



Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin Wisdom Seeking Toolkit

March 4, 2020

Acknowledgements: This toolkit was developed by Calgary Neighbourhood researchers using the Siim 'ohksin: Wahkotiwin Oral Validation (Evaluation) process (2019) developed by Suzanne McLeod. Suzanne McLeod is Anishinabe from Sagkeeng First Nation (Fort Alexander), MB. She has worked extensively within Indigenous communities as a researcher, writer, and educator with a focus on community, program, and policy development.

INTRODUCTION

The Crime Prevention Investment Plan (CPIP) supports time-bound, evidence-based programs focused on crime prevention. The long-term goals of CPIP are to reduce criminal offending or re-offending and enhance wellbeing. These goals are high-level, have multiple co-occurring causal factors, and are difficult to measure at the program level. Because of this, CPIP has also identified mid-term outcomes that research shows contribute to the long-term goals. In the mid-term, CPIP seeks positive change to risk and protective factors related to criminal offending or re-offending.

CPIP funds programs using either a [social development](#) lens, which can focus on early intervention for people most at risk of involvement in crime or prevention of reoffending for those already engaged with the criminal justice system; or the [Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin](#) approach towards crime prevention among Indigenous¹ people. Likewise, the evaluation of CPIP-funded programs incorporates both Western approaches and Indigenous evaluation methodology, known as wisdom seeking².

This toolkit is for [Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin](#) programs and other stakeholders. It provides a step-by-step guide to wisdom seeking and links to supporting resources.

A separate toolkit for programs using a social development approach is available. For more information on the rationale underlying CPIP's evaluation strategy, see the Framework for Wisdom Seeking and Evaluation. Both are available in the "Evaluation" section of www.calgary.ca/CPIP.

GOALS AND PRINCIPLES OF WISDOM SEEKING/EVALUATION

CPIP's goals for evaluation/wisdom seeking are to assess whether programs are being implemented as planned and whether they are contributing to mid-term outcomes. The following principles provide the foundation for CPIP evaluation/wisdom seeking:

1. In support of the TRC Calls to Action³, the funder accepts wisdom seeking as a valid approach to evaluation.
2. All programs are required to collect data/information and use it to report on program outcomes. Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin programs use oral wisdom seeking, which parallels Western written methods, as well as surveys developed for Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin. Social development programs can choose the data/information collection and analysis methods that work best for them.
3. Both funded programs and the funder strive for continuous improvement.

BACKGROUND ON WISDOM SEEKING

Wisdom seeking is oral, grounded in relationship, Natural Law, and ceremony and is woven into the fabric of Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin. Using a written format to document wisdom seeking and parallels with Western methods limits our ability to fully understand and communicate Indigenous ways of knowing and worldviews. This is especially true of descriptions of ceremony. Descriptions of ceremony are included in this toolkit only to explore parallels with Western evaluation methods. Readers should not use these descriptions as a guide to conducting ceremonies and should approach each program Elder to request guidance on the correct protocols and approaches to each unique culture. Creators of

this toolkit acknowledge the challenges and opportunities in this effort and seek to enter into ethical spaces with Indigenous communities to find solutions and best practices as the experience unfolds.

Indigenous communities are in the process of unearthing and remembering their true and validated values, teachings, and norms in the face of historical and ongoing colonial conquest^{3,4}. This situation means that understanding of protocols, roles, and ceremonies may shift and evolve. Given these challenges, when uncertainties about wisdom seeking and Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin arise, Ceremonial Elders and Indigenous communities are the authority. Much of the ceremonial information in this toolkit follows Blackfoot practice. Ceremonial Elders and Knowledge Keepers from different traditions may have somewhat different practices. These guidelines represent current understanding, which may evolve.

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STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

The [illustration below](#) is an overview of the steps in the process. More details on each step follow.

Figure A. Overview of Steps



STEP 1: Pre-Work for Western evaluation

Part A. Develop/revise Theory of Change

Each program will develop a one-page Theory of Change (template available [here](#)). Do not change the section titles, font size, spacing, or margins in the template.

