

## Using questionnaires and surveys

**Note:** *This fact sheet provides further guidance to that in “Explaining the difference your project makes”, available on our website.*

Forms can be for beneficiaries or for those running or working in your project. They can ask different kinds of questions:

### **Factual questions with a yes/no or numerical answer**

These are usually questions about behaviour or circumstance e.g. Are you registered with a GP?

Example: questions for young people:

1. Are you involved in any community activities? Yes/No
2. Have you been cautioned or arrested by the police in the last 3 months?  
Yes/No
3. If yes, how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

Example: Questions for families:

1. Do you recycle at the moment? Yes/No
2. If no, why not?
  - Never thought about it but would be interested
  - Too much hassle to separate rubbish
  - Too far to recycling point
  - No interest in recycling
  - Other (what? \_\_\_\_\_ )

### **Questions answered on a scale:**

Questions that use a scale of possible answers are often used when measuring outcomes, to show change over time. One commonly used question form is to have a list of statements and ask people whether they agree or disagree.

#### **Example: Young people’s project**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly agree
I can trust the workers in this project					
There are interesting activities for me to get involved with in my community					
I feel positive about what the future holds for me					

You can use the same sort of scale for questions about how often someone experiences or does something or how well they can do various tasks (such as excellently, well, not very well, needs work).

When asking questions about sensitive subjects, it can be helpful to word questions in someone else's voice rather than directly.

**Example:** Instead of asking the mother of an autistic child "How often do you feel unable to cope?", you could say:

The following are some of the experiences of other parents of autistic children. How often do you experience them?

	All or most of the time	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
Feeling unable to cope				
Isolation				
Worried about the future				

You may have a scale for each of your intended outcomes, with a minimum of 3 and maximum of 10 points. These could be very open, with beneficiaries or workers simply choosing a scale point.

**Example: Training for management committee members**

Before and after the training, people can be asked the following:

On a scale of 1 to 5, how knowledgeable are you about the following, where 5 is very knowledgeable and 1 is having no knowledge at all?

- Your duties as a MC member:      1      2      3      4      5
- Strategic planning:                      1      2      3      4      5
- Fundraising:                                      1      2      3      4      5

These open scales will show how many people feel they have increased their knowledge, which is a key outcome. However, they are highly subjective; two people with similar levels of knowledge could give quite different responses.

Scales can be made more objective, and more helpful, by describing the likely behaviour and attitudes at each point on the scale, so that there is more consistency in how people choose between a 2 or 3, for example. Writing such scales also helps describe how change happens and can be helpful to see where beneficiaries are on a defined journey.

**Example:**

Strategic planning

1) I don't know anything about strategic planning	2) I have some idea what strategic planning is	2) I understand what strategic planning is but don't know how to go about it	3) I have a reasonable idea how to develop a strategic plan, what should go into it and how	5) I know how to develop a strategic plan, what should be in it and how to use it in the
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			to use it but there are some things that I need help on	governance of my organisation
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Wherever possible, outcomes forms should be used as part of your work, such as part of assessment or reviews of progress, or to help keep track of how you are doing. If they are helpful, they will be used well and not be seen as an added piece of paperwork or burden.

There is evidence that discussing and agreeing where beneficiaries are on defined scales can be very helpful in focusing discussion, raising issues and showing change, especially in projects where workers and beneficiaries work together over time.

If you have a number of scales, try arranging them in the shape of a wheel, and/or joining up the points agreed at the start and review/ end. This gives a visual picture of progress which has proved helpful and popular with many groups of beneficiaries.

There may be advantages to using the same forms as other projects, or those found on the internet, especially those already tried and tested. However, do decide on your intended outcomes first and take care that the forms will give you the information you need.

### **Recording of observations by those running or working in a project**

This may be the main method to track outcomes in an environmental project, for example. They are forms to be completed by those running or working in a project. They can be used where there are no direct beneficiaries to ask questions, or to give another viewpoint. They can include scales and would usually be completed based on what workers see happening at different points in time.

#### ***Example: Community recycling***

Workers may want to record the following during the course of the project:

- number of people at each event held
- whether recycling points are kept tidy and are well-used

#### ***Example: Young people***

Workers may want to record the following:

- incidents anti-social behaviour or conflict within the youth club
- the extent to which young people are engaging with workers
- young people being proactive and/or taking responsibility

You may also want to draw on other information that is recorded within your project. This might include, for example, registers of people attending training or events.

### **Tips for tracking your outcomes**

The following can help you track your outcomes in ways that are helpful and match how your project works, and without adding too much paperwork:

***Make your outcome tracking part of the work you do***

Your forms can be used to give you information on what someone needs, how things are in a community or family, evaluate your training or encourage a group to discuss progress, for example.

***Involve your beneficiaries in your outcome tracking where possible:***

- to decide on your outcomes and outcome indicators
- in consultation when developing forms
- in asking or supporting others to answer the outcomes questions
- to test out draft forms.

BIG Lottery and other funders are interested in user involvement in tracking and evaluation.

***Consider using a sample to track outcomes***

If you work with large numbers of people, try selecting a sample at random.

***Keep things simple***

Make sure you don't collect any more information than you need.

***Be creative – try using visual images pictures, or actions***

Try and find ways of tracking outcomes that that are in keeping with your project and the way you work.

***Use new forms for a trial few weeks or months***

To check they are easy enough to complete and give the information you need

***Consider early on how to analyse your outcomes information***

Adding outcome information across the project to calculate averages is not complex and can be done using Excel spreadsheets or even by hand in a small project. However, if you have a database or IT system, it is best to add in a way to analyse your outcomes data.

***Explain outcome tracking and confidentiality***

Most people are happy to give personal information if you explain clearly and honestly what the information is for and how you will use it.