

## Questionnaire Planning Guide

Please use this Planning Guide in the first stage of designing your questionnaire. It is primarily designed with the written questionnaire in mind, but can be used when planning interview questions.

Item	✓/NA
<b>The question to be answered</b>	
<b>Do you have clear, concise documented <u>project</u> aim/s and objectives agreed to by all stakeholders?</b>	
<p><b>Do you have objectives for the <u>evaluation/research</u>?</b> Is the objective to evaluate/research a process, an impact or an outcome? Is it to gain information about demographic and health characteristics of a population? Are the terms used in the objectives for the questionnaire clear and unambiguous? Are terms defined e.g. What is user dissatisfaction? What is physical activity, healthy eating etc? Will the respondents interpret these terms in the same way as you do?</p>	
<p><b>What kind of information do you want?</b> Is it attitudes / beliefs / opinions, knowledge, behaviour, attributes (personal characteristics – age, gender etc)? What do you really want to know: has a need been met; has a project been implemented as planned; has the population changed their behaviour in response to an intervention; did the education program work; what were the participants/clients experiences of the program or service; have risk factors been reduced?</p>	
<p><b>Which method of information collection is the best for your project?</b> Is it a questionnaire, an interview, focus group, collecting physical data, observation etc. The questionnaire may be part of a whole range of tools you might use to get the information you need.</p>	
<b>The questionnaire</b>	
<p><b>Work plan</b> Do you have a detailed work plan for developing, implementing, analysing and reporting on the questionnaire including all aspects below? The work plan should include a timeline for all activities.</p>	
<p><b>What is your target group?</b> Respondent characteristics define the types of questions you ask, words you use, concepts you can explore and methods you can use. For example you would ask different questions about computer use to programmers and the general public. Ask yourself - what are their characteristics e.g. age group, literacy level, culture, health. If you don't know your population consider using a focus group to explore this before writing the questions.</p>	
<p><b>How many respondents do you need (sample size)?</b> Will you include everyone (e.g. all those who attended a single diabetes education program) or is the population so big (e.g. all people tested for diabetes in general practices in Canberra) that you need to take a sample (e.g. people tested for diabetes in 10 general practices)? Remember you need a certain number of respondents to be confident that your findings represent the population you are interested in. You may need to consult a statistician / epidemiologist or use software (available online) to calculate this.</p>	
<p><b>Is there an existing tool that you could use?</b> Using an existing tool saves time and resources, however, you need to be sure it meets your needs, whether it has been validated for your target group, or if it a good tool (review it against your questionnaire checklist). Do you need permission, training or specific qualifications to use an existing tool? Do you need to pay for it? Remember to acknowledge that it is existing tool and who developed it.</p>	
<p><b>How are you going to administer the questionnaire?</b> Will you use a paper or electronic questionnaire or will it be personally administered? If personally, who will do this, do they have the necessary skills. Will respondents have computer access /feel comfortable with electronic questionnaires? Consider literacy level, cultural considerations. How will you contact the respondents? (e.g. membership database, clinic/education session attendees), comparative costs of each method, ease of administration and how you will analyse the data.</p>	
<p><b>How will you maximise the number of people completing the questionnaire?</b> See questionnaire design checklist. Include cover letter, second mail out or reminder, include stamped addressed envelope if mailed out. Consider advertising the study (introductory letter, newspaper, posters etc.) Timing - avoid December, are school holidays, particular day of the week an issue for your target group,?</p>	
<p><b>How will you manage the data?</b> Where and how will data be stored? Who will have access to it? Confidentiality, privacy and security must be considered. Data storage costs may need to be included in the budget for the project. How long will you need to keep the data? (This varies with type of data and age of respondents i.e. data from children needs to be kept longer).</p>	

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<b>The questionnaire continued</b>	
<b>How will you analyse the data?</b> Considering this during the planning phase means that the data collected is more likely to be useful and saves time. Will your data be descriptive only or will you use more complex methods. Will a standard program such as Word or Excel be adequate or do you need to use statistical packages such as SPSS, Stata (in which case you may need to consult an epidemiologist/statistician/researcher at this stage).	
<b>How will you present the data?</b> Will you use text, graphs or tables? Do graphs / tables add to the presentation? Are they needed? Will there be other data collection methods? Will the questionnaire data be presented separately or will the information from all sources be synthesised and integrated (data triangulation)?	
<b>Do you need funding to undertake the questionnaire?</b> Do you need to budget for developing, piloting, producing (printing, uploading onto an internet survey program), administering, analysing or reporting on the questionnaire? Do you need to budget for statistical advice (on sample size, type of statistical analysis) or data storage?	
<b>How will you disseminate your findings?</b> Internally only or externally? If you have been funded for the project you need to meet reporting requirements of the funding body (e.g. organisation's board, government etc.) and others (e.g. ethics committee). Will you complete a written report, conduct information sessions for staff/respondents, write a letter to respondents, write papers for peer-reviewed journals or a newsletter?	
<b>Have you allowed sufficient time to draft the questionnaire?</b>	
<b>Have you planned to Pre-test the Questionnaire (Vital!)?</b> Allow plenty of time for this phase and be realistic about how long it takes. Ask colleagues to review, select people similar to the response group, use the same methods e.g. same time, paper or computer based. Ask them to feed back about both the format (e.g. directions, length, enough space for responses) and the content (questions clear, appropriate for target group). In your review of their responses consider whether they interpreted the questions as expected. Try analysing the data and revise as necessary.	
<b>Have you considered the need for approvals?</b> These could be ethics or survey committees, funding bodies, departmental heads, organisational staff/board, academic supervisors. Approval is part of the risk management process for your project.	

## Acknowledgement

This Questionnaire Planning Checklist concept was modelled on Paul, CL, Redman, S & Sanson-Fisher, RW, 1997, 'The development of a Checklist of Content and Design Characteristics for Printed Health Education Materials', *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* 1997; 7(3):153-9.

## Definitions

**Process Evaluation** 'The aims of process evaluation are to understand how the program worked, what happened in 'real life' and how people reacted to it' (Nutbeam & Bauman 2006, p41).

**Impact evaluation** 'is concerned with the assessment of the immediate effects of program and this usually corresponds with the program objective' (eg changes in health awareness, knowledge or behaviour\*) (Hawe et al 1990, p102).

**Outcome evaluation** is concerned with the...longer-term effects of the program and this usually corresponds with the goals (e.g. health outcomes\*) (Hawe et al 1990, p102). \*examples added to the quotes.

## References

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