



## Gaining Staff Buy-in for Data Collection and Entry

In resettlement work, when staff time and capacity are limited, data-related tasks can sometimes feel much less important than delivering services to clients. Staff in charge of data entry may feel overwhelmed by other responsibilities or feel a duty to prioritize client-facing work. On the other hand, staff in charge of managing data quality may need to give their peers constructive feedback or implement new data processes, and may struggle to do this in light of the challenges their teammates face. This guide shares tips and talking points for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff to help gain colleagues' buy-in for data collection and entry, while remaining responsive and respectful.

### Factors that Increase Buy-in

**You are more likely to get complete, high-quality data when staff members:**

- Clearly understand the value of quality data collection for improving service delivery
- See their data-related work reflected in team data shares, data-driven programmatic changes, or other data communication efforts
- Can easily access clear, written guidelines outlining data quality and completeness criteria
- Have the opportunity to voice concerns or sources of confusion and to feel heard
- Are empowered with effective tools to review and correct their own work

### Engaging Your Colleagues in Data Conversations

Whenever possible, engage your fellow team members in conversation about the role of data in their work. Invite them to consider and share the data that is useful to them. Meetings and workshops allow you to engage staff in a two-way dialogue about data quality standards, best practices, and the types of support available. For example, you can hold:

- **Brainstorming sessions** to help you decide what data to collect, beyond what is required by funders, to help you learn about your programming and make decisions

- **Periodic meetings** with staff to train them on data collection and entry best practices, provide updates on key processes, or discuss the need for additional support
- **Regular data shares** (on a quarterly, semi-annual, or even annual basis) to showcase key findings or start conversations about potential action items resulting from the findings

Consider using Switchboard’s [End-of-Project Learning Meeting Template](#) to include your team in discussions about how to shape future programming based on the results you measured.

## Sample Scripts to Increase Staff Buy-In

These sample scripts contain key talking points to help you put in place the factors outlined above. You may use these as a starting point, adapting them to your context as needed.

### Explore Challenges and Provide Support

Remember: **you won’t be able to remove every data quality barrier** your team faces. Certain system settings or compliance requirements that are out of your control may present difficulties for your team. Take the time to **listen and acknowledge staff members’ concerns** to show that you recognize the challenges they are facing. Then, provide clear guidance on what you can and cannot change, and commit to a set of next steps to implement the changes that are within your control.

#### Talking Points

**Start by inviting a conversation about challenges with data collection:**

- *From your perspective, what are the main areas for improvement in our data collection and entry system?*
- *What are the barriers that make it more difficult for you to complete your data tasks?*

**If you notice a specific issue, address it directly:**

*I’ve noticed that [specific data task or quality standard] seems to be causing difficulties. Can you share more about the challenges you encounter when you’re trying to do this? Then we can discuss potential solutions, so you have the support you need to work on this going forward.*

**Explain expectations related to data quality:**

*When we talk about data being “high-quality” and “complete,” here is what we mean: [outline your team’s data quality criteria].*

*If you are ever unsure about the standards for complete, high-quality data, you can find those here: [provide link or instructions for accessing written guidance].*

If you aren’t sure how to get started with developing documentation on data quality standards and self-assessment tools, consult Switchboard’s [Sample Data Quality Assurance Standard Operating Procedures \(SOPs\)](#) and [Improving Data Quality in Case Management Programs](#).

**Support with learning and normalize mistakes:**

*Here is a [checklist, self-assessment tool, or other method of evaluating their own work] that you can use to check your data work. You can use this tool to catch any mistakes you might have made. I encourage you to build time into your calendar to use this tool to review your data. This happens to everyone, and I always find it easier when I have tools to check myself so I can fix any of my own mistakes.*

**Where applicable, explain why certain changes cannot be made:**

*Unfortunately, we are not able to change [component of the system or process] because of [if possible, provide a clear explanation, such as funder reporting requirements].*

*However, here is what we can do to help support you on this moving forward: [outline available support systems—such as office hours, written guidance, or changes to other parts of the system or process—that will help address the concerns].*

**Efforts to gain staff buy-in for data collection are more effective when leaders are on board. Switchboard’s [5 Tips for M&E Culture Change](#) offers guidance for leaders on M&E priorities; Switchboard’s guide on [Organizational Resilience](#) includes considerations for leaders regarding staff workloads.**

## Connect Quality Data to Program Sustainability

Whenever possible, put the focus on what the data will help your program achieve (going beyond compliance). Highlight that data is an essential tool for showing that hard work is leading to positive outcomes for clients and helping to secure future program funding.

You can also highlight the ability of data to answer questions team members have about their work and position yourself as a partner in helping synthesize the information they want to learn. For tips on collecting data that helps your team learn what they want to know, watch this Switchboard Short: [From Getting the Data You Need, to Getting the Data You Want](#).

### Talking Points

- *While we need to submit complete and quality data to our funder to remain compliant, this data is also very valuable for service delivery. It's the main tool we use when making decisions, describing our successes, and writing proposals for new funding. For example, if we collect quality data on [example topic], it can lead to [possible outcome].*
- *It can be tough to balance data tasks with the direct services you're providing, especially when clients are navigating so many challenges. At the same time, having clear, accurate data helps us understand our clients' experiences and where we may be able to strengthen our services. The hope is that we find a way to balance collecting and using data in a way that supports staff and clients overall.*
- *Here's an example of how we have used data to shape our programming in the past: [include a specific, relevant example].*
- *What information would be helpful to you in your work? I'd love to help find a way to use our data to get you answers that could make your job easier.*

## Close the Loop

Make sure staff members see the value and usefulness of the data they collect and enter. This may include sharing results and findings, as well as inviting them to share their thoughts about how the data they have collected can be used.

### Talking Points

*Thank you all for your hard work on collecting and entering data this quarter. Based on the findings from the data you submitted, [choose one or more of the following options]:*

- *We have made a significant impact on our clients' lives. Here are a few highlights that demonstrate what an important role our team has played in improving outcomes for newcomers recently: [describe key outcomes].*
- *We are considering the following adjustments to our programming to better serve our clients: [outline the main changes]. What do you think?*
- *We [are currently developing a proposal for or have been awarded] funding to expand our project. The data you collected and entered helped us demonstrate not only that we've been effective at meeting clients' needs but also that even more clients need our services.*

*I want to make sure we continue to gather information that is useful for decision making in your work. Please feel free to provide your feedback or suggestions on additional data points that you think would be relevant for us to explore collecting in future cycles.*

## Conclusion

Establishing effective data collection systems in resettlement programs requires teamwork. Whether you are in a leadership position or simply responsible for data quality assurance, you can take steps to help your team members feel more supported in doing the tasks necessary to maintain data quality and completeness. It will likely take multiple conversations to achieve this goal, but the sample scripts above are a starting point for these important discussions.

## Resources

[Data Quality Assurance & Compliance Checklist](#) – This Switchboard tool includes considerations and resources for improving data quality in your context.

[Planning for Data Collection and Quality Assurance](#) – In this Switchboard self-paced eLearning course, you will find relatable scenarios of data staff working to secure the timely collection and entry of high-quality data.

[Organizational M&E Standards and Capacity Assessment](#) – You can use this Switchboard tool to better understand the current M&E capacity of your organization and identify areas for improvement.

*The IRC received competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant #90RB0053. The project is 100% financed by federal funds. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.*