



THE SANDBOX METHOD GUIDE

University of California, Berkeley

Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces

STEPS

1. Identify the occupational groups and stakeholders you want to learn from using the Sandbox method. The purpose is to gather a diverse set of voices to gain an interdisciplinary understanding of the topics you address.
2. Once these groups are identified, identify individuals within each group that you want to invite to the Sandbox. Look for individuals who are reflective, seasoned, thoughtful, broad in views, and do not have a particular agenda they “push” (e.g., a book, theory, practice, device, etc.). Use your network to obtain referrals to Sandbox candidates.
3. Recruit 12-15 people for each Sandbox. You will be convening small breakout groups of 3-5 people per breakout for discussions, so you want to have at least 4 breakouts or 12 participants for your Sandbox. Recruit candidates through a personal email inviting them to a Sandbox, and the email should contain details of the convening:
 - a. The Sandbox is a 2-hour virtual meeting with others who are their peers to discuss questions in 3 sessions. The questions are about their work life and their predictions of the future. Questions will be asked, and then participants will be free to discuss the questions among themselves—they won’t be probed or directed in any way. The sessions will be recorded by the facilitator and transcribed to preserve the participants’ views and thoughts. Participants will receive a summary of their discussions a short time after the Sandbox. All comments are de-identified—no names will be attached to the comments.
 - b. The Sandbox is part of a larger study of the critical problems facing workers today across the national workforce. This information can be used to develop strategies to address these problems in an integrated, systemic approach.

- c. All participants will be acknowledged in the summaries and in any public presentation or publication describing the Sandboxes.
 - d. Participants will be send a Zoom link for the Sandbox set for [enter the date and time]. Ask for confirmation of their agreement to participate.
 - e. Send 1-2 follow-up emails to the participants reminding them of the Sandbox and reconfirm their participation.
4. Recruit a facilitator and enough observers to run the Sandbox. You need a facilitator to lead the meeting and provide the questions, and you need one observer for each breakout group. Instructions for the facilitators and observers are provided in this guide. Train the facilitators and observers on their role before Sandboxes begin.
5. Prior to the Sandbox, send to participants a biographical form to complete before the Sandbox. The form is provided in this guide. Prepare short bios for all participants and the facilitator so that participants are “introduced” to their groups before the Sandbox. (Keep all the bios for all the participants for the summary report and for the preparation of a collection of Sandbox summaries at the end of the study.)
6. On the day of the Sandbox, the facilitator opens the Sandbox Zoom link and admits all participants and observers. The facilitator welcomes participants and begins the Sandbox Zoom.
 - a. Agenda for the meeting is presented.
 - b. Participants are encouraged to be generous with their thoughts and views. They should allow people to finish their comments before another comment starts. Try not to interrupt. Remind them that their comments will be recorded but they will be keep anonymous and de-identified to encourage engagement.
 - c. Announce that they will participate in three discussions: the first in response to a short briefing of facts that cover a range of topics, the second and third discussions will be in small breakouts which have been pre-arranged. They will be asked a different set of questions for each breakout. At the end, they will be asked to share their takeaways from their discussions.
7. Begin the Sandbox with the short briefing. At the conclusion of the briefing, tell participants they will have 20 minutes to discuss their thoughts about the briefing. Put the questions they could consider in the chat for their reference. Facilitator and Observers are quiet for 20 minutes. The session is recorded.
8. At the end of 20 minutes, end the discussion by moving to the breakouts. Participants and one observer are assigned to each breakout. Participants are sent to their breakout. Observers record the discussion using a cell phone recording program. The questions are presented to the participants on a Whiteboard in the breakout session or in their chat. After 20 minutes, the facilitator brings all participants back to the main Zoom room.