A TOC includes the following sections:

- Crime Prevention Level - Early Identification, Prevention of Reoffending, or Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin (from CPIP application)
- Need - Statistical information about the population served, include references (City of Calgary Community Profiles, available at <http://calgary.ca/communities>, provide demographic, economic, and housing information for specific communities and Calgary as a whole.)
- Goal - Short sentence stating program goal, references not needed
- Strategy - Description of strategies program will use to achieve the goal, references not needed
- Rationale - Summary of key research findings supporting why the strategy is expected to advance the program goal, include references
- Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin Surveys - List two to three of the [Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin Surveys](#)

Partnership Specialists approve TOCs and file them with CPIP.

Part B. Select surveys

Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin Indicator surveys (SWI) are a Western written method used to collect data for these programs. The goals of SWI surveys are to (1) count the number of participants; and (2) assess whether participants are changing between the pre-test and post-test. Suzanne MacLeod, program Elders and Knowledge Keepers, funded programs, and City staff collaborated to develop SWI surveys as part of the creation of the [Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin: Research Brief and Strategy](#). In a ceremony on June 28, 2017, the Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin strategy, including the surveys, were validated. Current versions of the surveys are available [here](#).

All programs are required to complete Survey 70 – Understanding Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin, that is composed of one question - “I understand what Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin means.” They should also select one or, at the most, two from the additional surveys available:

Survey 71 - Understanding the Role of Colonial History and Residential Schools

Survey 72 - Understanding Risk and Protective Factors

Survey 73 - Understanding Natural Laws and Ceremony

Survey 74 - Understanding Cultural Knowledge and Personal Resilience

To decide what additional survey/s to use, read the title and all questions in each survey. Choose the survey/s with the questions that align most closely with the program’s goals and activities. Partnership Specialists, with the support of City/CPIP researchers, can assist programs in selecting surveys.

Part C. Plan data collection/entry

[Appendix A](#) provides guidelines for collecting and entering survey data. Programs should create a plan for survey data collection and data entry using those guidelines.

Part D. Prepare for Year End Report

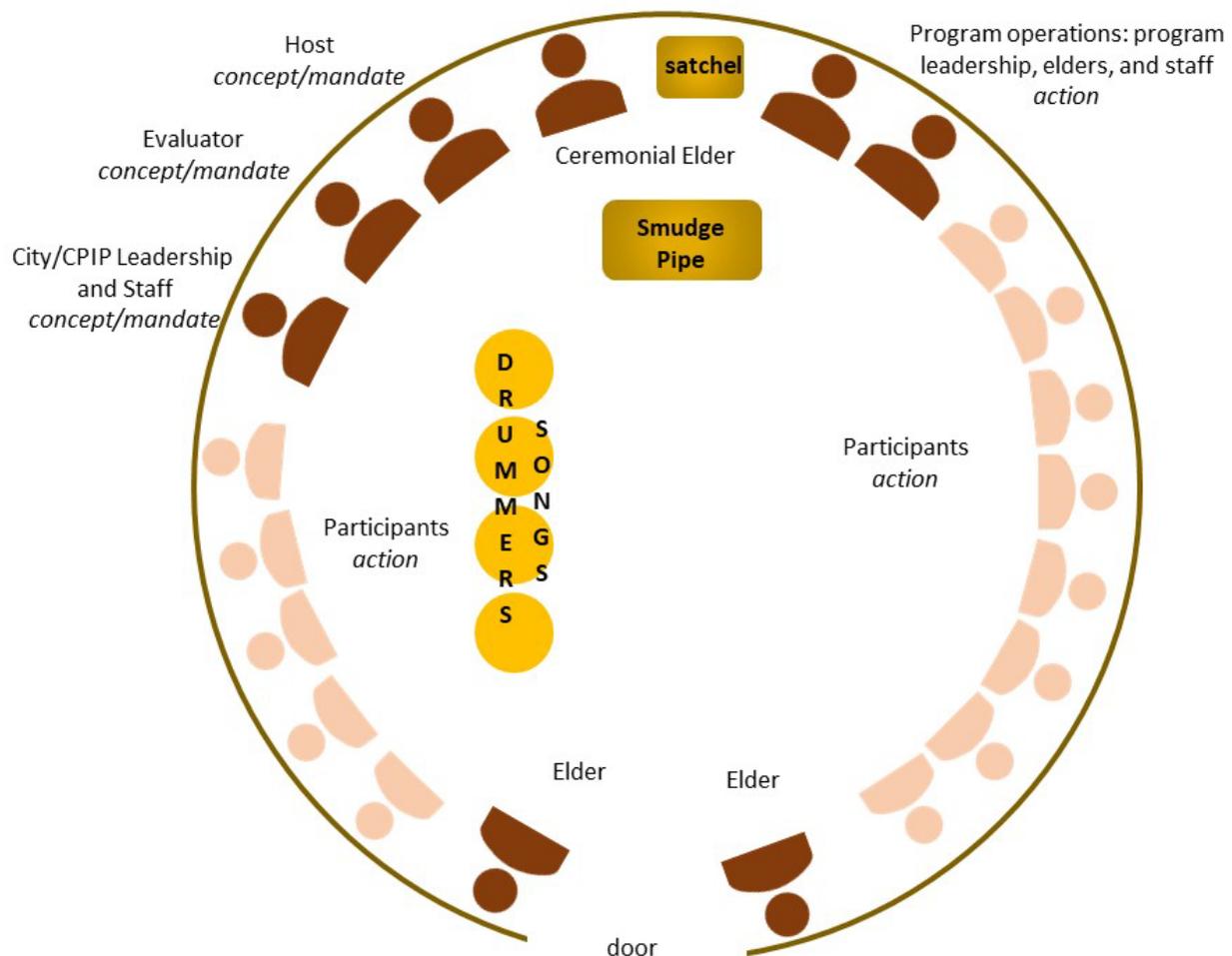
Programs are required to submit a brief Year End Report in FIMS once a year. Program staff should closely review the Year End Report form early in the year to ensure they are collecting necessary information (sample form available [here](#)).

