

Step 2: Plan and prepare for data collection

To track if the intended outcomes have been met, the same metric should be measured at both pre- and post-intervention to determine if the service user has improved after completing the programme.

Under the SEF, the data collection periods are detailed in Table 3 below.



Table 3: Data collection periods for different programme lengths

Programme Length	Data Collection Periods
Short-term programmes (i.e., < 1 year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once for pre-intervention, at intake or within 4 weeks before commencement of programme Once for post-intervention at discharge
Long-term programmes (i.e., > 1 year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once for pre-intervention, at intake or within 4 weeks before commencement of programme Annual collection as an interim progress update Once for post-intervention at discharge

Besides the data collection periods, SSAs will also need to determine the estimated sample size, how the survey will be administered (e.g., online survey platform, or hardcopy paper survey which will then require data entry at a later stage, etc.), as well as what additional questions should be included (e.g., demographic questions such as age and sex). All forms should go through at least two rounds of

checking to ensure that all the necessary questions have been included, and that the logic for online surveys are accurate.

For programmes which have been onboarded to the SEF, one-on-one consultation sessions will be set up between NCSS and SSAs to decide on the ideal data collection period, questions to be included, and the survey platform to be used.



While the SEF is primarily focused on quantitative data such as the outcome metrics and demographics, SSAs can consider collecting qualitative data to glean insights which typically are not as easily captured using quantitative methods. Some examples of qualitative data which might be useful are:



Conducting informal interviews with service users to understand why they found certain segments of the programme more enjoyable.



Organising focus groups after the programme to explore how service users were able to apply the skills learnt to their lives, and what seems to still be lacking or challenging.



Observations on how participative service users were during the programme.

SSAs may use these insights to further refine the programmes and to enhance the programme experience.

Checkpoints:

Do your caseworkers require training on how the metrics should be administered to service users?

- Caseworkers will be able to look through the list of questions and seek clarifications on the interpretation of certain words or phrases.
- During the training, it would also be helpful to share with caseworkers on how they can introduce the survey to service users (e.g., how will the data be used, data confidentiality, etc.).

Other than the outcome metrics which will be included in the survey form, are there any other questions that you think will be helpful in the evaluation?

- We suggest including basic demographics such as age and sex which might be helpful during the analysis stage. We will then be able to determine if the effectiveness of the intervention is affected by certain demographic factors.
- You may also consider adding feedback questions to better understand the service users' experience (e.g., what they found to be more relevant or enjoyable, what they were not able to connect with, etc.).

Do you have a unique identifier in the survey which can assist with following up with specific service users?

- Having unique identifiers in the survey will allow caseworkers to identify specific service users for further follow up if necessary.
- In line with NCSS' person-centred approach, we recommend that follow ups are conducted for service users who have exhibited the need for additional support.

Are your users able to complete the survey online?

- You may need to consider other modes of data collection if your users are unable to complete the online survey due to various reasons.
- This may include the use of a physical form.
- You can contact us at research@ncss.gov.sg for further discussion regarding the mode of data collection should you require assistance.

Taking into account the nature of your programmes, when is an appropriate time to administer the survey?

- As much as possible, NCSS recommends that the collection of data be done at the point of intake and discharge respectively.
- However, different types of programmes would likely have different points at which data is collected due to logistical limitations.
 - **Scenario 1**
Using counselling programmes as an example, you may choose to administer the pre-intervention survey during the intake session, and the post-intervention survey may be administered at the end of the final counselling session.
 - **Scenario 2**
For other programme types such as befriending at drop-in centres, it might be challenging to collect the pre-intervention data as part of the registration process due to certain logistical challenges. In such cases, you may consider separating the registration process and outcome evaluation data collection process into two different sessions.