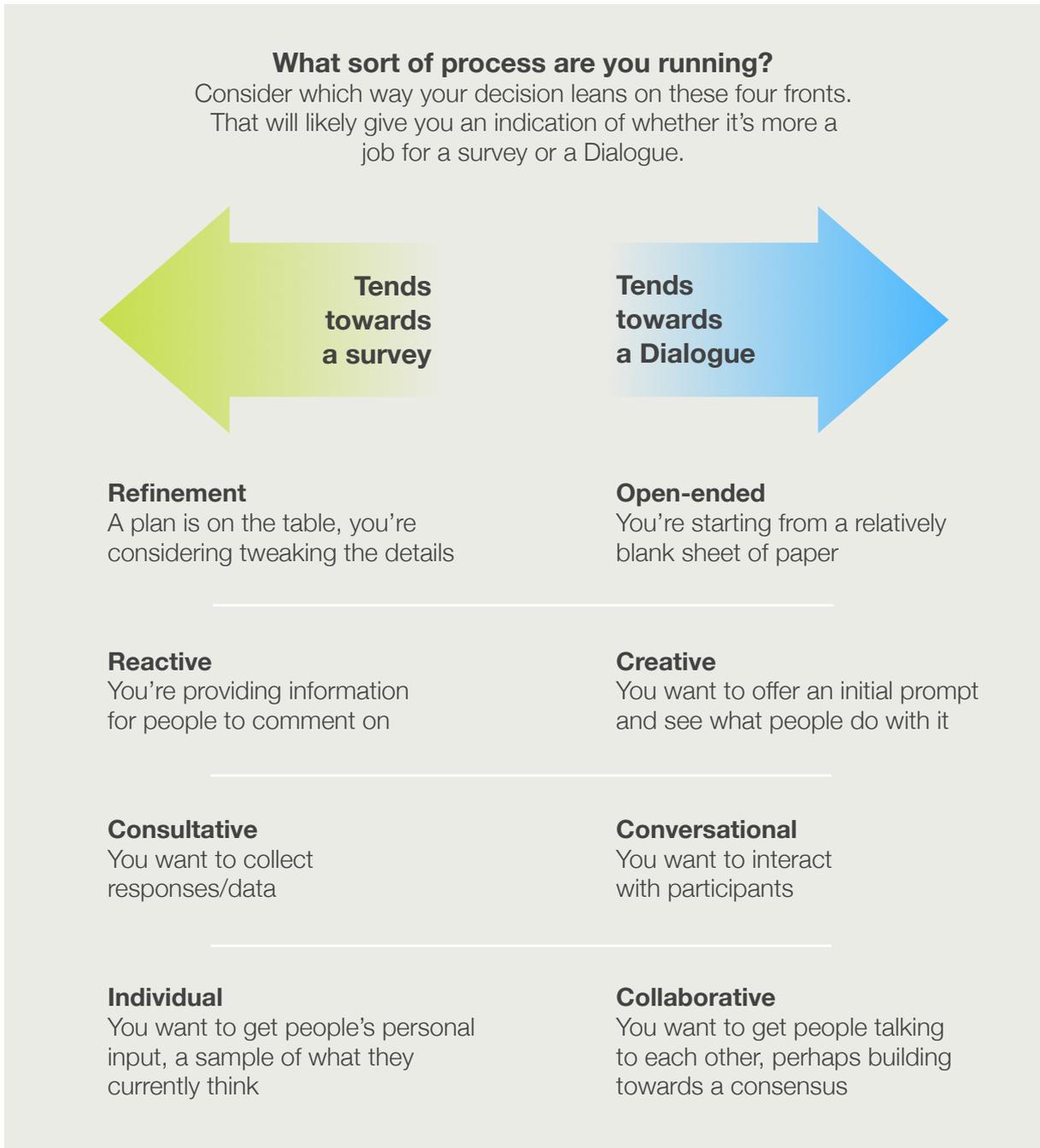


Survey vs Dialogue

You've got an upcoming decision and you want to get people's input on it. But should you use a survey or a Dialogue to do that?

The four key areas outlined below are designed to help give you a steer (though it's not definitive. It's ultimately up to your judgement to work out the most appropriate way to involve people in a decision-making process.)



(If you're not immediately sure, these more detailed questions might help you better identify which sort of process you're leaning towards.)

Area	Survey	Dialogue
<p>Refinement vs open-ended</p> <p>In general, surveys are better suited to refinement – getting feedback and detailed amendments to existing, fairly well-developed proposals.</p> <p>Whereas Dialogue lends itself to decisions that are less set in stone, where more details are still to be fixed.</p>	Refinement	Open-ended
Do you have an existing set of options for people to consider?	✓	-
Are you looking for a different or unexpected way to solve a challenge – perhaps finding an answer you hadn't even considered?	x	✓
Can you frame your challenge as 'what one thing would you...'? (e.g. 'What one thing would you change about this city?'; 'If you had to, what one thing would you cut from this budget?' etc)	-	✓
<p>Reactive vs creative</p> <p>We'd usually lean towards surveys for <i>reactive</i> contributions. That is, when you give participants a lot of information and then ask them to react to it. (Your respondents might say something like: 'The overall concept is OK but I don't like what you're suggesting at point 3'.)</p> <p>We'd suggest Dialogue when you're looking for <i>creative</i> contributions. That means providing an initial prompt, but allowing the participants to do most of the 'legwork'. (Your respondents might say something like: 'if I were in charge of the budget, I would do x'.)</p>	Reactive	Creative
Do you need to collect specific answers to questions within fixed parameters (e.g. 'how many times a week do you use this service?')?	✓	-
Are you at an early stage of the decision-making process?	-	✓
Do you want to provide your participants with lots of information, supporting documentation or prior reading material?	✓	x
<p>Participants and you</p> <p>What dynamic are you aiming for between your organisation and your participants?</p> <p>If it's quite a formal process or you want to appear as dispassionate as possible (simply collecting data to inform your own thinking), a survey is often best.</p> <p>If you would like a more conversational interaction with respondents, or the process calls for collaboration between your organisation and participants, then you should consider Dialogue.</p>	Consultative	Conversational
Do you want to be able to interact with respondents <i>during</i> the exercise?	x	✓
Is there an advantage to running a visibly open process, where people can see that you are actively engaging with feedback?	-	✓
Is it appropriate for you to talk with participants about the decision under consideration?	x	✓
Is your top priority to get a quantitative/statistical evidence base, a record of people's views that you can track in formal reporting?	✓	-
Would it be beneficial to go back and forth with participants to better understand their input?	-	✓

Participants and each other What dynamic are you aiming for between your participants? Sometimes, like with a secret ballot vote, you'll want to gather views without contributors knowing what others are thinking. That's a job for a survey. At other times, like with a public meeting, it can be beneficial for people to hear other perspectives, build on other's ideas or develop empathy for differing viewpoints. That's where Dialogue comes in.	Individual, towards data	Collaborative, towards consensus
Do you want your audience to interact directly with each other?	x	✓
Are you interested in seeing what other people think of the contributions you receive?	x	✓
Is it important that people's responses are seen as impartial/uninfluenced by peer reactions?	✓	x
Will you primarily be seeking input from a small group of expert stakeholders who could helpfully shape one another's input?	-	✓
Does the decision centre on a contested resource (e.g. a disused building which various groups want to renovate in different ways)?	-	✓

Key:

✓ = the best option for this

x = not a good option for this

- = could be used for this, but might not be the optimum solution