



# Demonstrating Value

## Tools & Methods Resource

### Measuring Outcomes Relating to Personal Transformation

#### *Introduction*

This *Tools and Methods Resource* summarizes some of the methodological approaches and tools out there to understanding how someone's situation is changing. There are multiple approaches to measuring personal outcomes and transformation. This short paper summarizes a few ways to approach measuring these outcomes and may be helpful to those working to address housing insecurity and homelessness, strengthen social inclusion, support recovery, and other personal goals. We provide a short introduction to different areas of assessment including: how someone is functioning in different areas (domain rating), self-efficacy (whether someone is seeing themselves as successful), quality of life & well-being. We also cover the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, the Most Significant Change technique and Thematic Analysis that can identify outcomes from qualitative data.

The tools and techniques listed do not represent a specific endorsement by us, rather they are meant to give you a sense of what is out there that can assist in measuring long-term outcomes related to personal development. There are many directories of instruments/tools relating to outcomes measurement in health, psychiatry and social services.<sup>1</sup> The following resource offers comprehensive guidance to methods and tools relevant to those working to address homelessness:

Mark Planigale, Literature Review: Measurement of Client Outcomes in Homelessness Services Services. (Collingwood, Australia: Home Ground Services, 2011)

<http://housingfirsttoolkit.ca/wp-content/uploads/literature-review-measurement-of-client-outcomes-in-homelessness-services.pdf>

#### *Measuring Progress in Functioning in Different Areas*

Many tools have been developed that provide an overview of a person's situation and how they are functioning in different 'domains'. This can help to track progress regarding how they are for instance, developing the resources, skills and capacities needed to manage and improve their situation. Some tools cover many domains while others focus on a specific area, like mental health and recovery from substance abuse. Here are a few examples:

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<sup>1</sup> An example is the Research and Training Center on HCBS Outcome Measurement (RTC/OM) <https://rtcom.umn.edu/database/domain-instrument-overview>

- **Outcomes Star(s)** – This is a popular UK-based tool based on an explicit journey of change. There are many different versions of this tool including one for housing and other needs. It encompasses the following domains: Self Care And Living Skills, Managing Tenancy and Accommodation, Managing Money, Social Networks and Relationships, Drug and Alcohol Misuse, Physical Health, Emotional and Mental Health, Motivation and Taking Responsibility, Meaningful Use Of Time, Offending. 10-point rating scales measures progress through 5 stages: Stuck, Accepting Help, Believing, Learning and Self-Reliance. ([www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk))
- **Life Skills Profile (LSP)** – Domains: Self-care, non-turbulence, social contact, communication, responsibility. Not a self-assessment but completed by someone connected to an individual. ([www.amhocrn.org/sites/default/files/publication\\_files/life\\_skills\\_profile\\_-16.pdf](http://www.amhocrn.org/sites/default/files/publication_files/life_skills_profile_-16.pdf))
- **Milestones of Recovery Scale (MORS)** - The MORS is a single item evaluation tool used to assess clinician perception of a client's current degree of recovery. Ratings are determined considering three factors; their level of risk, their level of engagement within the mental health system, and their level of skills and support. ([www.mhala.org/training-and-education/instruments-tools/](http://www.mhala.org/training-and-education/instruments-tools/))
- **Stages of Recovery Instrument (STORI)** STORI encompasses self-report measures for assessing stage of recovery from mental illness, based on a 5-stage model of recovery. The measures have a positive psychology focus and target psychological recovery and personal growth (rather than focusing on illness and disability) ([www.uow.edu.au/the-arts-social-sciences-humanities/research/iimh/stori/the-stori-and-scoring-guide/](http://www.uow.edu.au/the-arts-social-sciences-humanities/research/iimh/stori/the-stori-and-scoring-guide/))

## *Measuring Quality of Life and Well-being*

Quality of Life is a concept that is closely related, and sometimes used interchangeably with others - life satisfaction, happiness, well-being. Interestingly we are coming to quality of life and well being measurement from many different directions:

- The **health care field** that is trying to better evaluate the outcomes of health care interventions;
- **Economics** that, through the emerging field of 'happiness studies', is moving beyond neoclassical assumptions about utility as being only the satisfaction of material needs and wants;
- The **social indicators movement** (at communities, cities, regions and nation state level) that wants to monitor the impact of development and is challenging GDP and job creation as the sole indicators of how a community is doing.

This field has gained a lot of traction over the past few decades. There is now a forum for quality of life research (The International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies) and several journals devoted to this such as *Social Indicators Research* and *The Journal of Happiness Studies*.

