjusting to lower the sound of background music / noise

BRANDING & DESIGN

- Start and end recordings with branded intro and outro music or a tagline
- Mention your website, platforms, or email to keep branding top of mind
- Use a consistent tone and volume
- Script content in advance to maintain focus, practice before recording

TOOLS

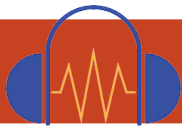
For podcasts, music, or voiceovers, audio tools like the built in voice recorder on a smart phone can be perfect for recording. Apps like Audacity, Adobe Audition, Final Cut Pro, and Garage Band are all great for editing audio clips.

Visual platforms like PowerPoint, Canva, and Prezi all allow the addition of audio clips into content as well.

CHOOSING YOUR TOOL

Choosing the right platform for creating audio content depends on factors like cost, ease of use, and the features you need. Free tools like offer basic recording and editing capabilities, making them great for beginners. More advanced software provides professional-grade features but comes with a steeper learning curve and higher costs. Some platforms balance ease of use with quality, making them ideal for casual creators. When selecting a tool, consider your skill level, budget, and the type of audio content you want to create—whether it's podcasts, voiceovers, or music production.

AUDACITY



- Best for: Beginners, free audio editing.
- Why it's great: Open-source, simple for editing and recording audio.
- Downside: Basic interface, fewer advanced tools.

ADOBE AUDITION



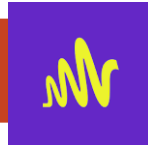
- Best for: Advanced audio editing, podcasts, and sound mixing.
- Why it's great: Industry standard with powerful features like noise reduction.
- Downside: Expensive, not necessary for simple tasks.

GARAGEBAND



- Best for: Beginner musicians or podcasters (Mac users).
- Why it's great: Free, user-friendly, and great for recording music or basic audio
- Downside: Mac-exclusive, limited advanced features.

ANCHOR



- Best for: Podcasts.
- Why it's great: Free, easy-to-use platform for recording and publishing podcasts.
- Downside: Minimal editing features compared to dedicated software.

REAPER



- Best for: Affordable, advanced audio production.
- Why it's great: Relatively low cost, highly customizable, great for music production.
- Downside: Steeper learning curve.

TIPS AND TRICKS



- Add music or other sounds to professionalize your audio. There are many different websites that offer free music, some examples are: [Free Music Archive](#), [Incomptech](#), [Youtube Audio Library](#) or [Bensound](#).
- Record in a soundproof space or a quiet environment.
- Coursera, Skillshare, LinkedInLearning, and Youtube all have lots of professional and user based learning content.



DIGITAL CONTENT

Examples: social media platforms, websites, online courses, email campaigns, presentations, and blogs

ACCESSIBILITY

- Follow WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)
- Ensure buttons are easy to click
- Use descriptive text for links
 - Learn More About Our Services vs Click Here
- When crafting captions use “**CamelCase**” for hashtags, capitalizing the first letter of each word. This will facilitate screen readers reading the words individually rather than as incoherent words.

BRANDING & DESIGN

- Use logo, branding, colours, fonts, and graphics consistently across pages and tools
- Keep navigation simple
- Be clear and concise in bios and descriptions
- Stick to a clear layout with white space balancing content
- Ensure any tools or web content is responsive for mobile devices
- Use a consistent layout and labelling
- Break information into easily readable components
- Keep things focused, one idea per visual or component
- Use charts, diagrams, and info graphics to simplify information.

TOOLS

- Website creation: WordPress, Wix, and Squarespace are some of the easier platforms to build on
- Newsletters and mail campaigns: MailChimp, HubSpot, Wix
- Social media: different platforms have different purposes, users, and tools

REACHING YOUR AUDIENCE

Identifying your target audience is the first step to creating impactful content.



Consider:

- **Demographics:** Age, location, gender, and cultural background.
- **Psychographics:** Interests, values, challenges, and goals.
- **Behavior:** Online habits, preferred platforms, and content consumption patterns.

Use tools like surveys, client feedback, and analytics platforms to gain insights into your audience's preferences and needs.

ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT



Engagement strengthens your connection with your audience and builds trust. Effective strategies include:

- **Interactive Elements:** Polls, quizzes, and live Q&A sessions.
- **Community Building:** Responding to comments and fostering conversations.
- **Consistency:** Regularly posting and engaging across platforms to stay visible and relevant.

STAY UP TO DATE

Monitor community and regional trends to support/ monitor wise and best practices.

CONTENT PROMOTION

Sharing your content effectively is as important as creating it. Use these promotion strategies:

Social Media:

- Tailor posts to each platform's style and audience.
 - Using hashtags
 - Hashtags increase engagement and reach. They help users discover content they care about and guide brands to intended audiences interested in their niche.
 - When formulating a hashtag ensure that it is short and simple, that individual words are capitalized ex: #BirchBundle instead of #Birchbundle.
 - Limit hashtag use, and keep them to the end of posts to reduce noise and clutter for any users who use screen readers.

Email Marketing:

- Deliver content directly to subscribers with newsletters or updates.

Collaborations:

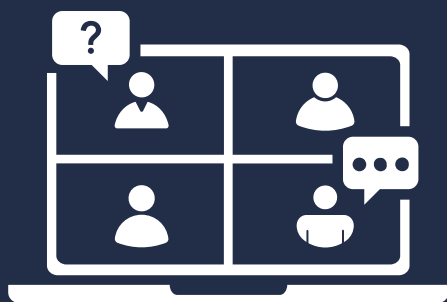
- Partner with other professionals or influencers to expand your reach.

Paid Ads:

- Utilize platforms like YouTube Ads, Spotify Ads, Google Ads or Facebook Ads to amplify visibility.



Remember to change your post style, graphic, text, or hashtag use based on the platform, intended audience, or the purpose of the post.



HOSTING A VIRTUAL MEETING

STEP ONE

MEETING PURPOSE

Clearly articulate the purpose of your virtual group or meeting. Establishing and communicating clear objectives will guide your planning and delivery, whether for project collaboration, training, support groups, or networking.

STEP TWO

PICK A PLATFORM

Select a virtual meeting platform that suits your needs. Consider the maximum participation count, video/audio quality, screen-sharing capabilities, breakout rooms, and security features. The Selecting Platforms section in the Program Design chapter lists several options.

STEP THREE

SEND AN INVITE

Create a structured agenda with topics to be covered, presenters, and time allocations for each section. Share the agenda in advance so that participants are prepared and know what to expect. Be sure to plan for breaks, just like other group sessions.

- Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, etc., have built-in invitation tools that integrate with email or calendars. Use these to streamline the process. Send individually if confidentiality is necessary.
- Include the meeting link, date, and time automatically when scheduling through platforms like Outlook or Google Calendar.

Your invitation should clearly include:

- Meeting Date and Time: Specify the time zone to avoid confusion.
- Platform Name and Link: Provide the direct meeting link and indicate which platform will be used (e.g., “Join us on Zoom here: [link]”).
- Attach the agenda.
- Meeting ID and Passcode (if applicable): Include these for platforms like Zoom or Google Meet where extra credentials are needed.
- Dial-In Options: Provide a phone number for participants who may prefer to join by phone



Attach a calendar event to your invitation to make it easy for participants to save the details. Most platforms allow you to export an invitation to tools like Google Calendar or Outlook.

STEP FOUR

CONSULT WITH ELDERS



Consult with the people who are leading the opening prayers, ceremonies, or who are intending on sharing cultural teachings during the meeting what their preferences are for sharing knowledge in this way. Always ask about recording content ahead of time.

STEP FIVE

BEGIN YOUR MEETING

Ensure everyone can access a stable internet connection, working microphones, and webcams. Are participants in a waiting room? Is your audio system working?

As people join the meeting ensure that everyone can see content if applicable and troubleshoot any audio issues.

Discuss the basics of how to participate in the meeting, raise hands, and answer questions. Discuss the session's roles, rules (*privacy and confidentiality, if applicable*), and other aspects, just like you would with other meetings.



