

Using open questions in your evaluation

The questions you are most likely to ask in a survey are **closed questions** - where there's a list of responses to choose from. But it can be useful to include **open questions** in your survey - where someone can answer in their own words. This will give you **qualitative data**.

This short guide will help you decide if open questions will suit your survey, and gives some examples.

For more advice on how plan and carry out a wellbeing impact evaluation, and how to gather and use qualitative data, go to <https://measure.whatworkswellbeing.org/>

1. Should you include open questions in your survey?

This table will help you decide whether you want to include any open questions in your survey.

Why include open questions?	Why not include open questions?
People can answer however they want, so you can identify unexpected and important information.	You need to know what you're asking and why, and what you will do with the data. You may get some data that is not relevant for you.
They help to identify why something has changed, and therefore how you can improve what you do	You need to work out how you will analyse the data before you start. This means knowing what wellbeing is and what results you're looking for, which takes time and calls for knowledge of wellbeing concepts. Having a clear Theory of Change is needed to identify the pathways you're trying to understand.
They may give insights into the whole service, and how wellbeing interacts with other results of the service.	The data can be more time-consuming to analyse and difficult to present to different audiences.

2. Some questions you can include

If you decide you want to include some open questions, here are some you may find useful:

Question	Why is this question useful?
<i>Since you got involved with (X), what, if anything, has changed about how you feel about yourself and your life?</i>	This asks someone to describe the most important changes in their lives in their own words. So it may help you identify extra, unexpected things like increased motivation or confidence.
<i>Why have things changed? What is it about (X) that has helped this happen?</i>	The 'why' here is the important bit. It allows you to understand what's effective, and do more of it in the future.
<i>Have these changes impacted anyone else (eg family members)? If so, who has it affected and how?</i>	<p>It's possible your organisation may affect people you don't work with directly. For example, your work with a young person might reduce stress on their family.</p> <p>This question can help you pick up on the wider impacts you're having on wellbeing.</p>
<i>Since you got involved with (X), have any other things in your life helped or got in the way of where you want to get to? (eg children, supportive partner, poor health.) If so, please give details.</i>	<p>This question provides important contextual information that can be useful for two reasons:</p> <p>It can help you understand patterns in your wellbeing data.</p> <p>Many of these wider contextual factors are beyond your control. But if something has helped or hindered your efforts, you may be able to do something about it.</p>
<i>What would have happened if you hadn't been involved with (X)? (eg how would you feel about yourself? What would you be doing?)</i>	This question helps you understand your 'added value' by getting people to imagine how different their lives would be without your service.

This guidance was developed by Ingrid Abreu Scherer, Jenny Rouse and Rosie Maguire, 2018.