With this keen interest, there is now a wide array of tools. Research progressed rapidly during the 1990s giving rise to more than 100 definitions and over 1,000 evaluation instruments. A popular instrument for measuring Quality of Life is the WHOQOL-BREF or the more extensive WHOQOL-100 ([www.who.int/tools/whoqol](http://www.who.int/tools/whoqol)) which is an international collaboration of researchers that were brought together by the World Health Organisation to develop and produce a cross-cultural measure of quality of life for use in health and health care. Other quality of life tools include the GENCAT Scale, specific to social services, and the QoLHHI, an interview-guided measure of subjective quality of life in individuals who are homeless or vulnerably housed. ([www.hubleylab.ca/dr-hublely/hublely-tests/qolhhi/](http://www.hubleylab.ca/dr-hublely/hublely-tests/qolhhi/))

An interesting framework that focuses specifically on 'well-being' is that developed by the UK's New Economics Foundation. It draws out key elements of why somebody may 'flourish', which is both feeling good and functioning well. Flourishing suggests that people are like flowers in needing both internal and external conditions to ultimately sprout, push through the ground, grow and bear fruit. Internally we need 'personal resources' like health, resilience, optimism, self-esteem, and external resources like: income, employment status and social networks. For more information, and a useful guide for community groups, see: Juliet Michaelson and Sorcha Mahony. *Measuring well-being: A short handbook for voluntary organisations and community groups*. London UK: NEF, 2012. ([neweconomics.org/2012/07/measuring-wellbeing](http://neweconomics.org/2012/07/measuring-wellbeing))

## ***Measuring Self-Efficacy***

In the psychology field, strong self-efficacy is closely linked to long-term success. The beliefs a person holds around their ability to handle situations, accomplish tasks and achieve goals can be a strong determining factor in the success of their endeavors. Many studies have demonstrated the important role of self-efficacy in many aspects of life including career development, and tools have been developed that can 'measure' self-efficacy. Positive Psychology has an excellent website about self-efficacy theory and how it can be applied. ([positivepsychology.com/self-efficacy-theory/](http://positivepsychology.com/self-efficacy-theory/)) Self-efficacy can provide an insightful view into how a program empowers an individual, without the intrusiveness of a longer, more involved study that tracks career development over time.

## ***Measuring Sustainable Livelihoods***

Sustainable Livelihoods is a holistic approach to looking at poverty reduction by supporting participants to build on their strengths. This entails building a range of assets, often characterized as 'human capital', 'social capital', 'natural capital', 'physical capital' and 'financial capital'.

The Sustainable Livelihoods idea was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development, and the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and

Development expanded the concept, advocating for the achievement of sustainable livelihoods as a broad goal for poverty eradication. For more information see:

- Krantz, L. (2001). The sustainable livelihood approach to poverty reduction: An introduction. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

([www.sida.se/contentassets/bd474c210163447c9a7963d77c64148a/the-sustainable-livelihood-approach-to-poverty-reduction\\_2656.pdf](http://www.sida.se/contentassets/bd474c210163447c9a7963d77c64148a/the-sustainable-livelihood-approach-to-poverty-reduction_2656.pdf))

Here are a few Canadian applications to understanding individual transformation and the development of sustainable livelihoods:

- YW Calgary Evaluation Framework (YWCA) ([www.ywcalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Evaluation-Framework-FINAL-1.pdf](http://www.ywcalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Evaluation-Framework-FINAL-1.pdf))
- Social Planning, Policy and Program Administration (2012). All roads lead to home: The homelessness to housing stability strategy for Waterloo Region – Policy framework. Waterloo, ON: Regional Municipality of Waterloo ([www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/resources/Documents/Housing/Homelessness-to-Housing-Stability-Strategy-Policy-Framework.pdf](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/resources/Documents/Housing/Homelessness-to-Housing-Stability-Strategy-Policy-Framework.pdf))

You may also be interested in checking out Demonstrating Value's tool to monitor 'asset' development, which applies some concepts of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework. ([www.demonstratingvalue.org/resources/sustainable-livelihoods-assessment](http://www.demonstratingvalue.org/resources/sustainable-livelihoods-assessment))

## ***Most Significant Change***

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique can help an agency explore the richness of narratives in a more rigorous way. Thematic analysis, which we cover next is another method. The MSC technique is a participatory method that uses storytelling to explore significant changes experienced by individuals, along with the meanings and values attached to those changes. The process involves the collection of significant change stories from people involved in the program, and the selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. Once changes have been captured, various people sit down together, read the stories aloud and discuss the value of the reported changes. For more information see: Rick Davies & Jessica Dart *The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use* (Melbourne, Australia: 2005). ([mande.co.uk/special-issues/most-significant-change-msc/](http://mande.co.uk/special-issues/most-significant-change-msc/))

## ***Thematic analysis***

Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data to identify common themes, topics, ideas and patterns. You can do a thematic analysis on data collected from a variety of circumstances, including open field questions on surveys, in-person interviews, or discussion across

all participants at engagement events. Themes could be things like: connection, employment opportunities, confidence to rebuild their life. Alternatively, more program specific themes could be: very satisfied with program, valued safe place to be supported, respect enables progress.

Systematically reviewing a collection of data (a data set) for meaning is what moves you from sharing participant anecdotes to data analysis. You can do a top-down thematic analysis, where you have specific pre-determined themes that you are looking for insight on. In this case, you will have framed your questions or lines of inquiry intentionally to get responses on those themes.

Alternatively, you can do a “ground-up” or exploratory thematic analysis. In this case, you would ask more open-ended exploratory questions about the broad topic (e.g., effects of engaging with the program) and then see what participants share and start to identify themes as they come up in responses. For example, you may ask questions like: “How did this program work for you?”

“Did your life change in any way after you started participating in this program? Tell me more about what changes you noticed.” A mix of these approaches to thematic analysis is most useful.

You want to guide the area of exploration so that the information you are gathering is useful, but you also want to be open to learning unexpected things, and it’s important to create the opportunity for that.