STEP SIX

REMINDERS & EXPECTATIONS

FOR MEETING HOSTS:

Start on Time

- Begin the meeting at the scheduled time, start with a brief introduction, and review the agenda.
- Ensure you introduce yourself and any facilitators

Have a Virtual Meeting Facilitator

- This person can encourage participation, manage interruptions and turn-taking, and help the conversation stay on track.
- This person can have a plan to address technical problems, such as audio issues or connectivity problems. They can manage people coming and going in the virtual meeting room, observe the chat features, and help the presenter.

Engage Participants

- Use features like polls, chat, hand-raising, and breakout rooms to increase interaction and engagement.
- If you plan to share your screen, close unnecessary tabs to avoid distractions, or use the function to share a specific window, application, or browser tab

Consider Recording Parts of the Session

- If appropriate and with participants' consent, record the session for those who cannot attend or for future reference. Ensure you comply with privacy and consent laws and respect your participants.

FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS:



Mute When Not Speaking: Keep your microphone muted unless you're actively speaking to minimize background noise.



Be On Time: Log in a few minutes early to ensure your technology works and you're ready to start on time.



Consider Keeping Your Camera On: This helps you stay engaged and shows the host you're actively participating



Raise Your Hand to Speak: Use the platform's features, like the "Raise Hand" tool, or wait for your turn to avoid talking over others



introduce Yourself: Use the chat feature to introduce yourself, if you ask a question verbally start by saying your name if you don't know other participants or the facilitators

FOR EVERYONE:



Stay Engaged: Pay attention to the meeting and the person talking. Don't be checking emails or multi-tasking.



Be Respectful: Avoid interrupting, listen actively, and keep comments or chat messages relevant to the meeting topic.



Thank You

for your continued support of the BIRCH program.

We hope you find this resource guide useful.



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thunderbirdpf.org





Virtual Program Developer Guide

Safety and Evaluation

birch

Bundle of Interventions, Resources, and Culture Hub



Safety & Evaluation

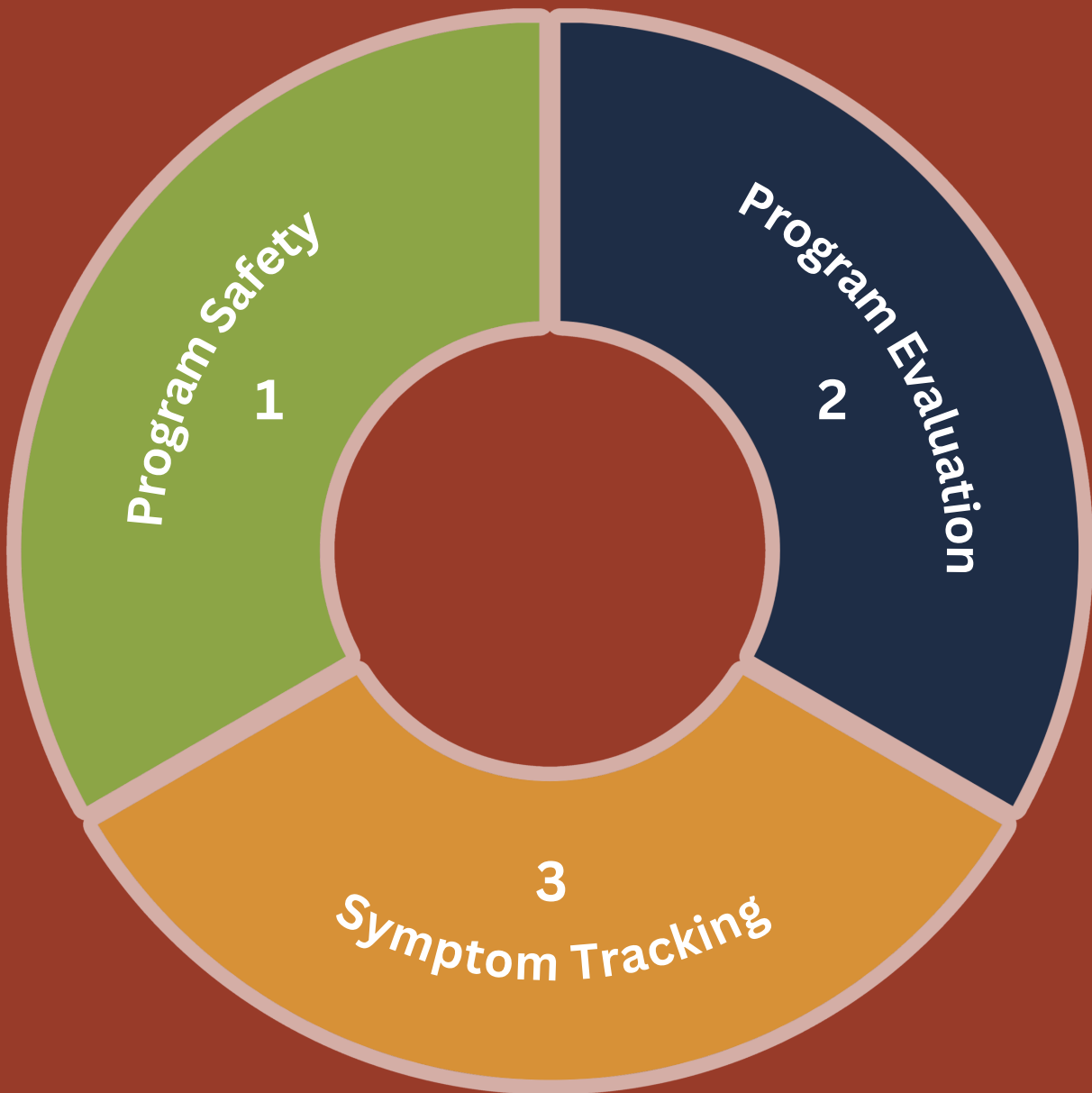
This section will review both safety and evaluation considerations when implementing virtual care services.

