"In-Person", "On-line recording" and "Virtual via Zoom" judging schools survey results overview

Survey Statistics
The survey was sent to 829 individuals, 188 responded

1. Percentage of respondents' interest in participating in the 3 different formats of judging school.

A) "In-person" format

Question: What is your interest in participating in an "In-person" judging school

- 80.9 % of respondents indicated that there was "*some to significant interest".*
  - 47.3 % of respondents indicated that there was "*significant interest" (highest ranking).*
- 19.1 % of respondents felt there was "*little, if any interest".*
  - 3.7 % of respondents indicated that there was "*no interest" (lowest ranking).*

B) "On-line Recording" format

Question: What is your interest in participating in an "On-line recording" judging school

- 43.6 % of respondents indicated that there was "*some to significant interest".*
  - 15.4 % of respondents indicated that there was "*significant interest (highest ranking)".*
- 56.3 % of respondents felt there was "*little, if any interest".*
  - 18.1 % of respondents indicated that there was "*no interest" (lowest ranking.*

C) "Virtual via Zoom" format

Question: What is your interest in participating in a "Virtual – Zoom" judging school

- 63.8 % of respondents indicated that there was "*some to significant interest"*
  - 14.4 % of respondents indicated that there was "*significant interest" (highest ranking).*
- 46.3 % of respondents felt there was "*little, if any interest".*
  - 16.0 % of respondents indicated that there was "*no interest" (lowest ranking).*

2. Take aways from the survey comments

A) "In-Person" Format Judging School:

- **Key strengths**

  1. Hands-on learning is considered essential. Many believe these sensory experiences are impossible to replicate effectively through online learning

  2. Interaction with instructors improves learning

  3. Learning from fellow judges is highly valued and emerges as one of the strongest benefits of "In-person" format

  4. Networking opportunities are invaluable for finding apprenticeship opportunities, recruiting judges for fairs, etc.

  5. Practice judging at "In-Person" schools builds confidence. Respondents felt that handling real exhibits and discussing placements with instructors and peers is one of the most effective ways to prepare for judging at fairs.

- **Concerns/Challenges**

  1. Travel time and expense

  2. Scheduling conflicts - weekend commitments, childcare, work schedules, frequency of schools

OAAS comment: these concerns are raised about attending judging schools but we felt that travel time and cost and scheduling conflicts would also be an issue for the same individuals when they are traveling to fairs for judging assignments.

3. Limited availability of judging schools
4. Instructor availability and consistency
5. Certification and recertification process

OAAS comment: The lack of apprenticeship opportunities was also mentioned but would be more of a concern with the judging program in general. It was mentioned under 'Key strengths" that one of the benefits of "In-Person" judging schools was the opportunity to network with Certified Judges to secure fair apprenticeships.

- **Overall Conclusion**

The survey indicates **overwhelming support for continuing the current in-person judging school model**. Participants believe it provides the highest quality learning experience through hands-on practice, direct interaction with instructors, and valuable networking opportunities. Although travel, cost, and scheduling remain significant barriers, most respondents would rather improve access to in-person schools than replace them with online alternatives. The feedback suggests that **in-person training should remain the cornerstone of the OAAS judging program**, with virtual options serving as supplementary tools rather than substitutes.

B) "On-Line" Format Judging School

- **Key Benefits**
  1. Flexibility, convenience and accessibility – allow individuals to complete training at any time, learn at an individual pace, schedule around other commitments. And allow expanded access to those individuals that are in more remote areas.
  2. Eliminate travel time and travel costs for participants
  3. Strong support for online recertification or refresher training
  4. Recorded sessions provide valuable reference material
  5. Online delivery could expand instructor expertise
     - Allow instructors from across Ontario to teach specialized topics.
     - Increase access to categories that currently have few instructors.
     - Standardize instruction province-wide.
     - Reduce instructor travel costs and scheduling challenges.

  OAAS comment: one of our priorities is reviving the Instructor Training and developing judging school format template and instruction guides for each Category.

- **Primary Concerns**

  1. Hands-on learning cannot be replaced. Many believed this format would be unsuitable for categories requiring sensory evaluation or close inspection
  2. Loss of interaction and networking - several felt networking is one of the greatest strengths of current judging schools.
  3. Technology barriers - limited or poor internet access in many rural areas, lack of computer equipment or limited computer skills, difficulty concentrating on lengthy recordings**.**
  4. Concerns about online exams - questions on how learning could be verified and online examinations would be supervised
  5. Cost concerns – questioned why an "On-line" school could cost more and it could discourage participation

OAAS comment: It is anticipated "On-line recording" format judging schools would incur the following additional costs 1) professional videographer to ensure the required quality of video recordings; 2) software – to track individual's participation in "Online" schools and completion of a test/exam and would still require 3) a facility rental to provide sufficient space to display the different items being discussed and/or judged and 4) the hiring of instructors.

