Data Exchange
Client Survey
Discussion paper
1. Background

The Data Exchange was created as part of the Department of Social Services' (DSS) new approach to collecting and using program performance data. This change was introduced to reduce red tape for service providers and to shift the focus of performance measurement from outputs to more meaningful information about service delivery outcomes. The client survey forms part of the Data Exchange priority requirements.

Rationale for the Client Survey

DSS is looking at ways to better understand how funded services are meeting the needs of individuals and communities, with the client survey providing the opportunity for clients to provide their feedback on the impacts of services they use. The client survey includes outcomes measures that can be used across a range of services so that the impacts of service delivery can be highlighted and further explored.

Insights gained from the client survey will be shared back with service providers, who will be able to access aggregated information through a self-service report as part of the Data Exchange standard reporting suite and use this to inform planning and service improvement activities. DSS will also be able to use this information to assist in future policy and program design.

How the survey was developed

The survey has been informed by:

- Qualitative research with clients across Australia who have received a health or social service;
- Several waves of consultations with service providers who deliver programs that report via the Data Exchange;
- Collaboration with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet’s Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA); and
- Collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) in the development of survey questions.

This research and consultation informed the structure, content and methodology of the client survey. Ethics approval to conduct the pilot has been received through the AIFS’ Human Research Ethics Committee.

How does the client survey align with other outcomes measurement activities?

The client survey includes a comprehensive set of questions aligned to the outcomes measurement framework underpinning the Data Exchange, the Standard Client Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) framework. The survey will enable clients to self-report on why they sought assistance and what their outcomes have been as a result of accessing the service. This information will complement the provider-reported client outcome information collected by those organisations that have opted into the partnership approach to reporting. Each of these two complementary data sources are an important component of the outcomes story.

The introduction of the client survey will not replace the need for, or value of, outcomes data collected through the partnership approach, or data that an individual organisation might collect to measure outcomes and inform their activities. The client survey represents only one part of the outcomes measurement story.

All clients will be provided the opportunity to complete the survey when they access a funded program activity which is in-scope for the Data Exchange. Client participation in the survey is voluntary. Service providers are required to offer the survey to their clients.

Discussion paper

This discussion paper is designed to seek feedback from stakeholders on:

- Suggestions for making it easier for clients and service providers to participate in the client survey in different service delivery contexts;
- The types of self-service reports and information that would be useful for service planning and improvement by using client survey aggregate data; and
- Key issues that need to be considered when evaluating the full pilot stage of the client survey.
2. The Client Survey Pilot

The methodology to administer the client survey is currently under development and is due to be tested as a pilot from October 2016. The pilot will be undertaken in two stages. Organisations that would like to participate in the pilot as early adopters will be able to commence using the survey from October 2016. Early next year, from around April 2017, all organisations will be encouraged to participate as part of the full pilot.

Stage 1

Stage 1 of the pilot will involve service providers who are interested in volunteering to participate in this first stage of the pilot to support the co-design of the final survey implementation methodology. This includes helping to shape the format of the client survey self-service reports that will be made available to service providers. Stage 1 will commence from October 2016 and continue until March 2017. Organisations that wish to participate in stage 1 can opt in at any time during this period as part of a phased roll out.

Stage 2

Stage 2 will involve all services providers and will commence from April 2017. All organisations will be encouraged to participate in stage 2, which will mark the commencement of the full pilot.

How can organisations nominate to participate in stage 1 of the pilot?

Service providers can volunteer to participate by emailing myservicemystory@dss.gov.au. Organisations are able to participate for some or all of their funded services and at any locations of their choosing.

Organisations participating in the pilot will be provided training and support prior to the organisation offering the survey to their clients.

Why is the client survey part of the Data Exchange priority requirements?

The Data Exchange priority requirements refer to the standardised core set of mandatory reporting that applies to all Data Exchange in-scope programs. The priority requirements are restricted to a small set of data items that allow for an understanding of:

- Who is accessing program activities (client details);
- How often and where they are attending (case and session details); and
- Whether they are willing to participate in follow-up client research.

The client voice provides a valuable additional source of information to help tell the outcomes story of how grant funding is used to respond to individual, family and community needs.

How will client survey data be collected?

The client survey involves two components; an initial survey completed towards the beginning of a service (pre-survey), and a follow-up survey towards the end of the service provision (post-survey). In the case of ongoing service delivery, this follow-up survey would be undertaken after the first six months from when the client first began receiving the service.

