

Canadian Financial Diaries
Methods Report on Phase I

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Terms

EIA: Manitoba's provincial government assistance program for persons experiencing unemployment, for single mothers with children, and for persons with a disability.

FD: Financial Diaries

MFO: MicoFinance Opportunity

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the qualitative and quantitative methods employed in the first phase of the Canadian Financial Diaries (FD) project. As such it provides an overview of distinct research phases, recruitment, participants, retention and attrition, interviews and data collection. Also included are analyses and recommendations on recruitment, attrition, compensation, interview locations, meeting times, survey instruments, and data cleaning.

The goals for this initial report are multifold: report on the methods that the FD field team employed during the first 1.5 years of fieldwork, analyze the success and failure of methods to accomplish the aims of this project and lastly to brainstorm and consider issues for an academic article. With three significant and at times contradictory aims, this report is a draft and removing/altering sections for the varied audiences will need to occur.

Field Research

Phases

June 2017-Oct 2017: Groundwork and hiring qualitative research assistants

In October 2017, PI hired two qualitative research assistants. During their orientation to FD and in the first month of work they became familiar with Micro Finance Opportunity, read literature about the project including a book on the U.S. Financial Diaries project, created documents for use with participants, became familiar with the database and had a meeting at SEED to learn about the organization and to meet Louise Simbandumwe, a member of the FD academic team.

Testing Phase: Nov 2017-Jan 2018

During the testing phase from mid-November 2017 through January 2018, the field team conducted weekly interviews with three participants recruited through SEED.

Recruitment: Jan 2018- Aug 2018

During these months, we promoted the project, prepared promotional material, gave project presentations, communicated with agencies and recruited potential participants. For more detail see recruitment section below.

Qualitative and quantitative data collection; data input; data cleaning: Mar 2018-Oct 2019

In early March 2018, we began meeting with our first participants and continually added research participants to fill our availability. As some participants dropped out, we added new participants until October 2018 when our last research participant began.

Over the course of Phase I, the principal researcher worked with three qualitative research assistants (only 2 worked at any one time) and three quantitative assistants (some overlap and gaps). The team conducted interviews with approximately 30 participants on a weekly and biweekly period for 12 months.

Recruitment

In order to recruit participants the team created promotional materials and ordered an organizational banner stand. The brochures and flyers about the project can be found in PDF attachments to this report. As the team attempted to recruit more employed participant and people with families, materials were altered.

FD communicated with approximately 20 different nonprofit agencies in Winnipeg to promote the project. In many cases the communication was via email with an individual meeting to follow up. In some cases, the team prepared interactive introductory sessions about the project.

Below is a chart listing of the agencies with which we worked, the recruitment/communication process, the number of participants recruited, the number of participants to complete the project and the type of participant that was recruited.

| Organization | # Recruited | # Began participation | Completed at least 3 months/# Retained | Type of participant recruited |
|--|--------------------|------------------------------|---|--|
| Norquay building tax clinic | 80 | 19 | 13 | Several on EIA; some employed; one retired; some casual employment |
| SEED Winnipeg | 11 | 8 | 1 | Participant on EIA |
| IRCOM | 16 | 3 | 2 | Participants initially on EIA. One now in university and one with job. |
| Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| The Winnipeg Boldness Project | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Entry program | 3 | 1 | 0 | |
| Mount Carmel Clinic | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Andrews Street Family Centre | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Indigenous Women's Healing Centre | 5 | 3 | 2 | All participants on EIA |
| Society of Manitobans with Disabilities | 4 | 2 | 2 | On EIA; one now has casual employment |
| West Broadway Development Corporation | 3 | 0 | 0 | |
| Manitoba Low-Income Intermediary Project | 5 | 1 | 1 | Participant on EIA |
| North Point Douglas Women's Center | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

| | | | | |
|--|-----|----|----|----------------------------|
| Legal Help Centre | 1 | 1 | 1 | Employed |
| Occupational Health Centre | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Facebook | 10 | 0 | 0 | |
| Recruiter | 2 | 2 | 1 | Employed |
| Friend/Word of mouth/Referral from other participant | 5 | 5 | 4 | Employed and foster parent |
| Assiniboine Credit Union | 1 | 1 | 1 | Employed |
| Elmwood Food Bank | 1 | 1 | 1 | Employed |
| MB Financial Empowerment Network | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Asset Builders Network | | | | |
| Totals | 147 | 47 | 29 | |

