Listen4Good

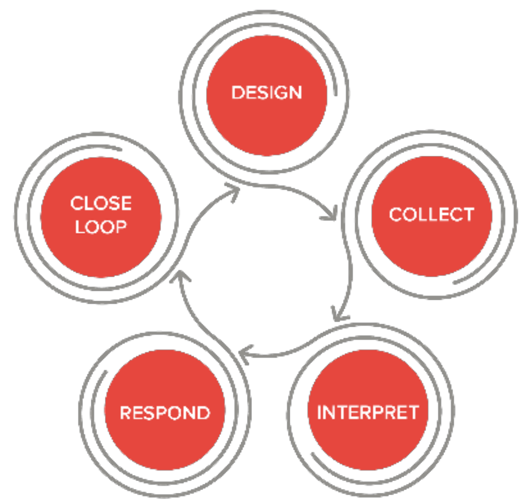
COMPETENCIES FOR HIGH-QUALITY CLIENT FEEDBACK LOOPS

Not all feedback loops are created equal.

At Listen4Good (L4G), our aim is to ensure that all service providers develop the ability to sustain the highest quality client feedback systems possible.

This framework outlines specific practices and behaviors that organizations should have across the five steps of a high-quality client feedback loop. The practices are presented at three quality levels— from viable to high-quality — so that no matter where your organization is, you have a goal to build towards.

The five steps of a Listen4Good high-quality feedback loop



When client feedback is valued as a critical data source and formally integrated into an organization's decision-making processes, high-quality feedback systems shift the culture to one that reflects client needs and preferences and promotes equity — thus creating enduring change. We've included some of the core cultural practices that promote this evolution as a bonus step.

STEP 1 / **DESIGN**

GOAL: Create an accessible and relevant feedback collection tool.

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
DESIGNING FOR ACCESSIBILITY		
• Tool is short/brief (e.g. survey is <15 questions) • Language is simple and understandable, given clients' backgrounds	• Tool is short/brief (e.g., survey is <15 questions)* • Language is simple and understandable to clients, given clients' backgrounds • Questions are asked in the language(s) in which clients are most comfortable communicating • Questions are at an appropriate literacy level for the client population	• Tool is short/brief (e.g., survey is <15 questions)* • Language is simple and understandable to clients, given clients' backgrounds • Questions are asked in the language(s) in which clients are most comfortable communicating • Questions are at an appropriate literacy level for the client population • Questions are tested with clients to ensure comprehension

STEP 1 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ▶

*Competencies that are identical to those in a previous column are noted in gray.

STEP 1 / **DESIGN** CONTINUED

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
DESIGNING FOR RELEVANCE		
• Clients can respond to question content based on their experiences • Tool includes a balance of questions seeking self-reported outcome data and input on client experiences, needs, and preferences (i.e., perceptual feedback*)	• Tool's primary goal is to gather client experiences, needs and preferences, with self-reported outcome data secondary • Tool is developed for purposes of continuous improvement (i.e., not for funder requirements or compliance) • Staff are consulted in tool development and encouraged to propose their own areas for inquiry, promoting staff buy-in	• Tool's primary goal is to gather client experiences, needs and preferences, with self-reported outcome data secondary • Survey is developed for purposes of continuous improvement (i.e., not for funder requirements or compliance) • Staff are consulted in tool development and encouraged to propose their own areas for inquiry, promoting staff buy-in • Clients/client advisory boards co-create questions to ensure relevance • Staff adjust questions over time based on organizational learning

*Perceptual feedback refers to the perspectives, feelings, and opinions individuals have about their experiences with an organization, product, or service that are used to inform and improve the practice and decision-making of that organization. Source: Ekouté, *"Perceptual Feedback: What's it all about?"*, February

STEP 2 / **COLLECT**

GOAL: Implement tool in a way that captures a large number of representative client voices and minimizes courtesy bias, resulting in credible, candid feedback.

