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Feedback Loops at Use
in Non-Profit Organizations

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Abstract

Community Bridges serves clients of all ages across Santa Cruz County through ten programs which address the needs of clients across different life stages. Serving a diverse change of client population it can become difficult to ensure client satisfaction and the agency mission is being fulfilled across all programs. The lack of a benchmark to measure overall client satisfaction does not allow for the agency to measure for discrepancies and build on continuous quality improvement. This capstone project will create a high quality client feedback loop that creates a centralized survey for the ten programs of Community Bridges. This will allow for a measure of client satisfaction that is consistent within all programs. Programs will then have the opportunity to review their results, implement appropriate changes based on feedback and present this feedback to clients. The final presentation of feedback to clients builds a trust between the agency and clients by allowing clients a voice in the agency. This capstone project creates an electronic survey and paper surveys to be used at all programs based on the Listen4Good structure and individual program needs. Feedback loops engage clients further than traditional feedback collection that does not let the client know what was done based on their feedback. It is recommended that all programs at Community Bridges launch surveys, collect feedback and engage in a high quality feedback loop at least once per year to improve services, ensure agency values are being held and build trust with clients.

Keywords: Feedback loop, client, survey

Agency & Communities Served

Community Bridges is a nonprofit organization which services Santa Cruz County in California. Ten different programs are operated under Community Bridges which serve the population of Santa Cruz County through all life stages with the various programs. The mission statement of Community Bridges states “Our mission is to deliver essential services, provide equitable access to resources, and advocate for health and dignity across every stage of life”. This occurs through the ten programs to address the changing needs across all stages of life.

The program which serves the earliest stage of life is the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) which serves the nutritional needs of families with young children beginning from pregnancy. The Child Development Division serves the early childhood education needs of young children with six early childhood education centers across Santa Cruz County. The Child and Adult Care Food Program which provides reimbursement to care providers for both adults and children who apply and meet the nutritional standards of the program. The four family resource collectives are located across Santa Cruz County as well with La Manzana Community Resources center located in Watsonville, Mountain Community Resources located in Felton, Live Oak Community Resources and Nueva Vista Community Resources located in Santa Cruz. These four family resource collectives serve a wide range of needs within the community from public assistance application assistance, assistance in completing government forms, tutoring, translations, food pantries, health services, counseling and many more direct services. The Lift Line program provides transportation to seniors and individuals with disabilities. Meals on wheels provides a meal delivery service to seniors over 60 and also provides meals at dining centers across Santa Cruz County. Elderday Adult Day Health center provides health care for

older adults and individuals with disabilities as well as recreational activities through a day program which allows participants to remain living in their own homes while ensuring they are well cared for during program hours.

While all life stages are served through the different programs within Community Bridges, the 2019 annual report states that 46% of the people served are children under five. 9% are youth aged 6-18, 27% adults aged 19-59 and 18% seniors aged sixty and over (Community Bridges, 2019). The importance of offering services that are bilingual is evident in all programs as many participants speak Spanish, all publications are available in English and Spanish. A majority of program participants are low income households as various programs have income requirements to qualify for services.

Problem Description

Community Bridges is a large agency with a wide variety of programs which makes measuring client feedback and program effectiveness across the overall agency difficult. This is a problem within the agency because it may lead to gaps in the services that are being provided compared to the needs of the community. The agency cannot be completely effective in serving a community without taking the time to listen to the community and implement changes based on what the feedback is.

Contributing Factors

Gathering meaningful feedback is important when addressing community needs through needs assessments. It is important that all stakeholders have a voice in what is occurring in their

community. Community Bridges has not yet implemented a high quality feedback loop to bring attention to any gaps in service across the ten programs. While there have been surveys at Community Bridges in the past the feedback of these surveys has not been shared publicly with clients and the community. This can mean that clients may never know that their experiences are important to the organization. Feedback loops are crucial in non profit organizations because as Twersky & Reicheld (2019) state, clients of non profit organizations do not have the option of voicing their opinion through their wallet like for profit businesses. This means the organization has the duty to ensure that the clients being served are being treated according to the agency's mission by checking in and listening.