Analysis of recruitment strategy

As noted by the numbers above, there were several agencies that were vital in promoting the project and others where recruitment efforts were less successful. We easily recruited participants whose major source of income was EIA. However, we also wanted to have employed participants and gather data for participants with families. We found it difficult to recruit significant numbers of employed participants with families. By mid-July 2018, we changed our recruiting message to target participants with partner/family and/or an employed family member.

Participants

In the FD project, we work with many diverse participants. All participants have low to moderate income and in other ways display much variety in gender, yearly income, sources of income, racial and ethnic identity, family size, and immigration status.

| | Gender | Yearly income | Source of income | Race/ethnicity ¹ | Family size | No. of children in household | Immigration Status |
|---|--------|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | F | 24,000 | EIA | African | 7 | 5 | Immigrant |
| 2 | F | 9,000 | EIA/Disability | White | 1 | | |
| 3 | F | 10,000 | Employed part-time | White | 1 | | |
| 4 | F | 42,000 | Employed | SE Asian | 1 | | Immigrant |
| 5 | F | 9,000 | EIA/Disability | White | 1 | | |
| 6 | F | 41,400 | Employed as foster parent | Indigenous | 4 | 3 | |
| 7 | F | 26,000 | Employed | African | 1 | | Immigrant |

¹ This column does not represent participants' self-identification.

| | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--------|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | M | 9,700 | Employed | White | 1 | | |
| 9 | M | 8,966 | EIA/Disability | African | 1 | | Refugee |
| 10 | F | 23,000 | Employment @ temp agency | Indigenous | 1 | | |
| 11 | F | | EIA/Disability | White | 2 | 1 | |
| 12 | F | 18,000 | Retired/pension | White | 1 | | |
| 13 | M | 25,000 | Employed | SE Asian | 1 | | Immigrant |
| 14 | F | 11,424 | EIA | Indigenous | 1 | | |
| 15 | F | 8,160 | EIA | Indigenous | | | |
| 16 | F | 8,000 | Employed part-time/casual | White | 1 | | |
| 17 | F | 8,808 | EIA | SE Asian | 2 | 1 | Immigrant |
| 18 | M | 16,800 | EIA | African | 4 | 2 | Immigrant |
| 19 | F | 23,726 | Retired/pension | S. American | 1 | | Immigrant |
| 20 | F | 2,640 | EIA | Indigenous | 3 | 2 | |
| 21 | F | 12,000 | EIA/Student | African | 2 | 1 | Refugee |
| 22 | F | | Employed/bank | Asian | 2 | 1 | Immigrant |
| 23 | F | 17,000 | Employed seasonally | White | 1 | | |
| 24 | F | 21,000 | Employed/daycare | White | 1 | | |
| 25 | M | 10,000 | EIA | Indigenous | 1 | | |
| 26 | F | 14,400 | Employed/student | African | 1 | | Intl student |
| 27 | F | 2,000 | Employed part-time/student | African | 1 | | Immigrant |
| 28 | F | 24,000 | Employed | S. American | 2 | | Immigrant |
| 29 | F | 15,000 | Employment-customer service | White | 1 | | |
| | Male: 5 Female: 24 | | | White & South American: 12 Racialized/visible minority: 17 Indigenous: 6 African: 7 SE Asian: 3 Asian: 1 | | | Immigrant: 11 Refugee: 2 Int'l student: 1 |

Family size

Many of the participants (19) with whom we worked were single persons. The average family size was 1.62 persons. Eight participants had children living in the home with them and of those eight, five were single mothers. Three participants had a partner living with them in the home and sharing finances. In these cases, the participant's partner was an opposite sex partner. In all cases the person with whom we worked was the person most knowledgeable (PMK) about finances in the household.