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
CAPTURING CLIENT VOICE		
• Only a small proportion of clients provide feedback • Tool is sporadically administered to clients	• A substantial proportion of clients provide feedback • Staff/volunteers are given training and administer questions consistently to all eligible clients • Staff/volunteers engage clients to increase participation rates (e.g., 1:1 outreach, offering incentives)	• As many clients as possible provide feedback • Staff/volunteers are given training and administer questions consistently to all eligible clients • Staff/volunteers engage clients to increase participation rates (e.g., 1:1 outreach, offering incentives) • Staff ensure that respondents/ participants providing feedback are roughly representative of client population • Underrepresented demographic groups are oversampled or given extra prioritization in outreach efforts

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STEP 2 / **COLLECT** CONTINUED

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
MINIMIZING COURTESY BIAS		
• Staff do not pressure or prep clients to give a particular response • Feedback is given and submitted confidentially or, ideally, anonymously	• Staff do not pressure or prep clients to give a particular response • Feedback is given and submitted confidentially or, ideally, anonymously • Staff explain to clients in verbal and written communication: - That clients will not be punished or lose access to services based on their feedback; - Why they are being asked to give feedback; - How data will be used (i.e., giving your opinion will help us improve services)	• Staff do not pressure or prep clients to give a particular response • Feedback is given and submitted confidentially or, ideally, anonymously • Staff explain to clients in verbal and written communication: - That clients will not be punished or lose access to services based on their feedback; - Why they are being asked to give feedback; - How data will be used (i.e., giving your opinion will help us improve services) • When possible, admin staff or volunteers collect feedback, rather than direct-service staff who have close relationships with clients • If direct-service staff collect feedback, they provide privacy and do not have access to results

STEP 3 / **INTERPRET**

GOAL: Identify areas for celebration and areas for improvement, with particular attention paid to any differential experiences across specific client groups.

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
IDENTIFYING AREAS FOR CELEBRATION AND IMPROVEMENT		
• Staff review overall trends in quantitative feedback (if applicable to tool) • Staff read and discuss responses to open-ended questions (if applicable to tool) • Small groups of staff are involved in reviewing and interpreting findings	• Staff analyze quantitative feedback, looking at averages, range, and trends over time (if applicable to tool) • Staff review and categorize responses to open-ended questions into themes (if applicable to tool) • Results are documented and compared over time • Staff at various levels of the organization review findings with a focus on areas for improvement • Staff use benchmarks to "norm" quantitative feedback (e.g., how are we doing relative to our peers?)	• Staff analyze quantitative feedback, looking at averages, range, and trends over time (if applicable to tool) • Staff review and categorize responses to open-ended questions into themes (if applicable to tool) • Results are documented and compared over time • Staff at various level of the organization review findings with a focus on areas for improvement • Staff use benchmarks to "norm" quantitative feedback (e.g., how are we doing relative to our peers?) • Findings reference notable differences in client experiences and implications for action

STEP 3 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ▶

STEP 3 / **INTERPRET** CONTINUED

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
IDENTIFYING DIFFERENTIAL OR OUTLIER EXPERIENCES		
• Staff do not segment quantitative feedback by client demographics (e.g., client race, age, gender) or service experience (e.g., site, frequency of service, tenure) (if applicable to tool)	• Staff segment quantitative feedback by client demographics (e.g., client race, age, gender) and service experience (e.g., site, frequency of service, tenure) to surface differences in client experiences (if applicable to tool)	• Staff segment quantitative AND qualitative feedback by client demographics (e.g., client race, age, gender) and service experience (e.g., site, frequency of service, tenure) to surface differences in client experiences (if applicable to tool) • Staff further segment data to discover within-group differences (e.g., Hispanic/Latino males vs. Hispanic/Latina females) • Clients are included in the analysis process (e.g., focus groups, follow-up surveys) to help put findings into context—and better understand confusing feedback—or to probe initial results • Staff reflect on differential client experiences, including contributing factors and implications

STEP 4 / **RESPOND**

GOAL: Engage internal and external stakeholders (including funders) to learn from client feedback and implement changes based on what is learned.