Ensuring a safe virtual program involves identifying ways to protect. This involves technology security, patient privacy, confidentiality, and ways to share information in a way that the data is kept safe. There are sometimes additional considerations when moving services to a virtual environment.

Program evaluation helps promote the overall usefulness of the program by tracking user outcomes over time and monitoring for overall patient safety. When we track these outcomes, we need to make sure that participants are informed and that this information is also kept safe.



IN THIS GUIDE



VIRTUAL PROGRAM SAFETY



Increasing safety in virtual mental health interventions involves addressing various aspects of technology, practitioner expertise, ethical standards, and client needs.

These involve considerations related to:

- Technology security
- Patient safety in session
- Data storage
- Data encryption
- Crisis management
- Monitoring symptoms
- Legal compliance
- Confidentiality
- Privacy
- Maintaining boundaries

**Virtual health services need to
be as safe as in-person services.
This can require additional
considerations**



VIRTUAL SAFETY

Safety needs vary by program and can change depending on your goals.

INFORMED CONSENT FOR SERVICE


Obtain informed consent for virtual services. Review additional considerations related to offering services virtually such as the potential benefits and risks, and communicate your crisis plan, including potential situations in which you would need to break confidentiality (i.e.; imminent risk of harm to patient).

For example, if a meeting is going to be recorded, ensure that all participants are aware and what will be done with this recording afterwards.

PRIVACY

Privacy considerations involve the people who use your service. Think about where virtual services are occurring for individuals and if there is risk to the individual or other treatment group members. For example, virtual meetings should be completed in a quiet, private space with limited distractions and no one else present.

Some people want to participate more anonymously. They may want to hide their faces or use a fictitious name. You will still need a way to confirm participants are safe, in a private space, etc. (e.g., create a



check-in approach for group settings). Determine what information you need in order to protect client safety while balancing their privacy.

CONFIDENTIAL SERVICES

Confidentiality is about how we share and protect health information. When we collect information, including someone's name, health information, or treatment needs, how and why we share this information matters.