The Department will make the survey available to clients through an online questionnaire, with the Department responsible for hosting the survey and collecting survey responses, and service providers responsible for offering the opportunity to clients to complete the survey as part of their regular service delivery.

The process for client participation in the survey will involve:

- The service provider inviting the client to complete the survey on their premises - by providing the client with an internet connected device (e.g. desktop, laptop or tablet) in a private location, or by providing a private location where the client can use their own internet connected device to complete the survey.
- If the client agrees to participate in the survey, the service provider will enter the type of service that the client is receiving on the first page of the survey. This can be selected from a prepopulated drop-down menu.
- Once the survey is set up, the client provides consent by clicking the ‘Start survey’ button. The client will complete the survey alone. It is expected (based on testing during the research) that the survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, with the client submitting their responses by selecting the ‘Submit’ button at the end of the survey.
Service providers would not be in the room when the client is completing the survey, unless the client has requested their assistance.

Is participation in the client survey voluntary?

Participation in the survey is completely voluntary for the client who receives the service. Even if someone initially agrees to participate in the client survey, they may withdraw their consent at any time.

Is client survey data confidential?

Client survey data is confidential and individual results will never be published or reported. The client's survey results will be stored as a de-identified client-level unit record, and will be treated with the same strict privacy protections that apply to all personal information collected and stored in the Data Exchange.

A participant information sheet has been developed to inform clients about the survey, and to provide assurance that information produced from the survey, such as reports, will never identify clients to their service providers or impact their ability to access services in the future. This document will be made available on the client survey website ‘My Service My Story’.

What sort of questions are in the client survey?

The client survey covers a comprehensive set of questions aligned to SCORE, the outcome measurement framework that underpins the Data Exchange

In wave 1 research the Department tested questions using the same current wording as client SCORE measures. This did not test well with clients and the Department revised the approach to the development of the survey questions, conducting a further three waves of research.

The client survey includes questions that are well validated. Many of the questions in the client survey are drawn from well-established survey questions used in other similar research projects including questions from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), and the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. Where existing questions were not available, specifically in relation to service experience, new questions were developed and tested through the research process.

An outline of the survey items is presented in Attachment 1 and a table of the full range of information reported through the Data Exchange and the client survey, mapped against the SCORE domains, is presented in Attachment 2. SCORE is outlined in more detail in section 7 of the Data Exchange Protocols.

How will the survey data be reported?

The Department is committed to sharing the aggregate results of the client survey with service providers, consistent with how information is currently shared through the Data Exchange standard self-service reports.

The format of the client survey reports is yet to be determined and the Department is looking for feedback from service providers about what information from the client survey would be most valuable and useful for service planning and improvement.

Training for the pilot phase

Service providers will have overall responsibility for administering the survey. All service providers will be trained in the delivery of the client survey prior to the organisation offering the survey to their clients, to help ensure consistency in administration. The training will be delivered in a variety of mediums including group sessions and online, with training supported by a range of reference material.

What other support will be available to administer the survey?

Guidance material for service providers will be available on the client survey website ‘My Service My Story’. The guidance material will include:

- An information sheet for service providers;
- The survey delivery steps, outlining the process for administering the survey;
- A client survey script, outlining the information to be covered to obtain a client’s informed consent to participate in the survey; and
- A participant information sheet for service providers to provide their clients.

Instructions on how to log into the ‘My Service My Story’ website will be provided to organisations as they opt into the pilot.
How can feedback during the pilot be provided?

Throughout the pilot, feedback will be collected on the experiences and perceptions of service providers about the client survey process.

Service providers can provide feedback throughout the pilot to myservicemystory@dss.gov.au. A separate survey will also be developed to collect feedback from organisations who participated in the pilot.

What technical support will be available?

The delivery of the survey will be online initially and the software that runs the survey will be administered and managed by the Department. The way in which the survey is offered, such as a desktop computer, iPad or similar tablet, or the client’s own device will be a decision of the organisation based on the equipment they have available.

3. Issues to be evaluated during the pilot

A number of key issues will be evaluated as part of the pilot phase. The Department is interested in receiving feedback on potential solutions to these issues. This feedback will be used to refine and improve the methodology ahead of the full roll-out of the survey from July 2017.

The pilot phase will involve an online survey in English. It is intended that translated versions of the survey for clients from non-English speaking backgrounds will be developed and other options for delivery of the survey will be considered after the conclusion of the pilot.

