**Common Outcomes & Indicators – Common Tool Questions (December, 2013)**

**Basic Needs**

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**PREAMBLE**

***What Are the Common Tool Questions?***

We have developed a collection of questions that address:

* A mix of questions that will suit a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods.
* Flexibility of how questions can be asked (such as survey or interview, some questions also allow for staff observation, creative methods, group discussion/reflection) – so you can decide what the best fit is for you and the people in your program.
* Language and format that will work across program areas and populations
* Feasibility in terms of response time for participants and staff

For each indicator, we have presented at least one closed question and at least one open-ended question.

Each question is written at a ‘mid-level’ of specificity, so that it can apply across multiple program areas that use the same common indicator for which the question is written.

For a particular common indicator, you may wish to choose the question(s) for that indicator that is (are) most relevant to your program. This would be similar to what you now do when you choose the most relevant indicators for a common outcome. Not all questions will be relevant to all agencies/programs.

***Where Do the Questions Come From?***

All questions have at least ‘face validity’ – they appear to measure the intent of the indicator. In some cases, we drew from agencies’ existing tools for content.

Many questions come from other sources (such as existing tools); others were developed ‘from scratch’ using general principles of writing evaluation questions.

Some questions/tools come from research literature or population surveys, and have had further reliability and validity testing done. Some of the more ‘formal’ questions/tools from literature are public domain (Nobody’s Perfect Parenting Program, Community Capacity Building Tool – both from Public Health Agency of Canada), but others are copyrighted. In the latter cases, we used broad dimensions from these tools in our questions and refer to the copyrighted tool. If agencies or their funders wish to order these tools, there would be a fee to purchase. (We understand that some agencies may already be using some of these measures for their own evaluation purposes.)

We made some trade-off decisions for some questions, with regard to how direct & specific versus how familiar a format is (to participants) and quick to use.

***How Can You Use These Questions with Your Existing Agency Tools?***

These questions are intended to strengthen your already existing data collection methods and tools (not replace them). That is, questions can be embedded within tools you are already using.

We have created a sample ‘mock survey’ that demonstrates how questions can be selected and inserted into an existing tool. This type of process will allow agencies to insert ‘common questions’ into their existing tools (surveys, interviews, etc), so agency staff can include some of these common tools with their own agency-specific questions.

The instructions and informed consent information in the ‘mock survey’ tool can be adapted to other methods (such as one-to-one or group interviews, creative methods, staff observation).

If you use any of these questions, please keep the wording provided, so as not to change the measurement intent of the question. However, do feel free to make minor changes to fit your context; for example substitute the word “client” or “user” for “participant”, if you wish. For many questions, you will need to insert the name of your program in the question – where you see [program] in brackets. For some questions, you can choose words that make the most sense for your program (for example, choosing among “program”, “service”, “resource” or some other term that fits).

***Do You Have to Use These Questions?***

Your funding liaison person will let you know if there are certain questions that may be especially useful to ask your participants, and if there is any expectation about reporting on particular questions.

Try out the questions that you like best for your program, and let your funder know which of those questions work well and which ones may still need some work or change. Agency feedback has been integral to the whole process of developing the common outcomes, common indicators, and now the common tool questions. You or someone in your agency may have participated in some of those discussions. Your feedback is valued.

***When Would You Ask These Questions?***

We are aware that there will likely be variation in the times at which agencies can ask questions or make observations of participants. For some agencies pre (BEFORE) and post (AFTER) measurement is feasible, but for others, it is not. Some agencies may decide to slightly modify BEFORE and AFTER to early-program and late-program (we still consider that BEFORE-AFTER). For some agencies, it may work best to ask questions or make observations at one point in time, at/near the end of the program – either because participants would not be able to provide an accurate BEFORE-program measure (e.g., when self-rating their own skills), or because of concerns about resource limitations for staff, response burden for participants, or participant life circumstances that limit multiple measures (e.g., transience). In some cases, it may be feasible to ask participants AFTER to reflect back on how they were doing BEFORE the program; in other cases only an AFTER measure may be practical to gather. We considered these challenges when we were developing and revising these questions, and our NOTES throughout the document suggest options (and in some cases, limitations).

***What Are the Supplementary Questions?***

While we were going through the process of developing these questions, we sometimes thought of other questions that did not quite measure the indicator, or that went beyond the indicator. We have included these questions as Supplementary Questions (under green headings, and in a different font), because agencies may find them of interest for their purposes, beyond COG reporting.

***How to Navigate This Document?***

The main part of each question in bolded blue, as is each question number. Response categories, prompts, and other instructions or comment are in black type. Any notes we have about a question begin with NOTE: in red. To avoid repetition of notes within an outcome section, we often refer you back to an earlier note in that section.

The questions you have received are for the common outcomes/indicators for your program area, as determined with your funder. Please note that because there are often multiple program areas that report on the same outcome, you may see questions that do not seem relevant to your program, That is OK; those questions will be more relevant to another program area that reports on the same outcomes/indicators.