There is a lack of agency wide surveying for the opinion of clients who participate in the programs. Without this it is difficult to measure whether clients are receiving the quality of service that is expected across the agency. When each program has its own survey that lacks an agency wide structure there may lead to a disconnect in service delivery and client satisfaction. When surveying it is important that there is a way to measure demographic trends across the entire agency to avoid disconnect between programs and the overall agency mission and values. The Listen4Good program structure bridges this gap between programs by allowing a part of the survey to be used across the entire organization.

Consequences

Without a high quality feedback loop clients could feel that even when they voice their opinions and provide feedback that they are not being heard. A high quality feedback loop closes this divide by coming back to the client with a report explaining a summary of what the survey results were and what was done to address their requests and needs. This empowers the client by

making them part of the decision making process. Twersy & Reichield (2019) share that a client from the non profit called Our House in Arkansas who used Listen4Good to implement a feedback loop felt that the process showed her that the organization does want to hear from everyone and valued the input given. This is also an opportunity to share that perhaps not all requests could be accommodated while still acknowledging their feedback is important and the client was heard.

Without regularly surveying for quality of services there may be a lack of quality of service which may lead to negative experiences for clients which may push them away from much needed services. Surveying allows an agency to see where improvement is needed and if a specific program or demographic group is having a similar issue to address these issues where they arise and ensure quality service across the agency. Twersy & Reichield (2019) share the story of another non profit who before surveying for client feedback had clients who were overwhelmed by the intake process to the point of tears until the feedback loop brought this to the attention of the organization. This allowed the organization to take the time to listen and change their intake process to make sure clients did not feel distressed which was a simple change of expanding the waiting area, providing snacks and allowing a client who had forgotten a form to get them and come right back without losing their place in the waiting queue.

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Lack of high quality feedback loop	Lack of assessment tools to measure client feedback and program effectiveness.	Clients may not feel heard
No agency wide surveying for quality across demographic trends		There may be inconsistent experiences across different programs and demographic groups

<p>Need for direct client participation in program services</p>		<p>Clients may not feel they have agency as far as what services are available to them. An opportunity for clients to give suggestions on what services they would like to see is needed.</p>
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Capstone Project Description and Justification

Capstone Project

This capstone project will be to assist in the survey creation and begin the analysis process of an agency wide high quality feedback loop in a partnership with Listen4Good. This will be done across all ten programs for the first time. This begins with creating the surveys which allow for surveying for consistency in service while allowing for individual questions for each program unique services and then releasing them to all clients. Each program will have a month to collect feedback and then results will be analysed for trends. Agency changes will be implemented based on the results. The summary of feedback and changes will be openly published so that the clients can feel heard and know what changes occurred based on their feedback. The creation of these surveys will serve as a blueprint for the agency to use for years to come. Adjustments will be made in Survey Monkey where each program will find their individual questions to be adjusted for emerging needs. For programs who survey through a traditional format a design with program logo and current questions will be made so the programs can continue to use paper survey design as well.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project will be to ensure that quality service is being delivered. It takes the time to ensure clients who are stakeholders in their services are being heard and understand their voice carries weight to direct change in the agency. This will begin a cycle of feedback in the agency which can continue to repeat the process on a yearly basis. Each program will grow their capacity in surveying to continue this to allow for continuous quality improvement.

Project Justification

Feedback loops have been identified to be crucial assets to non profit organisations to improve and innovate their services. A study done with the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) by Daidone & Samuels (2019), showed that listening and improving based on feedback gave the best results in client satisfaction and meeting the organization's long term goal of reducing intergenerational poverty. NFP found that by listening to feedback they were able to engage their clients further by using social media platforms to connect with more participants and allow participants to connect with each other. This led to more connections with program alumni which fostered an environment where graduates of NFP are encouraged to come back and work for NFP creating a lifelong connection. This shows how powerful feedback loops can be in creating a two way relationship between organizations and their clients.

Project Implementation

This capstone project begins with the programming of 11 different surveys. One for each program with the exception of two for the Meals on Wheels program. As one will survey service for the congregate dining sites and one for the home delivered meals. Each survey consists of a first part with standardized questions that will assess client satisfaction across the entire agency for consistency, a demographics section, and then an individual portion to fit the needs of each program.