Client willingness to participate in the survey

The pilot will provide an opportunity to better understand the nature of clients’ willingness to participate in the survey, in particular whether there are particular groups of clients or particular service contexts where clients are more or less likely to agree to participate in the survey. Possible issues to be investigated include:

- The practicality of agreeing to participate where the service interaction is relatively brief or occurs outside of the service provider’s premises;
- Client cohorts who may be mistrustful of ‘government’ surveys based on their historical experiences; and
- Client cohorts who may be hesitant or decline to participate because of language, literacy or confidence barriers in completing an online survey.

The pilot will provide an opportunity to explore potential accessibility barriers associated with online surveys and also explore opportunities to improve accessibility in the full roll-out. Possible issues to be investigated include:

- Requirements for translating the survey;
- Barriers faced by clients with low literacy skills in completing the survey, and whether it is possible for service providers to assist clients without compromising the privacy of survey responses;
- Barriers faced by clients with limited computer skills and confidence; and
- Barriers faced by service providers in administering the survey e.g. internet access; access to the IT equipment needed to complete the survey.

While the client survey is designed to take about 10 minutes to complete, the pilot will provide a better understanding of the amount of time needed in practice and whether respondents feel this amount of time is reasonable. Possible issues to be investigated include:

- Time taken and client reaction to the set of demographic questions (name, date of birth, gender, Indigenous status, country of birth, main language spoken at home) – particularly in service contexts where this information has recently been collected and recorded by the service provider;
- Time taken and client reaction to the set of questions about current circumstances (housing, family, education background, employment status and income) – particularly in service contexts where this information has recently been collected and recorded as part of the Data Exchange partnership approach or in the provider’s case management data system for other reporting purposes;
- Time taken and client reaction to the set of questions needed to assess circumstances relevant to the Data Exchange outcome domains – particularly in service contexts where similar information may have recently been collected and recorded by the service provider (e.g. service providers that undertake family functioning or wellbeing assessments as part of their intake process); and
- Time taken and client reaction to the survey where they are receiving multiple services (and are asked to complete multiple surveys).

**Time taken and service provider reaction to administering the survey**

While the client survey methodology is designed to minimise the administrative burden on service providers, the pilot will provide a better understanding of the amount of time and resources needed in practice to support the administration of the survey for all clients. Possible issues to be investigated include:

- Practicality and appropriateness for service providers administering the initial survey towards the start of the service (e.g. practicality at times of high client volume; facilities and computer equipment to support large numbers of clients to complete the survey in private; and appropriateness of asking clients to complete the survey in certain circumstances);
- Practicality for service providers administering the follow-up survey towards the end of the service; and
- Any unintended impacts on the streamlined operation of a service provider’s case management, client service or processes.

4. **Discussion questions**

Feedback is sought on a number of key questions:

1. Is the approach and methodology for the Data Exchange client survey sufficiently clear? If not, what additional information is needed?
2. Are the issues to be investigated during the Data Exchange client survey pilot sufficiently comprehensive? If not, what other issues need to be evaluated as part of the pilot?
3. Do you have specific suggestions for making it easier for clients and service providers to participate in the client survey pilot?
4. Do you have suggestions for reporting client survey results to provide information that is useful to service providers for service planning and improvement?
5. Are there any other issues that need to be considered as part of the planning and implementation of the Data Exchange client survey?

**How to provide feedback**

Feedback should be framed against the above five questions and sent to the Data Exchange via email at myservicemystory@dss.gov.au. Organisations that wish to opt into stage 1 of the pilot are encouraged to nominate to participate as soon as possible so they can be contacted to organise training.