Members should not be allowed to record the meeting, take a screenshot of participants, or share content with other individuals not in the meeting

CRISIS SUPPORT

Identify potential risks that warrant crisis support, such immediate threats to personal safety of clients. Create a detailed plan that includes immediate steps to be taken in various types of crises, key contacts, and referral pathways to emergency services. If someone logs off the call unexpectedly, have someone follow up with them to check in.

Verify alternative contact information, including telephone number and address for your client. Be aware of their physical address in case an emergency arises in live meetings and you need to call crisis support. Know the emergency supports and crisis lines for the area your client such as local health services, crisis hotlines, and emergency wellness supports or first responders to facilitate quick assistance when needed.



DATA SECURITY & LEGAL COMPLIANCE

There are legal standards that vary by province to ensure that health care data is protected in a virtual space. Think about how the information you have is shared and protected by the technology you use for your intervention.

How is the information protected and is this compliant with your provincial health codes? For example, where is the data that is automatically collected by the technology platform stored?

TECHNOLOGY

Some more ways to improve safety when interacting with technology or specific software platforms include:

- Encouraging participants to use personal rather than public WI-fi
- Using a password to enter video calls
- Only sharing meeting links with selected participants
- Use a video platform that is compliant with your provincial health system guides. For example, see a list of Ontario Health compliant software [here \(https://www.ontariohealth.ca/system-planning/digital-standards/virtual-visits-verification/verified-solutions-list\)](https://www.ontariohealth.ca/system-planning/digital-standards/virtual-visits-verification/verified-solutions-list)
- Conduct meetings with videos on to make sure that people are who they say they are and there is no one else in the background.

Measuring Success:

Program Evaluation Strategies

When implementing a treatment program, it can be useful to track the experience of participants over time. Tracking information can provide information about:

- How individuals perceive the program
- How to improve the program over time
- How people may benefit from the program
- How to increase the safety or usefulness of the program
- How participating in the program affects individual's mental wellness

There are lots of ways to measure success in a program. Evaluation is a key way to learn about what works and what doesn't with the programs and services you provide.



PEOPLE

Shared experiences of clients, treatment providers, and community-member within the program; self-report measures, interviews, art-based projects, or sharing circles



OBSERVATIONS

Number of referrals, people who consent to and/or complete the program, number of digital downloads, number of people who participate in community webinars



OTHER INFO

Information found in document reviews, community impact, quality or other knowledge sharing exercises (community presentations, information sessions, lunch and learns, or other events).

SYMPTOM TRACKING

Collecting information directly from participants who engage with your program can be a useful way to find out about their experiences with the program or find out whether or not it works. You can do this by:

- Orally sharing experiences about the program (such as through a sharing circle, individual interview, or focus group)
- Reviewing art-based projects (photo voice, art projects, video projects)
- Using self-report measures, such as questionnaires that collect participant experiences



A measure is a tool used to assess various traits, behaviours, experiences, processes, or outcomes, like questionnaires, surveys, or interviews. Measures provide valuable information for research, clinical evaluation, or personal development.

Measures can be used collect information in a standardized way with participants. These can be shared both in in-person and virtual settings.





INFORMED CONSENT

Participants must provide informed consent to having information collected about them. Participants need to be informed of how their information will be used. This means providing participants with information about:

WHY YOU ARE COLLECTING THIS INFORMATION

Obtain informed consent for virtual services. Review additional considerations related to offering services virtually such as the potential benefits and risks, and communicate your crisis plan, including potential situations in which you would need to break confidentiality (i.e.; imminent risk of harm to patient).

For example, if a meeting is going to be recorded, ensure that all participants are aware and what will be done with this recording afterwards.

WHEN DOES INFORMATION STAY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Inform participants about if their information is confidential or not. Talk to them about if their information is de-identified (such as removes their name or other information that would tell someone it is them) or if their name is attached to their information. It is best practice to typically remove identifying information unless this information collected is being used for clinical purposes.

Participants need to be aware of limits to confidentiality when sharing information about themselves. For example, if they are at risk of hurting themselves or someone else, information they provide can be shared to keep them safe.



WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Think about who has access to the information and will be managing it over time. This can be a program director, counsellor, or other staff member. Think about how people who access this information are trained to protect it.

WHERE INFORMATION WILL BE STORED

Be clear to participants where information is stored, such as in their client file on-site.

If you are collecting information virtually, participants need to be informed of how long you will keep this information and where it is stored specifically.

For example, on some survey sites, information is not stored on Canadian servers and sometimes, this can affect patient health privacy rules. If you are using sites like GoogleForms or SurveyMonkey, be aware of where information is stored before you decide to use them.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY DON'T WANT TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

Sometimes, we don't need all the information we ask to be able to provide good care. If you are evaluating your program, participants should be able to opt out of providing their information and still be able to receive the treatment. Not participating in program evaluation or research should not affect their ability to receive help they need.



SYMPTOM TRACKING CONSIDERATIONS

Here are a few things to consider when you are tracking client progress over time.

1. NOT ALL MEASURES ARE CREATED EQUAL

Most measures were developed for non-Indigenous populations and haven't been used regularly with Indigenous communities. Sometimes, this means that they don't accurately capture the information we need. We have provided a [list of measures](#) that were developed by Indigenous communities or have been previously used with Indigenous communities before. Be sure to review the individual questions on each measure to make sure that the items are safe, useful, and relevant for your community.

For more information: <https://birchbundle.ca/resources/symptom-tracking/test-library-and-scoring-guides/>

2. BE STRENGTH-BASED

The measures we provide look at many different facets of wellness. They include aspects of cultural engagement, current mental health symptoms, and community use. We can measure things that may be difficult for individuals (mood symptoms, childhood experiences) however how we use this information matters. Be careful about choosing measures that reflect the change you expect to see in your program. For example, if you think your program will reduce cravings for substances, it will be helpful to measure this.



3. BE CAUTIOUS USING MEASURES IN TREATMENT

The measures provided are not to be used to “diagnose” an individual. If you ask certain questions (such as about some mood concerns or about suicidality) you may have to follow up with an individual to make sure they are safe. If someone is at risk of hurting themselves, you may need to be able to contact them to keep them safe. We have a responsibility to make sure that when people provide information on these questions, we use that information in a good way.

4. SHARE INFORMATION BACK TO PARTICIPANTS

When possible, share collected information back to participants, such as their progress or changes over time in the outcomes you are measuring. For example, if you are tracking mood scores over time, you can consider creating a graph and sharing this information to the individual participant as information about their progress. For some measures, like the Substance Use Risk Profile, it can provide information to participants about the reasons for use, which can be useful in treatment. Sharing information back can help participants learn more about themselves or learn about their progress in treatment. More information on how to do this is provided with some of the individual measures provided.

5. RESPECT COPYRIGHT PRINCIPLES

Not all measures are available for free or to all people. Some measures must be administered by specific types of clinicians. Some measures are copyrighted and cannot be used without permission.



RESOURCES

Please see the following additional resources describing Indigenous-focused community evaluation.

Thunderbird Resources

AMIS for case management, planning, and evaluation:

<https://thunderbirdpf.org/addictions-management-information-system/>

Native Wellness Assessment (NWA)™ for wellness outcome measurement:

<https://thunderbirdpf.org/native-wellness-assessment/>

Surveys to help support your community:

<https://thunderbirdpf.org/surveys-can-help-support-your-community/>

First Nation Information Governance Centre

The First Nations Principles of OCAP®: ownership, control, access, and possession

<https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society

Measuring Wellness: An indicator Development Guide for First Nations

<https://www.acc-society.bc.ca/resource/measuring-wellness-an-indicator-development-guide-for-first-nations/>

Assembly of First Nations

First Nations Performance Indicator Checklist

<https://education.afn.ca/afntoolkit/web-modules/plain-talk-10-first-nations-performance-indicator-checklist/a-culturally-appropriate-model-for-measuring-success/>

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

Indigenous Outcome Measurement

https://thesummerinstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/indigenous_measurement_lit_review.pdf

Thank You

for your continued support of the BIRCH program.