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS		
• Findings are shared with leadership	• Findings are discussed with multiple levels of staff (e.g., senior leadership, program leaders, and front-line staff) • Findings are discussed respectfully and in a way that promotes accountability, celebrating positive feedback while also identifying areas for improvement	• Findings are discussed with multiple levels of staff (e.g., senior leadership, program leaders, and front-line staff) • Findings are discussed respectfully and in a way that promotes accountability, celebrating positive feedback while also identifying areas for improvement • Findings are shared and discussed with funder(s) and/or other external stakeholders (e.g., partner agencies) • Staff engage clients in dialogue around potential responses and prioritization

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STEP 4 / **RESPOND** CONTINUED

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	QUALITY FEEDBACK LOOP	HIGH-QUALITY FEEDBACK LOOP
IMPLEMENTING CHANGES		
• Organization addresses 'low-hanging fruit' (i.e., requested improvements that do not require a significant resource commitment)	• Organization addresses 'low-hanging fruit' (i.e., requested improvements that do not require a significant resource commitment) in a timely fashion • Senior and program leaders create action plans (e.g., with timelines, resource deployment plan, accountability mechanisms) to pursue resource-intensive changes	• Organization addresses 'low-hanging fruit' (i.e., requested improvements that do not require a significant resource commitment) in a timely fashion • Senior and program leaders create action plans (e.g., with timelines, resource deployment plan, accountability mechanisms) to pursue resource-intensive changes • Changes affecting historically marginalized groups are prioritized • External stakeholders (e.g., funders, community partners, other agencies) are recruited to help resolve resource-intensive challenges • Staff collect follow-up feedback at a later date to understand effect of implemented changes

STEP 5 / **CLOSE LOOP**

GOAL: Communicate back to clients what was learned from listening to them and specific ways that the organization intends to respond to feedback.

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
COMMUNICATING BACK		
• Organization thanks clients for participating in the survey • Organization shares survey findings opportunistically and focuses generally on positive feedback	• Organization thanks clients for participating in the survey • Organization shares survey findings with clients thoughtfully in written form, noting both positive feedback and areas for improvement	• Organization thanks clients for participating in the survey • Organization shares survey findings with clients thoughtfully in written form, noting both positive feedback and areas for improvement • Organization shares findings with most or all clients, including respondents, non-respondents, and new clients • Organization communicates what is being done to address clients' concerns • Communication is in easy-to-understand language and a user-friendly format

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

GOAL: Client feedback is valued as a critical data source and formally integrated into organizational decision-making and processes. Equity is advanced through shared decision-making power.

VALUING CLIENT FEEDBACK

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
• Client feedback is used primarily for marketing and fundraising purposes, and occasionally program improvement • Client relationship is considered to be solely transactional, without opportunities for deeper organizational engagement	• Client feedback routinely informs program improvement • Leadership solicits client input to inform organizational decisions outside of regular feedback cycles • Client advisory structures (e.g., community councils, student boards) are established and occasionally consulted	• Leadership and program staff routinely invite clients to share their views during strategic-planning processes as well as before and after implementation of new programs and approaches • Client advisory structures (e.g., community councils, student boards) are regularly consulted and given formal and meaningful decision-making power • Organization has former clients on its staff

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ▶

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE CONTINUED

VIABLE FEEDBACK LOOP	**QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP	**HIGH-QUALITY** FEEDBACK LOOP
MAKING FEEDBACK SUSTAINABLE		
• Client feedback is gathered sporadically • Organizational expertise about feedback processes resides with one person • Technology and analysis system supporting feedback are not quality-controlled	• Client feedback is gathered on a regular basis (e.g., quarterly or semi-annually) • Feedback processes are well documented and responsibilities are distributed across several individuals • Organization budgets for and dedicates staff to feedback efforts on a regular basis • Technology and analysis system are error-free but “static”	• Client feedback is gathered on a regular basis (e.g., quarterly or semi-annually) • Feedback processes are well documented and responsibilities are distributed across several individuals • Organization budgets for and dedicates staff to feedback efforts on a regular basis • Technology and analysis system are adaptable to current needs • Multiple team members share the knowledge and motivation to implement feedback processes; Organization has multiple champions • Feedback data is triangulated regularly with other data to inform organizational learning

Listen4Good

ABOUT LISTEN4GOOD

Listen4Good (L4G) helps organizations like yours build and sustain systems that gather direct feedback from the people and communities they serve.

Over the past five years, we've provided 550 organizations with capacity-building services and expert feedback guidance to improve program effectiveness, service delivery, and overall impact.

Find out how our services can help you be even better at what you do.

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5
YEARS IN OPERATION

550+
ORGANIZATIONS ASSISTED

175K
INDIVIDUAL VOICES HEARD

L4G is an initiative of the Fund for Shared Insight, a collaboration of national foundations dedicated to making sure funders and nonprofits are more meaningfully connected to the people they seek to help.