STEP 2: Pipe Ceremony

Typically, there will be one Pipe Ceremony for all Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin programs held at the beginning of a funding cycle. The most recent Pipe Ceremony was in March of 2019 and included all projects funded for 2020 through 2022. Another Pipe Ceremony will likely not be required until after 2022.

The ceremony is conducted in a circle. [Figure B](#) illustrates how participants are arranged. In Blackfoot tradition, those who represent the *concept/mandate* are seated to the left of the Ceremonial Elder while those who represent *action* are seated to their right. Representing the *concept/mandate* means keeping focus on the substantive reason for the gathering. In the case of CPIP, the *concepts/mandates* are the funding goals of establishing/re-establishing a relationship and connection to other people, community, traditional practices and values, enhancing wellbeing, and reducing offending and reoffending. The Host, evaluator, and City/CPIP leaders and staff represent the *concept/mandate*. Representing *action* means being responsible for the activity that accompanies the concept/mandate. In the case of CPIP, the *action* is the program. *Action* is represented by program participants and program leadership, Elders, and staff. In addition, there are Elders seated on either side of the door to support the *concept/mandate* side (seated left of door) and the *action* side (seated right of door).

Figure B. Diagram of Circle (Pipe ceremony and Truthing ceremony)



The Pipe ceremony creates a sacred commitment between those who attend and the Creator. They commit to support the programs and help them to provide the best service possible to advance program goals. The order of events in a Pipe Ceremony is, generally:

1. Host welcomes attendees and leads introductions.
2. Host brings the satchel to the altar for witnesses to view and drummers sing and bring life to the Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin song.
3. The Ceremonial Elder starts the process with smudge.
4. The Ceremonial Elder asks a leader from each funded program to sit before them to accept the satchel and song and make a commitment to Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin.
5. The Ceremonial Elder and Host formally acknowledge and thank all who have participated.

Below is additional information on roles and responsibilities, to supplement what is described in the order of events.

The Ceremonial Elder is a person validated to conduct ceremonies. They bring their Smudge, Pipe, and other ceremonial tools to conduct the Pipe ceremony but are not responsible for organizing any aspect of the ceremony.

Ceremonial Elder - The Ceremonial Elder is a person validated to conduct ceremonies. They bring their Smudge, Pipe, and other ceremonial tools to conduct the Pipe ceremony but are not responsible for organizing any aspect of the ceremony. In the first few years of Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin the key Elders who contributed to the philosophy Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin will be asked to act as the Ceremonial Elder. Over time, these key Elders may instead sit at the door to monitor the process, and other Elders who have witnessed or supported will be asked to fill the role of Ceremonial Elder. These roles will be determined by the key Elders themselves, not the Host or funder.