9. Without delay, the participants are sent to their second breakout for another set of questions. Participants and observers go to their breakout. The mix of participants in each breakout changes from the first breakout to provide an opportunity for a different set of participants to be in each breakout. The observers record the discussion. The questions are posted on the Whiteboard or in the chat. After 20 minutes, the facilitator brings all participants back to the main Zoom room.
10. When everyone has returned, the facilitator asks all participants to take 5 minutes to write down their takeaways from the Sandbox discussions. No directions are given about what to think about or to write down. After 5 minutes or so when it appears that participants are ready, the facilitator asks participants to share their takeaways. The facilitator records this discussion. No direction is given to how the participants share their takeaways. The facilitator and observers (who also attend) are quiet for 20 minutes.
11. At the conclusion of sharing session, the facilitator thanks the participants for their participation. They are reminded that they will receive a summary of their thoughts and views from the discussions. The Sandbox now ends.
12. Recordings from the three sessions and the takeaway sharing are provided to the facilitator by email. The recordings are transcribed and lightly edited to remove unnecessary words and de-identified. The set of thoughts and views expressed in the Sandbox discussions can then be analyzed in a variety of ways at the researcher's discretion. Examples could be:
 - a. Identifying topics raised in each of the Sandboxes and then compiling all comments across Sandboxes by topic.
 - b. Applying a content analysis to discussions to identify key problems identified both across Sandboxes (common problems identified) and unique problems identified within each Sandbox (particular to a specific occupation or industry).
13. Send recordings to UC Berkeley Interdisciplinary Center for Healthy Workplaces to add your Sandboxes to the growing database of thoughts and views of occupational groups and stakeholders from around the world. This database will be continuously updated and summarized periodically to track the stream of information coming through the Sandboxes.

SANDBOX

Current Trends Briefing

Social Trends

- People are choosing to live where they are happiest, not where they work. (Forbes)
- High quality talent demands location independence (Forbes)
- Remote work helps working mothers only slightly because most child and home care work still falls to women (NYT).
- Women tend to take more flexible jobs, but such jobs contribute to a gender pay gap. (NYT)
- 53% of remote workers say it's harder to feel connected to their coworkers (Gallup)
- Workers' attitudes toward work is changing; Quitting (or quiet quitting) isn't just about the money—it is work-life balance, professional development, or purpose that will bring employees back to work (McKinsey).

Working

- 32% of workers want to work full-time remote; 59% want to work part-time remote; 9% want full-time on-site (Gallup)
- Failing to offer flexible work arrangements is a significant risk to an organization's hiring, employee engagement, performance, employee well-being and retention strategies. (Gallup)
- Eight in 10 remote-capable employees expect to work hybrid or fully remote (Gallup).
- Executives expect the amount of fully remote and hybrid employees to increase and onsite workers to decrease over the next five years (Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank, University of Chicago, Stanford).
- Psychological safety (ability to take interpersonal risks without negative consequences) is one of strongest predictors of team effectiveness. (HBR)

Urban Trends

- Cities with highest growth: Las Vegas, Phoenix, Austin, Tampa. Why: low cost, affordable housing, low crime, good climate, good schools. (Colliers)

- Population leaving urban areas in the northeast, Seattle, SF Bay Area, Los Angeles, San Diego, Chicago, Minneapolis (Colliers).

The Environment

- Carbon emissions are back to 2019 levels due to more non-work travel despite reductions in commuting (Scientific American).
- Part-time teleworking could lead to a net increase in energy consumption due to growing distances between the workplace and home (Forbes).

Labor Movement

- Union membership is currently at 10% of the national workforce, with the highest rate among public sector employees (32%), and less (6%) among private sector employees (BLS 2023).
- Unionization rates have remained largely unchanged (BLS).

Legal Trends

- The EEOC filed 143 discrimination or harassment lawsuits in fiscal year 2023, more than 50% increase over filings in 2022. This increase is expected to continue to rise (SHRM).
- Workplace violence (physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior at the work site) is increasing. Of the 5,333 fatal workplace injuries that occurred in the US in 2019, 761 were cases of intentional injury by another person (BLS).

Workforce

- 9% of US adults earned money through an online gig platform (independent contractor, freelancer, temp, contingent worker) in the last 12 months (Upwork).
- 16.4% of the US workforce participates in the gig economy, many adding gig work to their full-time employment (Pew Research).
- Immigrants make up nearly 20% of the US workforce, up from 17% in 2021, in response to labor demand and a low unemployment rate (BLS).
- The size of the US workforce is shrinking overall due to retirements, lower population birthrates, and limited immigration (DOL).