We hope you find this resource guide useful.



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Virtual Program Developer Guide

Additional Resources

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Bundle of Interventions, Resources, and Culture Hub





ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

This section provides helpful web-based resources for those who may be interested in extending their skillsets and building better virtual programs.

These skills relate to activities that you may wish to incorporate into your virtual program.



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IN THIS GUIDE



VIRTUAL MEETINGS



General Guidelines

Indigenous Guardians Toolkit: Virtual Community Guide

<https://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/sites/default/files/2021-12/Virtual%20Community%20Engagement%20Guide.pdf>

Mindshift: How to Host Virtual Meetings

<https://www.mindtools.com/ahluvzg/how-to-run-effective-virtual-meetings>

NTen.org: 9 Practices for Engagement in Virtual Meetings

<https://www.nten.org/blog/9-best-practices-engagement-virtual-meetings>

Harvard: How to Lead Better Virtual Meetings

<https://hbr.org/2022/07/how-to-lead-better-virtual-meetings>

Rox Event Staff: Virtual Meeting Tools

<https://roxeventstaff.com/virtual-meetings-53-tools-where-to-find-them/>



Platforms

There are many options for hosting virtual meetings. Some of the tried and true are below:

- Slack
- Zoom
- Cisco WebX
- Microsoft Teams
- Owl Labs: [7 Best Platforms](#)
- Google Meet
- Skype
- Go To Meeting
- Jitsi



ENGAGEMENT

- [50 Ways to Increase Engagement in Virtual Meetings](#)
- [Virtual Team Building Activities](#)
- [Icebreakers for Virtual Meetings](#)

WEBSITE DESIGN

These are some resources to use as a starting point if you are interested in creating a website.

Hosting Platforms

- Wix
- Squarespace
- Shopify
- HubSpot
- WordPress
- WebFlow
- Adobe Dreamweaver
- Figma
- Google Web

Domain Names

- GoDaddy
- Canva
- Squarespace
- Bluehost
- CIRA
- Cloudflare

Design Platforms

- Canva
- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe xd
- Coolors
- Skitch
- Infogr.am

Fun Fonts

- FontJoy
- Google Fonts
- What Font
- DaFont
- Font Squirrel
- Tiff

Web Design Courses

First Nations Technology Council
<https://www.technologycouncil.ca/>

Web Development Best Practices

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21>

Website Development Process
<https://xbsoftware.com/blog/website-development-process-full-guide/>



COURSE CREATION

Resources for how to develop virtual based learning on various platforms.

Course Design

- Camtasia
- Veed
- Canva
- GetResponse
- Vimeo
- Zoom
- ConvertKit
- Stripe
- Zapier
- Beaver Builder

Choosing the Right Platform

Designing an online course is easier with the right tools. [Mighty Networks](#) offers resources to help you create, structure, and promote your course effectively.

Keep in mind that some platforms have the ability to build content within the platform and some require you to have your content pre-built.

Platforms include but aren't limited to:

- TalentLMS
- Absorb LMS
- EdApp
- Podia
- Adobe Learning Manager
- Learn Upon LMS
- Bridge
- Teachable
- Ruzuku
- LearningPool
- LevelUp LMS
- Trainer Central
- Thinkific



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Want to start a podcast? Check out Buzz Sprout.
<https://tinyurl.com/2fbk492k>

UpWork has resources to help support early app building <https://tinyurl.com/4rj35fzv>

Considering Digital Health? Check out this article from the **American Medical Association**
<https://tinyurl.com/s4xabzn4>

Tech Smith has a series on how to make engaging YouTube videos: <https://tinyurl.com/54s9r4zh>

There is a great resource guide for virtual education from Unity Health Toronto:
<https://tinyurl.com/4anfpym5>

Implementation Roadmap in Rural Settings Chapter 11 describes additional considerations for rural communities: <https://tinyurl.com/yc373rf6>

Thank You

We thank you for your continued support of the BIRCH program.

We hope you find this resource guide useful.



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