Host - The Host represents The City/CPIP (the funder) and has cultural knowledge and validated rights. When City/CPIP staff change, this role is traditionally transferred. The Host is a co-facilitator and is also responsible for organizing the logistics of this ceremony. This includes scheduling, securing a location, bringing tobacco and asking a Ceremonial Elder to conduct the ceremony, inviting programs and City/CPIP staff, and securing tobacco and honorariums. Honorariums are provided for the Ceremonial Elder, helpers, and drummers, as necessary, and small gifts can be given to participants.

Evaluator - The evaluator is a CPIP/City researcher who acts as co-facilitator, with the Host.

City/CPIP Leaders and Staff - Given the importance of relationship and oral tradition to Indigenous ways of knowing, it is important for City/CPIP leaders and staff to engage directly in Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin by attending ceremony. At the ceremony their role is to listen and be present, support programs, and look for areas of improvement.

Program Leadership, Elders, and Staff - Leadership, Elders, and staff from funded programs, or the larger organization in which the program is housed, make a commitment to provide the best service possible to advance program goals.

Participants - Because the Pipe Ceremony is usually held before the program has begun, there may not be a large number attending.

Western Data Collection

After the ceremony is complete, City/CPIP researchers and other City staff will work together to complete a [Ceremony Documentation Form](#), creating a written record of the ceremony.

STEP 3: Implement program and conduct surveys

During program implementation programs should follow the plan developed in [Step 1 – C](#) to collect and enter Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin surveys.

STEP 4: Truthing Ceremony/Circle Process

The Truthing Ceremony is inextricably linked with the Pipe Ceremony (described in [Step 2](#)). It typically occurs annually when a program ends. In most years each program has a separate Truthing Ceremony, but at the end of the funding cycle one combined ceremony may be held for all Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin programs. The Truthing Ceremony is conducted in a circle with participants arranged in the same way as they were for the Pipe Ceremony (see [Figure B](#)).

The order of events in the Truthing Ceremony/Circle Process is, generally:

1. Host welcomes attendees and leads introductions.
2. Host brings the satchel to the altar for witnesses to view and drummers sing and bring life to the Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin song.
3. The Ceremonial Elder starts the process with a smudge.
4. The Ceremonial Elder invites each program participant, in a clockwise fashion, to sit in front of them and lights a Smudge. The Ceremonial Elder asks participants the following four questions:
 - What have you learned?
 - How will you use what you have learned?
 - How will you support Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin (and the individual program) in the future?
 - Are you willing to act as a support (in a cultural capacity)?

Participants have as much time as they want to respond, they are not interrupted, and they can speak as loudly or softly as they want. This process is a conversation between the individual and the Smudge or Creator. The Ceremonial Elder may say a few words of support to each person after their truthing. This portion of the ceremony is also referred to as Gathering the Stories.

5. The Ceremonial Elder and Host formally acknowledge and thank all who have participated.

In years when a combined ceremony is held, involving all Siim ohksin Wahkotiwin programs, after the oral truthing the program leaders share the program's Oral Story or the larger story of the combined funded programs. This is followed by a Pipe Ceremony in which Drummers sing the Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin song, the funder provides a summary of the written evaluation, and the host acknowledges their responsibility to Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin by putting the written evaluation in the satchel. This is usually followed by a round dance and feast

Below is additional information on roles and responsibilities, to supplement what is described in the order of events.

Ceremonial Elder - In years when each program hosts its own Truthing Ceremony/Circle Process a program's Elder may be asked to serve as the Ceremonial Elder.

Host - In years when a combined ceremony is held the Host organizes the event, otherwise program staff do so.

Evaluator - The evaluator is a CPIP/City researcher who acts as co-facilitator, with the Host. They are responsible for meeting with program staff and participants prior to the ceremony to obtain informed consent and for recording the oral truthing during the ceremony. In years when a combined ceremony is held the evaluator provides a summary of the written evaluation.

Participants - In forming a connection with the smudge/Creator and answering the questions, participants play the central role in the Truthing Ceremony/Circle process. Representing *action*, they are storytellers. Without their involvement there is no truthing. The oral truthing can be very personal and may bring up strong emotions. Program leadership, Elders, and staff, in addition to others attending the ceremony, provide reassurance, guidance, and support to participants.

City/CPIP Leaders and Staff - Given the importance of relationship and oral tradition to Indigenous ways of knowing, it is important for City/CPIP leaders and staff to engage directly in Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin by attending ceremony, especially when it is a joint ceremony with multiple programs. At the ceremony their role is to witness the discussion, support participants, and look for areas of improvement.