Health & Wellness

- 120,000 people die unnecessarily each year due to bad working conditions, costing over \$1B in excess healthcare cost annually (Pfeffer, “Dying for a Paycheck”)
- 71% of workers say remote work helps balance their work and personal life, but it comes at the cost of increased burnout from digital communication tools (Forbes)
- In a 2021 survey 76% of U.S. workers reported at least one symptom of a mental health condition (anxiety, depression), up from 69% in 2019 (Mind Share).
- 81% of workers say that how employers support mental health will be an important consideration when they look for future work (APA 2022 Work and Well-Being Survey).
- Job strain (high job demand, low control) is linked to the development of hypertension and cardiovascular disease and can lead to premature death (Healthy Work Campaign).

Technology

- AI is making its way into how organizations operate:
 - o creating sustainable, long-term talent pipelines through better matches between job candidates and open positions;
 - o improving the ways of working by implementing AI-enabled integrated systems to foster a collaborative, data-driven, and fun work environments;
 - o making faster, data-driven structural changes by identifying areas for improvement in spans of control, removing duplications, and redistributing resources (McKinsey Global Survey on AI).

Work Futures Sandbox Facilitator and Observer Orientation

Welcome to the Team!

As a Facilitator or Observer, your role is crucial in holding discussions and capturing valuable insights without your prompting or commentary from our expert sessions. Here's a quick guide to help you prepare for your role:

Sandbox Preparation

- **Setting:** Choose a quiet location where you can play audio without headphones. We suggest using a computer or tablet to join the meeting as most record using their phones.
- **Join Time:** Please log in at 9:45, 15 minutes before the Sandbox starts, to ensure everyone is set up and ready before participants arrive.

During the Breakout Sessions

- **Role:** Your primary task is to let attendees lead the conversation. Be ready to answer questions and remind participants of the discussion questions only when necessary. The participants can see the questions during each breakout.
- **Recording:** Both the Facilitator and Observer must record each breakout session. This redundancy ensures that no data is lost. Use your phone for recording. We recommend using the pre-installed Recorder app for ease and reliability.
- **Facilitator:** In addition to recording audio during breakout rooms, you will also be asked to write notes during both large group and breakout discussions.
- **Observer:** Ensure that you are recording both breakout sessions and take notes.

After the Sandbox

- **Submit Recordings and Notes:** Email all recordings and any notes you took during the session to _____.

Thank you for your dedication and contributions to making our sessions productive and insightful. Your work ensures that we capture the full value of our expert discussions.

Please reach out to _____ if you have any questions or need further assistance. We look forward to your active participation and leadership in the Sandboxes!

Question Set for Full Group:

1. What is your reaction to this presentation? Do you agree/disagree?
2. What other emerging problems should we bring into this discussion?
3. What have we been doing that's not working anymore?

First Breakout:

1. What is the current state in your area of expertise?
2. What do you know about what you think will happen or what you think will be driving the future?
3. What questions need to be answered?

Second Breakout

1. How are you preparing for the future?
2. What do you expect to happen in the future?
3. What general thoughts do you have about the direction going forward?

Sandbox Agenda (example)

10:00 General Introduction to the Sandbox and its Purpose

- Introduction of The Work Group
- Introduction of Sandbox participants
- Description of the Sandbox

10:10 Opening remarks—the current state of work, worker, and workplace experience

- Setting the stage for discussions
- Where we want to go with Sandbox discussions
- Where we want to end up: a new combined vision of the future of work that includes new forms of work, changed expectations of work-life, and flexible places of work, and makes room for everybody

10:20 First set of questions for discussion: open forum (20 minutes)

10:40 Second set of questions for breakout groups (20 minutes)
11:00 Third set of questions for breakout groups (20 minutes)
11:20 Individual Participant Recording points and ideas (10 minutes)
11:30 Sharing of ideas from breakout sessions (25 minutes)
11:55 Wrap up and next steps (5 minutes)
12:00 Adjourn

Contacts

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<https://healthyworkplaces.berkeley.edu/work-futures-initiative>