This survey design portion involved Tonje who is leading the Listen4Good survey launch by adjusting the standardized questions to fit the needs of all programs and receiving feedback from each program director to ensure it met their needs. Then, each program director submitted their individualized questions which were adjusted to fit the needs to the survey and for

consistency across the agency. The intern assisting with this program received feedback from Tonje and the program directors and programmed each survey through the Survey Monkey online platform where appropriate skip logic was applied when needed. This allows each program to be able to send links to this survey through email or text message. As requested by each program, surveys for paper distribution were also created.

Through trial and error, it was found that the online platform Canva was the best way to design the surveys for paper distribution. Each survey was customized using Canva to add in program logos and agency colors and fonts. This process included receiving feedback on my designs from Tonje and the program directors and making adjustments based on feedback. For example, when creating the Meals on Wheels surveys for paper distribution the program director for this program expressed concerns about accessibility. Explaining that based on the demographics of being mainly older adults of this program, the font would need to be larger and the English and Spanish translations would need to be on separate pages rather than the side by side translations that were being used for other programs.

After receiving feedback and approval from all the surveys, they will be launched to clients through mass emails, text messages and distributed through paper depending on the needs of the population being surveyed.. Each group of programs will be launched together ideally. The family resource collectives will launch together and the child development division and the senior programs will launch together. These staggered launch dates will allow for time to data analysis. An implementation plan, program launch timeline, and the start of responses received can be seen in the Scope of Work in section in Appendix A.

Assessment Plan

The primary goal of the capstone project is to have the surveys recorded in survey monkey and in paper formats. Effectiveness is measured through the ability of the project achieving completeness of a survey that is adaptable for the agency for years to come. By having the survey recorded in a digital Survey Monkey account the agency can easily add new questions, remove unneeded ones and adapt to emerging needs without significant future time investment after the initial creation. Long term effectiveness of feedback loops in the agency can be measured based on the response rate of the surveys and the changes that will be made in the agency based on the feedback received through these surveys.

Expected Outcomes

This project is expected to strengthen the relationship of the clients with Community Bridges by demonstrating that the voices and opinions of clients matter to the agency. This will allow clients to feel empowered about what services they have access to and know that their satisfaction is important to all programs in Community Bridges.

This will allow the agency to receive feedback on strengths and areas for improvement in customer service, client satisfaction and meeting the goals of each program. Based on feedback from clients appropriate improvements can be made to better serve clients. It is expected that this will build increased trust and satisfaction in clients towards Community Bridges. Initial response rates will be used to measure effectiveness for this survey cycle. An increase in response rates overtime and increased staff competence in surveying clients and continuing this feedback loop process will be measures that will remain ongoing in the agency to measure effectiveness over time past this initial evaluation. Increased response rates in the future will demonstrate that clients feel their voices are heard which may make them more likely to participate in surveys in

the future for Community Bridges. By the conclusion of this capstone project there is an expectation that all programs within the agency have begun their surveying process or are aware that their program now has a customizable survey that is built to evaluate their individual program needs while establishing a baseline to compare overall satisfaction across the agency to ensure all programs are meeting the shared values of Community Bridges.

Project Results

Eleven surveys were created and provided to programs for distribution, Lift Line, Meals on Wheels, La Manzana Resource Center, Nueva Vista Resource Center, Live Oak Resource Center, WIC and the Child and Adult Care Food Program completed their surveys. Analysis is completed for the Lift Line program and remains in progress for Meals on Wheels. The Child Development Division and Elderday program directors received their surveys which are ready for launch. The program directors of these two remaining programs have not decided when these surveys will be launched to clients. This may impact the 2021 survey cycle as there will not be a complete picture to measure client satisfaction across the agency with two programs totalling five sites missing from the data.

A total of 666 surveys were collected among the programs who completed their one month long survey cycle. In Appendix A, under the ‘Results’ table the exact number of surveys each program received can be found. The program who received the highest number of surveys was WIC which received 236 completed surveys. The WIC program director in order to best reach the clients of WIC direct outreach would be best. For one month a phone banking campaign occurred where participants were called and surveyed over the phone. This was highly

effective in receiving feedback. Lift Line and Meals on Wheels who distributed paper survey only received third and second highest rates of survey completion. Lift Line received 134 surveys and Meals on Wheels 106 surveys. The remaining programs who completed their surveys used a combination of having paper surveys available online and text or email instruction of the survey web link. Significantly lower rates of completed surveys were received through these distribution channels. These rate of surveys received based on distribution method highlights that there may be a need for increased direct outreach when surveying.