- **Overall Conclusion**

The feedback indicates that respondents see recorded online judging schools as a valuable supplementary learning tool rather than a replacement for traditional instruction. Participants appreciated the flexibility, convenience, and accessibility of learning on their own schedule, especially for recertification and reviewing material. However, the lack of interaction, networking, and hands-on experience was viewed as a significant limitation. The strongest consensus was that recorded modules are best used to support experienced judges or provide theory-based instruction, while new judges should continue to receive in-person practical training to develop the observational and sensory skills essential for effective judging.

C) "Virtual Via Zoom" Format Judging Schools

- **Key Benefits:**

1. Reduced travel time and costs (most common theme)

OAAS comment: these concerns are raised about attending judging schools but we felt that travel time and cost and scheduling conflicts could also be an issue for the same individuals traveling to fairs for judging assignments.

2. Ability to interact with instructors in real-time as compared to "On-line" format
3. Greater convenience and accessibility to judging schools because of distance or busy schedules.
4. Flexible learning opportunities and potential for hybrid learning
5. Standardized instruction and access to instructors or Categories than may not be available in some areas
6. Real-time interaction as compared to "On-line recording" format
7. Good option for refresher or recertification training

OAAS comment: Judging Program Advisory committee expressed that some of the important components and benefits of judging schools would be lost if we allowed judges to recertify via an "On-line recording" or "Virtual via Zoom" school

- Apprentice Judges network at judging schools to source fair apprenticeships with Certified Judges.
- Sharing experience and information between the Judges/participants and with Instructors on new classes, new ideas or concerns with fair competitions
- If Certified Judges were allowed to recertify via "On-line recording" or "Virtual via Zoom" judging schools, based on the current statistics, a number of "In-person" judging schools might not have enough participants to be held. This could decrease the number of opportunities for new, apprentice, and certified instructors and apprentice instructors to become qualified.

- **Concerns/challenges:**

1. Hands-on learning remains essential with Many respondents stressing that sensory experiences (feel, taste, smell, closely examine workmanship) are essential for developing competent judges in numerous Homecraft categories exhibits through gaining practical experience with real judging items.

2. Technology and internet access barriers - limited or poor internet access, lack of computer equipment or limited computer skills, difficulty concentrating on lengthy recordings, audio and video quality, home distractions during sessions.

OAAS comment: An individual would require sufficient internet access to allow them to use their video during a "Virtual via Zoom" school to ensure that they are engaged and participating – the same requirement that individuals are required to be engaged and participate in an "In-person" judging school.

3. Reduced networking

Although Zoom allows discussion, many respondents felt it cannot fully replace:

- Informal conversations.
- Networking during breaks.
- Building relationships with instructors and fellow judges.
- Connecting apprentices with experienced judges for future assignments.

OAAS comment: connecting apprentices with Certified Judges for mentoring and apprenticeships at fairs was raised by the respondents as a major concern.

4. Scheduling challenges as compared to "On-line" format

- Although travel is eliminated, Zoom requires attendance at a specific time.

5. Managing discussion and interactions effectively will require an experienced facilitator that could ensure well-managed question periods and good Zoom etiquette.

6. Concerns about online exams

Several respondents questioned:

- Why an exam is necessary.
- How exams would be supervised; Whether cheating could be prevented.

7. Cost concerns

Participants questioned proposed higher fees, noting that:

- Software costs are largely one-time expenses.

OAAS comment: from our initial investigation, it appears the cost would depend on the software purchased. It could be a time purchase, a yearly subscription; or charge for usage on a "per-person" basis.

- Recorded Zoom sessions can be reused.

OAAS comment: one of the benefits that the survey indicated for "Virtual via Zoom" over "On-line recording" was the ability of participants to interact with the Instructor – that would not be available with a pre-recorded Zoom school.

- Reduced travel and facility costs should offset technology expenses.

OAAS comment: A facility would still be required for a "Virtual via Zoom" format school to provide sufficient space to display the different items being discussed and/or judged. Travel costs could be less than if an instructor was travelling to a different district.

- Increased fees may discourage participation.

OAAS comment: It is anticipated the cost to host "Virtual via Zoom" format judging schools would incur the following additional costs 1) professional videographer to ensure the required quality of video recordings; 2) software – to track each individual's completion of a test/exam and would still include 3) facility rental costs (see above point) and 4) the hiring of instructors.