



# LDAT Alternative Evaluation Methods.

## Surveys are not always the right tool to collect data for your process and impact measures.

There might be occasions when the activities delivered through your Community Action Plan (CAP) are not suited to surveys because they're more creative or innovative, or your community is culturally or linguistically diverse.

In these cases, there are alternative approaches you can use, including:

- asking questions without surveys
- running focus groups and discussions
- observing, capturing reactions and reviewing materials.

These approaches collect data in different ways, so consider:

- who you need to collect data from
- issues of anonymity and privacy
- cultural appropriateness
- the time and resources available.

The other aspect to consider is the difference between **what you need to know in order to demonstrate impacts** (the indicators provided in the [Evaluation Measures Guide](#) are good examples of this) and **what is nice to know**.

Remember that you may only have people's attention for a short time, so you should prioritise what you are capturing.

## Asking questions without surveys

Sometimes a survey isn't the best way to capture data from your activities.

Below are some different ways that you can adapt, instead of asking traditional survey questions. Remember - they should still **link to your process or impact measures**.

<b>Card sort</b>	Print each of your activity topics or outcomes on cards. If you have multiple topics ('AOD harm', and 'Preventative measures') print enough for each participant to have one of each. Then, ask attendees to sort cards into different piles that reflect your measures. For example, 'I learnt a lot', 'I learnt a little', 'I didn't learn anything'. Each participant can sort their own pile, which you can then count afterwards to <b>measure your impact</b> . Simple key words or images can be used, which can help in overcoming any literacy challenges.
<b>Charts</b>	Write your questions at the top of a flip chart or piece of butcher's paper and ask participants to write their answers on Post-It Notes and place them underneath. Your questions should relate to your <b>impact measures</b> .
<b>Container votes</b>	This could be done by returning materials (e.g. pens) or equipment at the end of the day, or using tokens. You can use this method as a way of asking people to <b>indicate the extent to which something occurred</b> . For example: When returning your pens ask participants to place them in one of the three cups. Each cup is labelled differently: 'learned a lot', 'learned a little', 'didn't learn anything'.



Learned a lot

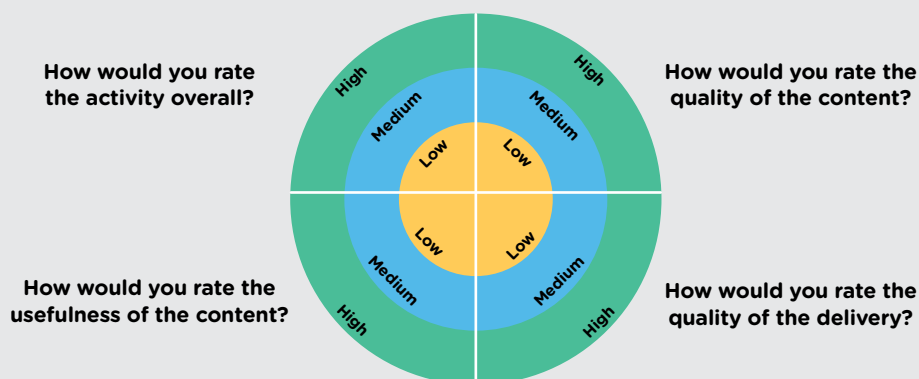


Learned a little



Didn't learn anything

**Dartboards** A **dartboard** is drawn on a piece of butcher's paper, or printed on a large piece of paper (e.g. A3 sized). Each section represents an answer to a question from the centre to the outside circle. These should be labelled to match your **impact measures**. For example, if your target is '50% of participants rated the quality of the content as high', the labels should be 'high', 'medium', 'low'.



**Show of hands** In this method, the facilitator **asks for a response to a question or series of questions on the spot**. For example: "I am going to ask you to show me how you found this workshop - whether it was useful, not useful or very useful. First, not useful? Put up your hands if you found this workshop overall was not useful for you."

**Line ups** Ask participants to line up against the wall to capture which answer they feel best represents their opinion. You can also do this at the end of the event – the benefit of this approach is that you can take a photo as a record so that you can report on the outcome later. Set fixed points that match your **measure** (e.g. one corner is 'learnt nothing', the middle is 'learnt a little', the other corner is 'learnt a lot').

This is useful for answering a single post-event question, such as: "How much did you learn from today?"

## Focus groups and discussions

Focus groups or informal discussions are another way of collecting data against your **impact measures**.

There are some important principles for running these data collection activities:

- Make sure your participants understand the purpose of the activity.
- Conduct the discussion in a comfortable space, free from distraction.

In a focus group or discussion, you'd typically ask 'open' questions (i.e. questions that require more than a yes/no response), such as:

- How are you finding/have you found the event?
- What have you learned the most about today?
- If there is anything that you would change about the day, what would it be?
- How are you planning to use what you learned?

Your role when running a focus group or discussion is to get participants to build off each other's opinions and perspectives. Getting your group together in a safe space and making sure they are clear on why they are there is a good place to start.

It's good to have two facilitators present – one to ask the questions, and one to capture the key points made by your participants. You can then use these in your reporting.

## One-on-one interviews

These questions can also be conducted as a one-on-one interview, either face-to-face on the day of the event, over the phone, or by email or in writing afterwards.

If you'll be asking questions on the day, you could think about:



Asking 2 to 3 general questions in conversations during breaks, during periods of travel (e.g. on a bus) or afterwards.



Place interviewers at entry or exit points to the event. Use a randomised approach, such as choosing every fifth person, to randomly represent the diversity of the attendees. This also helps to save on time as you may not get a chance to talk to everybody.

Each question should only have one request in it. For example: “From today’s session, what will you implement?” has one idea, whereas “From today’s session, what was the most useful and what will you implement?” has two ideas and should be split into two questions.

Don’t use leading questions where the respondent’s response is anticipated. For example: “How much did you like the workshop?” This assumes that the respondent liked the workshop. It is better to ask things like: “What did you think of today’s workshop?”

Don’t provide judgement or feedback. Say things like “I understand” rather than “I agree” to avoid leading the discussion.

## Observing, recording reactions and reviewing materials

Observing is about watching what people do, listening to what they say and seeing how they interact without you asking questions.

Observation of participants in an activity or event is particularly useful for evaluating **process measures**. Using a standard template, you can record things like how many people visited an information booth. This will ensure that your records are consistent across activities – particularly if more than one person is capturing them. It will also help with your **process measures** by capturing how many people attended the activity.

You can ask your attendees for consent to take photos and video of the activity. This can be a useful way of collecting information to understand how people are interacting or engaging with the activity. If someone doesn’t consent to have their image recorded, make sure to avoid them when taking photos.

Another option is to ask your attendees to document their feedback in other forms, like drawing on a page or in a similar creative format. You can then review these materials in line with your **impact measures**. For example, asking participants to draw an image of what their key learning was. You can then count the number of people that provided a representation of what they learned.

Refer to the [LDAT Evaluation Measures Guide](#) for a detailed discussion of impact and process measurements and survey question guidance.