

# LISTEN for GOOD

Advancing the practice of feedback loops in the social sector

An initiative of *Fund for* SharedInsight

## The Net Promoter System Applied to the Nonprofit Sector

In order to expand the practice of high quality feedback loops, we researched what options might be **simple** enough for the majority of nonprofits to implement and **standardized** enough to begin to create some meaningful benchmarks. A promising idea came from the business sector, where there is considerable experience in soliciting customer feedback, in the form of the Net Promoter System<sup>SM</sup> (NPS<sup>®</sup>) – a concept originally created by Bain & Company.

NPS is framed around the idea of asking customers if, based on their experiences, they would recommend a service to someone in a similar position. The standard NPS question specifically asks: **“How likely are you to recommend [x company, program, product or service] to a friend?” on a 0 to 10-point scale**, and then asks a qualitative follow-up question: “What is the reason for your score?” Many companies also add, “How can we improve?” An organization’s NPS score is calculated by taking the percentage of promoters (those who answer 9 or 10 on the question) less the percentage of detractors (those who answer 0 to 6). Active users of NPS typically examine feedback that comes from each category of respondent (promoter, detractor, etc.); conduct root-cause analysis to understand the reasons behind the detractor experiences in particular; and close the loop with customers so clients know the organization heard them.

Listen for Good (L4G) applies the NPS question, along with two open-ended questions, and adds two other questions that get at key dimensions of program/service quality. There are, in total, five standard questions that all participating organizations are required to ask as part of L4G:

- ▶ 1. How likely is it that you would recommend [...] to a friend or family member?
- ▶ 2. What is [...] good at?
- ▶ 3. What could [...] do better?
- ▶ 4. How much of a positive difference has [...] made in your life?
- ▶ 5. How often do staff at [...] treat you with respect?

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In addition, organizations can ask four optional demographic questions and add up to five custom questions to their survey.

**With the L4G initiative, we seek to build on the spirit of NPS to expand and strengthen beneficiary feedback loops in the social sector.** We seek learning partners who will join us in this exploratory initiative to see how a simple, semi-standard survey instrument and standardized analysis platform can generate meaningful feedback for improvement.

## A hypothetical example of an organization's Listen for Good feedback loop...

**A+ Career Counseling** is a nonprofit offering job-training services to adults. The organization is participating in Listen for Good because it wants to systematically collect feedback about how clients view their services. Since the training programs are four months long, the group decides to collect feedback at the two-month mark so that it will have time to act on the input and improve in each cycle. The plan is that just before the end of one of the classes halfway through the program, clients will be asked to take a few minutes to respond to a Net Promoter System survey, using the online platform SurveyMonkey. Most of the clients are expected to use their own smart phones, but the group will also make iPads available to survey takers who need them.

In the first survey round, there was a high response rate: 32 of the 40 people in the class, or 80 percent, completed the survey. When asked, "How likely is it that you would recommend A+ Career Counseling to a friend or family member who was struggling to get a job?", the scores were as follows: 13 (41%) gave a 9 or 10 (meaning they were very likely to recommend the program); seven (22%) gave a 7 or 8 (meaning they were less likely to recommend the program); and 12 (37%) gave a score of 0 through 6 (meaning they were unlikely to recommend the program). An NPS score is calculated by taking the percentage of so-called promoters, those who answered 9 or 10, and subtracting the percentage of so-called detractors, those who answered with a rating of 6 or lower. In this case, A+ Career Counseling earned an NPS score of four.

When staff members learned the results, they were disappointed. They thought the score would be really high. At the same time, they realized they didn't know what to expect. What was a realistic goal for their program? How would other classes of participants score? What scores do similar programs get from their own feedback surveys? A+ Career Counseling was able to put its score in context because participating in Listen for Good means having access to important benchmarks. Referencing the data, the group found that the average NPS score for comparable programs was -10.

But even with an NPS score well above average, A+ Career Counseling remained committed to making improvements based on other survey questions, such as what clients like best and least about the program. Respondents, promoters especially, cited the hours of the classes, and the individual coaching, and resume help as the best aspects of the program. The weaknesses, especially cited by detractors, included the very strict attendance policy, and the long wait times when calling the office to schedule one-on-one coaching and resume-assistance appointments.

To close the feedback loop, instructors shared and addressed the survey results with the class the week after participants took the survey. The instructors explained that, despite the negative feedback, the group's strict attendance policy served a purpose and wouldn't be changing. They did report, though, that the organization was already looking into solutions to help with the call wait times, such as adding more receptionists at certain hours to better handle calls or instituting an online signup.

A+ Career Counseling is looking forward to the possible changes and to continuing to collect client feedback in the coming survey rounds.