Conclusion & Recommendations

To maximize effectiveness of the Listen4Good model clear timelines should be established for programs to ensure surveys are launched seamlessly according to program category. In the future programs should be aware of when their questions are due to be finalized and when their survey launch and end date is set for. By setting clear timelines it will allow programs that serve similar populations to launch together and allow for effective comparative analysis in similar demographics. This will also allow for a full comparative analysis to be done at the end of the survey cycle. It is recommended that Community Bridges continue engaging in this feedback loop across all programs once per year to remain engaged with clients and continue to build trust year and year.

Personal Reflection

Creating the surveys which intended to create a consistent foundation for comparison of overall services across the agency while allowing for surveying of unique program needs taught me it can be difficult to compare across an agency with such diverse programs. This process showed that communication is essential to building surveys. Speaking with program directors of

the programs allowed for the understanding of the unique needs and concerns about each program which led to modifications that allowed the intended constituency to remain with enough questions to provide a unique insight to each program. The creation of these surveys will allow the agency to continue to make adjustments to the editable survey as change is needed through the years while maintaining consistency.

A success of the process of working on this capstone project was the discovery of how various software can facilitate the process. A master survey was created in Survey Monkey to select questions that could be moved for another program. This allowed for consistency in spelling and capitalization while saving time to ensure all surveys could be programmed in a timely manner. Creating the paper survey designs in Canva allowed the professionalism of using appropriate agency font, logos and a consistent design.

Through the process it was at times difficult to move forward with the project and launch surveys on time due to the lack of staffing and changes in services due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However while this delayed some programs from launching surveys according to the original intended timeline all are created and either in progress or ready to launch. As the agency returns to pre pandemic staffing levels and services it is expected that the Listen4Good survey process will continue to improve.

This capstone project addressed the broader social need of conducting needs assessments in communities to ensure the agency is responding to the needs of the communities it serves. These surveys asked clients to identify what program and services they participate in while also identifying what services they would like to see added, if appointment times are sufficient and if

they have access to the internet. The questions that asked about changes and assessing needs varied by program but all sought to understand community needs.

Beyond this project needs and asset assessments are essential to human services and should be conducted at increased rates when programs are being planned and implemented. Future capstone students should consider working on needs assessments to identify where the gap is between services available and what is needed in a community.

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Appendix A

Scope of Work

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines	Supporting Staff
Program surveys are designed in survey monkey and Canva, feedback is received and adjustments are made	Lifeline, Elderday and Meals on Wheels are ready for electronic and paper distribution WIC is ready for electronic distribution	March 2021-May 2021	Tonje Switzer
Program surveys are designed in survey monkey and Canva, feedback is received and adjustments are made	Family Resource Collectives surveys are ready for distribution	May 2021-June 2021	Tonje Switzer
Program surveys are designed in survey monkey and Canva, feedback is received and adjustments are made	Child Development Division are ready for distribution	June 2021-August 2021	Tonje Switzer
Feedback is received	Survey Totals are aggregated	August 2021-November 2021	Tonje Switzer
Feedback is shared with program leadership	Data is sent	August 2021-November 2021	Tonje Switzer
Changes and feedback is reported back to clients	Documents are created to report back to clients	August 2021-November 2021	Tonje Switzer

Results

Program Name	Surveys Received	Distribution Type
Lift Line	134	Paper Surveys Only
Meals on Wheels	106	Paper Surveys Only
La Manzana Community Resources	65	Paper Surveys, Text Distribution of Web Link
Nueva Vista Community Resources	32	Paper Surveys, Text Distribution of Web Link
Live Oak Community Resources	45	Paper Surveys, Text Distribution of Web Link
Mountain Community Resources	13	Paper Surveys, Text Distribution of Web Link
WIC	236	Phone Banking
Child and Adult Care Food Program	35	Web Link Distribution Only