If you are interested in also using some of the questions that go with other common outcomes/indicators outside your program area, please ask your funder for the version(s) of this document that covers the other outcomes/indicators of interest to you.

|  | **Common Outcomes** | **Indicators** | **Tool Questions** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| F | F. Participants are supported in meeting their basic needs*(Basic needs)* | 1. Participants access nutritious food for themselves or their children (e.g, fruits, vegetables, multiple food groups) 2. Participants access housing that is(1) safe, (2) adequate, (3) affordable, (4) permanent -- in either independent or supported living arrangements, as appropriate to their needs (e.g., their physical, mental or social health; economic situation) 3. Participants access clothing for themselves or their children 4. Participants access transportation for themselves or their children 5. Participants access resources that address safety (e.g., protection from physical emotional, or financial abuse; assistance with daily living tasks as needed) 6. Participants access resources that address mental health (e.g., counselling) 7. Participants access resources that address social isolation (e.g., group activities, outings, home visits) 8. Participants access resources that address financial issues (e.g., employment opportunities, career counselling, financial literacy) | **NOTE:** Because the questions in this section are about supports participants access once they are in the program, retrospective (AFTER) questions are likely most relevant and feasible – especially when many participants accessing basic needs are transient and seeing them more than once is rare (according to agencies). **Questions refer to a through h as a group**, because all those items represent basic needs.  **NOTE:** For questions that refer to programs/services/ resources, use the word (or something similar) that is most familiar to your participants.  **NOTE:** The firsttwo questions below are designed for situations where you need to collect data quickly from participants who may be hard to follow up with. Agencies have said they are not always able to gather data from all participants, if participants are transient. You will need to decide what works best with participants who are unlikely to return. For example, would they be willing to do a very short phone chat 2-3 days after you see them? Would they be willing to receive a text message? Or, is your only option to gather data while the participants are still on site?  **(Staff observation of participant):**  **(a-g.1)** Program staff document instances of participants requesting or using any of the categories of programs/services/resources listed in the chart in a-g.4 below, that pertain to Indicators **a through h –** when such direct observation is possible (such as when the services are offered directly by the program or by other programs in the same agency/on same site)[[1]](#footnote-2)  **(Open-ended alternative):** This could be used for very quick interview or text message  **(a-g.2) What kinds of programs/services/resources have you used in the [insert timeframe of interest]?**  **Open-ended elaboration of above question a-g.2):**  **(a-g.3) Which of these programs/ services/resources gave you the help you needed?**  (This question goes a little beyond the indicator, but could be useful to elaborate on access. This question could  be asked after either a-g.2 above, or a-g.4 below.)  ***Prompt*** *as needed*: Where did you go (particular agencies or groups)? Who helped you?  **NOTE:** Code responses by categories **a through h** in column to left, plus any additional categories of interest from the chart in Question (a-g.4) – as well as any more specific types of support mentioned (e.g., types of agencies, people).  **NOTE**: The chart in a-g.4 below includes categories relevant to all of the indicators **a through h.**  You can shorten the chart, by only including the checklist categories that are relevant to your program. You may decide to just focus on categories relevant to **a through h,** or you may want to include other categories too. The chart could be done in **survey or interview with participant**. (If interview, omit the “Please check… all that apply….”).  **(a-g.4) What kinds of programs/services/resources have you used in the [insert timeframe of interest]? (Please check all that apply, in the shaded box to the right of each type of resource.)**   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Program/Service/Resource** | **√ if Yes** | **Program/Service/Resource** | **√ if Yes** | **Program/Service/Resource** | **√ if Yes** | | Aboriginal services |  | Abuse - Safety and prevention related to abuse/violence (such as intimate partner violence, child abuse, elder abuse) |  | Citizenship and Immigration |  | | Community social connections (such as coffee groups, community social gathering events, group social outings) |  | Disability Supports (such as AISH, PDD, assistance with activities of daily living) |  | Early childhood programs/services (such as child care, preschool, services for special needs) |  | | Emergency services (ambulance, fire, police) |  | Employment –related (such as such as assessment for employment capabilities, career counselling, job search/referral, training (education or on-the-job) |  | Ethno-cultural services (such as support for new Canadians with language, employment, community connections; activities to connect people with same cultural background, cross-cultural activities) |  | | Financial counselling/money management (such as budgeting, banking) |  | Food (multiple food groups – including fruits and vegetables – from sources such as food bank, community kitchen, good food box, community garden) |  | Functional assessments (such as development, skills, behaviours) |  | | Health (such as family doctor, dental care, eye care, public health centre, health information health benefits/coverage available for people with low incomes) |  | Housing supports (such as affordable housing options, rent supplements, landlord-tenant information) |  | Income Supports (such as SFI) |  | | Legal or protective services (such as Legal Aid, child protection, restraining orders ) |  | Libraries |  | Mental health/emotional support (such as counselling, practical supports for daily living as needed) |  | | Parenting programs or information (such as child growth and development, healthy parenting strategies, dealing with child behaviour issues, family functioning) |  | Places of worship/spiritual support |  | Recreation/leisure (facilities, programs, groups for people with common hobbies or interests, sports or physical activity groups) |  | | Relationship support (such as counseling, healthy decision making) |  | Schools |  | Shopping assistance/advice (such as sources of affordable food, clothing, household goods, toys) |  | | Transportation |  | Other (please specify) |  | None of these |  |   **NOTE:** Question a-g.3 above could be asked here, for further elaboration. |

1. NOTE: We have developed a common resource list to fit several indicators that are about resources. The question that goes with the list varies somewhat by indicator. For this particular indicator, program staff would report on responses in the list that pertain to a through h above – but may also document other types of resources accessed by participants if they wish. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)