Program Leadership, Elders, and Staff - Before, during, and after the ceremony they guide, support and ensure the safety of participants who may be emotionally affected by participating in the truthing. In years when each program hosts its own Truthing Ceremony/Circle Process program staff organize the event and the program Elder may be asked to be the Ceremonial Elder.

Western Data Collection - Prior to the ceremony, City/CPIP researchers will work with program staff and Elders to gain participant informed consent and ensure their safety and confidentiality. They will unobtrusively record participant responses during the oral truthing portion of the ceremony. After the ceremony is complete, City/CPIP researchers and other City staff will work together to complete a [Ceremony Documentation Form](#), creating a written record of the ceremony.

In forming a connection with the smudge/Creator and answering questions, participants play the central role in the Truthing Ceremony/Circle Process. Representing action, they are the storytellers. Without them there is no truthing.

STEP 5: Finding new directions

This step is conducted by City/CPIP researchers and accommodates the Western approach to analysis of data collected during the Truthing ceremony. The recorded audio will be transcribed, and City/CPIP researchers will theme responses against the cultural principles of Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin - Respect, Responsibility, Accountability, and Discipline. If capacity allows, responses will be coded separately by program and also across all programs. City/CPIP researchers and Partnership Specialists will share themes with program staff and the Elder for each program. Researchers will revise themes and findings until all parties are satisfied with their validity.

STEP 6: Complete Year End Report in FIMS

Each year programs are required to submit a brief Year End Report in FIMS. (Sample form is available [here](#).) Partnership Specialists review Year End Reports to ensure that all information is filled out correctly and any anomalies are explained. If revisions or additional information is necessary, Partnership Specialists may send Year End Reports back to programs before approving them.

STEP 7: Setting up a new camp

This step accommodates Western consultation between the funder and the funded program. Partnership Specialists and City/CPIP researchers compare the TOC to themes from the Truthing ceremony, the SWI reports, and the Year End reports. Partnership Specialists meet with funded programs to discuss these comparisons and, as needed, to revise programming, SWI surveys selected, and the TOC.

UPDATES TO TOOLKIT

While Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin draws on longstanding Indigenous culture and traditions, identifying parallels between wisdom seeking and Western written evaluation techniques and implementing parallel processes is new. Western evaluation methods, wisdom seeking, and the connections between them will develop and evolve as the work unfolds. As the CPIP Wisdom Seeking and Evaluation Framework is revisited this toolkit will be updated to reflect changes

Suggested citation: Calgary Neighbourhoods. 2020. Siim ohksin: Wahkotiwin Wisdom Seeking Toolkit. (Calgary, AB: Crime Prevention Investment Plan, The City of Calgary)

References and Notes

1. For the purposes of this document, Indigenous refers to not only the legal definition contained in Section 35 of the 1982 Canadian Constitution Act, First Nations, Metis and Inuit, but also the historic – individual, familial, and communal definitions of what it means to be an Indigenous person in Canada. The complex history and current scope of the political, cultural, economic and social influences on Indigenous communities results in a spectrum of Indigenous identity at both the individual and community levels.
2. Term is borrowed from University nuhelot’jne thaiyots’j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills | Be determined. Together we succeed. <http://www.bluequills.ca/>. Accessed February 11, 2020.
3. Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; 2015.
[http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future July 23 2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf).
4. White Goose Flying: A Report to Calgary City Council on the Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation, Calls to Action. Calgary: Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC) and The City of Calgary; 2016.
<https://postmediacalgaryherald2.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/white-goose-flying-calls-to-action-cauac.pdf>.
5. Wilcoxon F. Individual Comparisons by Ranking Methods. *Biom Bull.* 1945;2(6):80-83.

Appendix A. Guidelines for survey data collection and entry

Use these guidelines to develop a data collection and entry strategy for your program.

Participants to include

All participants should be invited to complete surveys. Inviting all participants provides a more accurate count and more accurate results than only inviting a sample.

Procedures for giving surveys

The surveys are available in the “Evaluation” section of the [CPIP website](#). To be ethical and ensure the quality of the information, participants must be free to choose whether to take surveys and answers must be kept confidential. While staff should not pressure participants to take surveys, they should encourage them to do so and make survey completion part of programming, to the extent possible. To create a supportive environment for completing the survey, distribute it in a quiet space with minimal distractions. Participants may not be familiar with the teachings and concepts in the surveys, especially when they first see the questions in the pre-test, so staff should be available to help participants read and understand the questions. Whenever possible a Knowledge Keeper or Elder should be included in the process. While Elders and staff can support participants as they answer questions, to improve the accuracy of the information gathered, participants should answer questions themselves, questions should not be answered by staff on behalf of participants.