This discussion paper will remain open for comment throughout the stage 1 pilot period to 31 March 2017.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Exchange outcome data</th>
<th>Data item domains</th>
<th>Survey items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Factors impacting on outcomes - client demographics | Confirmation of client demographics | • Age  
• Gender  
• Location  
• Indigenous status  
• CALD status |
|                          | Extended data on needs and circumstances | • Housing / homelessness  
• Family / household characteristics  
• Education attainment  
• Employment status  
• Income  
• Health status  
• Stressful life events  
• General life satisfaction  
• Locus of control over life events  
• Carer status  
• Reason(s) for seeking assistance  
• Referral source for assistance |
| Satisfaction with services and support | Client self-reported satisfaction | • Overall satisfaction with service  
• Satisfaction with service  
  o quality  
  o with help received to deal with issues |
| Improved capacity to change circumstances | Knowledge | • Improved knowledge / skills to deal with issues that assistance was sought for |
|                                             | Skills | • Improved confidence to deal with issues that assistance was sought for |
|                                             | Confidence making own decisions | • Changed behaviours to deal with issues that assistance was sought for |
|                                             | Behaviours | • Improvement / resolution of issues that assistance was sought for |
| Improved circumstance | Physical health | • Self-reported health status  
• Medical conditions and disability  
• Health limitation on daily activities  
• Physical Health related problems with work / daily activities  
• Smoking  
• Alcohol  
• Drugs |
|                          | Mental health and self-care | • Mental health status (Kessler 10)  
• Emotional health related problems with work / daily activities |
|                          | Personal & family safety | • Perception of safety in neighbourhood |
|                          | Networks & participation | • Availability of social supports  
• Participation in community activities |
|                          | Family functioning | • Perceptions of family functioning  
• Family’s ability to get along together  
• Support in raising children  
• Family stressful life events |
|                          | Financial resilience | • Financial stress  
• Gambling |
|                          | Employment, education & training | • Employment status  
• Education levels |
|                          | Material wellbeing | • Financial stress |
|                          | Safe, affordable housing | • Housing / homelessness |
## Attachment 2: Data Exchange - Client information and data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information type</th>
<th>Data items and source</th>
<th>Service provider reported through DEX</th>
<th>Client survey</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Client demographics** | • Age  
  • Gender  
  • Location  
  • Indigenous status  
  • CALD status  
  • Disability | • Age  
  • Gender  
  • Location  
  • Indigenous status  
  • CALD status | |
| **Service details** | • Case details – funded activity  
  • Session – date service delivered  
  • Type of service received | | • Type of service received |
| **Extended data on needs and circumstances** | • Reason for seeking assistance  
  • Referral source  
  • Referral made to another service  
  • Household composition  
  • Household income  
  • Language spoken at home  
  • Ethnicity / country of origin.  
  • Length of time in Australia  
  • Migration visa category | • Housing / homelessness  
  • Family / household characteristics  
  • Education attainment  
  • Employment status  
  • Income  
  • Health status  
  • Medical conditions and disability  
  • General life satisfaction  
  • Locus of control over life events  
  • Carer status  
  • Reason(s) for seeking assistance  
  • Referral source for assistance | |
| **Satisfaction with services and support** | • Satisfaction that the service listened to me and understood my issues  
  • Satisfaction with the services I received  
  • Satisfaction that I am better able to deal with issues that I sought help with | • Overall satisfaction with service  
  • Satisfaction that the service was easy to access  
  • Satisfaction that the service was friendly and welcoming  
  • Satisfaction that the service listened to your needs  
  • Satisfaction that the service understood your needs  
  • Satisfaction that the service met your needs  
  • Satisfaction that the service helped you deal with issues you needed help with | |
| **Improved capacity to change circumstances** | • Progress in achieving goals to improve knowledge (e.g. awareness and knowledge for support options)  
  • Progress in achieving goals to improve skills (e.g. life skills)  
  • Progress in achieving goals about confidence to make own decisions (e.g. confidence to seek help early where issues arise)  
  • Progress in achieving goals to change behaviours (e.g. reduced harmful behaviours)  
  • Progress in achieving goals to engage with relevant support services (e.g. willingness to engage with referral agencies)  
  • Progress in achieving goals to address impact of immediate crisis | • Improved knowledge / skills to deal with issues that assistance was sought for  
  • Improved confidence to deal with issues that assistance was sought for  
  • Changed behaviours to deal with issues that assistance was sought for  
  • To be developed  
  • Improvement / resolution of issues that assistance was sought for | |
### Attachment 2: Outcomes information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Type</th>
<th>Data items and source</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Improved circumstance</strong></td>
<td>Improved physical health measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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<td>Improved mental health and self-care measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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<td>Improved personal &amp; family safety measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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<td>Improved age-appropriate development measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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<td>Improved networks &amp; participation measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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<td>Improved family functioning measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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<td>Improved financial resilience measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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<td>Improved employment, education &amp; training measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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<td>Improved material wellbeing measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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<td>Improved housing measured on the changed circumstances (independence, participation and wellbeing) SCORE</td>
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