Data System Scoping Tool

Template

This tool is meant to lay the foundation for a successful selection and implementation of a new data system. This tool can also be adapted to scope define requirements for improvements or integrating new functions into existing technology.

You can use the resulting document to support you in your selection of a vendor and a system that matches your organization's needs, through the articulation of the scope and requirements for a data system or technology.

To use this tool, start by reviewing and responding to the guiding questions below. These responses can be synthesized to form a short brief that can be (1) shared internally to align team members to the goals of the data system and (2) shared externally to guide conversations with vendors.

This document includes the following sections:

- **Background Information** - Describe what your organization does
- **Project Objectives** - Articulate the why of the project
- **Project Scope** - Articulate what data/programs will be included
- **Project Planning** - Begin to set up project structures
    - Key Staff/Roles
    - Budget
    - Timeline
- **Requirements** - Describe requirements of the system

Background Information

Provide a brief description of your organization and what it does

Project Objectives

This section seeks to consolidate your ideas, goals, and objectives for your new (or improved) data system. This section serves as the foundation for much of the content and decisions in the following sections.

Problem statement(s) and users

These questions support the identification of the specific problem(s) or challenge(s) that the data system will address, in addition to who will use the system.

What problem(s) does this product solve? *This will help define your objectives of the system*

Who will use this product? *(i.e. specific staff, all staff, will clients interact with it?)*

Critical Success Factors

Critical success factors are goals or functions that the system needs to satisfy in order to consider the implementation a success.

Articulate 5-10 goals of functions to act as Critical Success Factors for this project.
Ensure some are tied back to solving the problems articulated above.
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Example of Critical Success Factors

- **System must maintain individual-level records on every individual who receives services by the organization** (have those records be searchable and well organized for staff to leverage)

  - Individual records should include basic tombstone data including other standard information such as demographics, and other standard intake information.

- **System must maintain detailed records for each client at every stage of service delivery** (From Inquiry, to Screening/intake, to Program Participation)

- **System must be able to allow volunteers to self participate in the system via creating their own profile, documenting hours worked, being able to access documents and register for information sessions**

- **System must provide streamlined approach to capturing data from participants after their participation in programs** (To support Outcomes & Reporting)

- **System must reinforce collaboration, alignment, and communication among organization staff**

- **System must easily produce data extracts / reports that can be used for funder reporting and/or other ad hoc analysis**

Project Scope

The purpose of this section is to help you identify (1) the specific programs or business functions (HR, Finance, etc.) and (2) the relevant data will be housed in the data system. We recommend reviewing the Business Process Mapping tool for this section, because it will help you identify how the new data system will interact with existing processes.

For each program or business function fill out the follow table:
(Make a version of the following table for each program you intend to use the new data system)

Name of Program:		Approx # of staff user	Approx # of clients in program
Program Description:			
Current Systems and Tools: *include CRMs, databases, data collection tools, and forms* • • • •			
Does this program have historical data to be considered for migration? (Y/N) **If yes, please describe:**			
Links to supporting documents (process maps, data inventory, contract requirements)			

Project Planning

This section will help identify key project planning details before embarking on requirements identification or researching platforms. It is helpful to articulate roles and responsibilities of the team involved, along with key constraints and considerations for the overall project.

Key Staff/Roles

Understanding who will be involved in the project and how project team members interact will help decisions be made more quickly and ensure the team is aligned on their roles and responsibilities for this project.

Who will be responsible for moving the work forward, calling check-in meetings, and getting approvals? *This is usually the project lead who leads the coordination of the work across team members and understands how each piece of work contributes to the overall objectives.*

Who will be responsible for providing approvals and for what? *This is usually the project/executive sponsor that can sign off on spending requests and champions the work at the executive/leadership level*

Are there staff that need to be informed but not involved? *This is usually staff who function in an enabling capacity like IT or Finance.*

Is there anyone else that will be involved in the project (including contractors)? *Briefly name them and describe their role and responsibilities*

If preferred these roles could be articulated in a RACI chart, see Project Governance Guide

Budget

Knowing the budget for the cost of the system, the implementation supports or resources required by staff (including time for training), and the ongoing cost of licenses is an important consideration for data system selection.

What is the overall budget available for the implementation of the data system? *This figure should include the costs to purchase the system (i.e. licensing), to pay a vendor to support configuration and implementations, to offset staff time to participate in scoping and implementation, and to cover potential costs for integrations to existing data systems. This figure will be further broken down as potential systems are identified and needs are prioritized.*

Are there any considerations for the above budget number? *Does it need to be spent by a specific date or are their limitations to what can be spent in each fiscal year?*

What is the budget for ongoing maintenance and licenses? *Will an external consultant be maintained or a database admin hired on staff? How many licenses will be required across the org and what is the annual cost?*

Timeline/Milestones

This section will help you Identify key milestones or other dependencies that could affect how the rollout of your new system unfolds Thinking about this factors will help you to determine which of your programs or business functions should be prioritized, and will help you plan for your change management needs.

Are there specific milestones that will affect the implementation of this data system? *This could be the launch of a new program or new program cohorts, the end/beginning of a funding period, changes to funding reporting requirements, the retirement of an existing system, or a date in which the outputs of this new system are needed.*

Example High-level Timeline
This is an example of the phases of work before a vendor or system is selected and many organizations take 6-12 months to move through these steps intentionally to ensure a good fit for their organization.

Activity/Phase	Start Date	End Date
Scoping ● Filling out this document ● Getting approval ● Creating process maps for all programs or business functions for the system ● Create Requirements Document		
Vendor/System Research ● Review potential vendors/systems		
Vendor interviews or RFP process ● Reach out to top picks or draft RFP		
Vendor/System Selection		

Requirements

Requirements describe what functions you need the data system to be able to do. These can be written in clear plain language that is reflective of the activities of your organization. These requirements can then be prioritized for what the system must do (i.e., high priority and non-negotiable), what is highly desired (i.e., medium priority), and what is a nice-to-have (i.e., low priority).

Requirements are most easily recorded in a spreadsheet, so that they can be categorized and are filtered. We have created a template and an example document which can be found [here](#).

Below are some definitions and examples of types of requirements to consider:

Functional Requirements
Describe the ways a product must behave including:

- How will different types of staff interact with the system? What user permission(s) would they have?
- Are there any deployment requirements? (i.e., timeline, or releasing it to a specific department)
- What are the environmental needs i.e
  - Is there any compliance needed to any relevant regulatory body?
  - Is there any requirement for data encryption?

Technical Requirements
Describes the general characteristics of the software/technology including:
- Hardware needs
- Third-party integration needs (i.e., data system must be compatible with Qualtrics (survey software)
- Data Integration needs (i.e needs to bulk upload/download an Excel file)
- Security needs (i.e., data storage needs to be within Canada)
- Maintenance needs
- Testing needs (i.e., needs to have a sandbox where testing can happen before deployment)

Implementation Requirements
Describes additional needs the organization might seek to include in a contract with a partner. Common items can include:
- Change management needs (i.e the partner will help with the strategic thinking and deployment in preparing the organization for this change)
- Ongoing technical support needs (i.e the partner will include hours as part of the contract to provide guidance on technical questions)
- Ongoing helpdesk support needs (i.e the partner will provide customer service on the day to day to staff as questions come up)