Both pre-tests and post-tests are required

Participants should be asked to complete surveys at least twice, once near the beginning of the program (pre-test) and again near the end of the program (post-test). Having two measures allows a more robust assessment of whether participants improve. Post-tests can be given more than once if it fits with the program schedule. Programs should wait two to three months before giving subsequent post-tests.

Key messages to share with participants when distributing surveys:

- Our funder requires us to invite all participants to take surveys.
- We’ll do the survey twice, once at the beginning of the program and again at the end.
- These surveys are important because they give us information about what you are getting out of the program.
- Your answers to survey questions are private, when we share the data your name will not be connected to your answers.
- Please answer these questions honestly and if there’s anything you don’t understand just ask.
- If a question makes you uncomfortable you can skip it and go on to the next one.
- You are not required to do the surveys, but we do encourage you to take the surveys, as they provide important information.

Entering survey data online and storing paper surveys

After participants take surveys their answers should be entered into the online system. It is critical that staff do not change participant answers before entering the information online, to ensure accurate results. If staff notice information they believe to be incorrect on the intake form, they can check with participants and make changes as needed.

It is critical that staff do not change participant answers before entering the information online, to ensure accurate results.

Although CPIP is a different funding stream than FCSS, both CPIP and FCSS survey data are entered into FSII: <https://fsii.calgary.ca>. A username and password are required to entered data. Staff cannot request a username/password for themselves, program managers need to make this request by emailing fcss.indicators@calgary.ca.

To minimize the chance for errors, best practice is to enter survey data into FSII soon after it is collected, ideally by the 15th of the month after it was collected. Following this schedule will ensure programs are prepared for semi-annual and annual reports. Programs should follow their organization’s rules for how long to keep paper surveys. CPIP recommends keeping all forms (intake, pre-test, and post-tests) at least until a participant’s last post-test has been entered into FSII.

Once a month, City/CPIP researchers offer data entry training that is open to both CPIP and FCSS-funded programs. Everyone with a username/password is notified about these trainings. For more information email fcss.indicators@calgary.ca. The [FSII User Reference Guide](#) is available online and also provides step-by-step directions for entering survey data into the online system.

Data Analysis and Reports

Twice a year City/CPIP researchers analyze data and produce reports based on information entered into FSII. Reports include a count of participants, and pre-test scores, post-test scores, change between pre-test and post-test, and analysis of whether the change is statistically significant for the survey as a whole and each individual survey question. If a change is statistically significant it means that the change is not due to chance or random variation. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test⁵ is used to assess statistical significance.

For significance tests to be run, there must be at least 25 cases where the participant answers the question on both the pre-test and the post-test. If they skip one out of five questions on either the pre-test or post-test the data for that one question is not valid and cannot be analyzed. However, the data for the remaining four questions, where the question is answered on both the pre-test and post-test, is analyzed. Programs that are concerned about not having at least 25 participants should consult their Partnership Specialist.

City/CPIP researchers produce two types of reports. Program Impact reports are run for each program and include all participants in that program. They are produced twice a year in July and January. Collective Impact reports are run for each SWI survey and include all participants that respond to that survey across multiple programs. Collective Impact reports are produced only once a year, in January. See [Figure C](#) for details on SWI survey reports.

Figure C. SWI Survey Reports

	Semi-Annual	Annual
<i>Coverage period</i>	Six months January 1 to June 30	Twelve months January 1 to December 31
<i>Data entry deadline</i>	July 15	January 15
<i>Type of Reports Produced</i>	Program Impact	Program Impact and Collective Impact

Note on Changing Surveys

To change surveys, programs need to consult with their Partnership Specialist and update their TOC. Adding a new survey once a program has started requires discontinuing all active participants and having them take a new pre-test. To minimize administrative burden and enhance the utility of reports it is best to add surveys between program cycles, after existing participants have completed a post-test and before a new group of participants begins a program. Dropping surveys does not require special planning and can be done at any time.

Partnership Specialists can answer questions or review data collection/entry plans, calling on City/CPIP researchers when necessary.

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