Source of income

FD participants receive income from a variety of sources, some of which are categorized below. Some participants have multiple casual and part-time jobs. Some participant's sources of income have changed significantly in the course of the year. Also, while student is listed as a source of income, it is generally not a source of income, but also accounts for the reason a participant may have casual or part-time employment.

The following list is intended to illustrate a number of ways that participants receive inflows. At the same time it is difficult to calculate the number of participants who fall into each of these categories as people got jobs during the year or changed jobs during the year.

| Sources of income | Number of participants |
|--|--|
| EIA ² : | 12 |
| EIA/Disability | 4 |
| Full-time employment throughout the diaries process | 7 |
| Seasonal employment | 1 |
| Self-employed | Two participants regularly sell things but no one is fully employed with a business. |
| Multiple jobs (at some point in the diaries process) | 10 |
| Student (at some point in the diaries process) | 6 |
| Foster parent | 1 |
| Retired/pensioner | 2 (plus one EIA participant who receives a small pension) |
| Employment Insurance (EI) (at some point in the diaries process) | 3 |
| Line of credit | 1 |
| Loans | 1 |

² EIA is Manitoba's provincial government assistance program for persons experiencing unemployment, for single mothers with children, and for persons with a disability. Some of the participants on EIA also worked casually or sold food for money.

Housing

Listed below are various categories of housing in which our participants live. We learned about some of these categories in conversation with participants, but did not have accurate questions in the socio-demographic form to capture many of the nuances about how people live and how they pay or who pays for their housing.

| Type of housing | Number of participants |
|--|------------------------|
| Private rental | 18 |
| Apartment | 17 |
| Rooming house | 1 |
| Cooperative and/or community/subsidized housing | 4 |
| Own home | 2 |
| MB Housing | 3 |
| Lived in family home | 2 |

| Payment for housing | Number of participants |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Rent Assist | 2 |
| Rent paid directly from EIA | 5 |
| No rent | 2 |

Attrition

Some participants met with us one to three times before dropping out unofficially. In many cases we called participants to learn more about why they stopped coming or to inquire if there was a way to entice their participation. One participant spoke of not wanting to reveal such intimate information about her finances while others were simply difficult to get in touch with and were no longer interested.

There was a set of participants with whom we worked for at least three months and whose data is included in the study and yet these participants were not able to meet with us for the entire twelve months. Some participants got busy and others provided us with incomplete information, thus necessitating ending the quantitative aspects of the project with them. We began to talk about “qualitative participants” as we met with them occasionally to ask more qualitative questions. A few participants seemed to want to continue but were unable to do so in a regular way. These included two participants with newborns and a participant who was in and out of treatment for alcohol addiction. We tried to incentivize participants with newborns by providing a one-time \$15 benefit for these mothers. One participant lasted in the program three months into having twins but then became overwhelmed by the program and asked for a break which turned into an extension to leave the program.

When considering the data about who dropped out of the program after participating for at least three months, I notice that all participants are racialized (three indigenous persons, one refugee and three immigrants). Five out of seven were on EIA rather than employed and four had young children at home. There were two male dropouts and five female dropouts.

| N o. | Disa ble | Gender | Indig | Refugee | Immi grant | Famil y # | Single-parent & child in home | Income source & time of particip. | Drop out reason |
|------|----------|--------|-------|---------|------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Yes | M | | Yes | | 1 | | EIA/ 6.5 | Did not consistently bring financial information and had trust issues |
| 2 | | M | Yes | | | 1 | | EIA/8.5 | In and out of treatment for alcohol addiction |
| 3 | | F | Yes | | | 3 | Yes | EIA/4 | Got overwhelmed and wanted to take a break. Said had too much on her plate with twin babies |
| 4 | | F | | | Yes | 7 | | EIA/3.5 | Did not want to track accounts and wanted more honorarium. |
| 5 | | F | Yes | | | 3 | Yes | EIA/3.5 | New baby. Difficult to schedule/stopped responding |
| 5 | | F | | | Yes | 3 | | Employe d/6 | Unknown |
| 6 | | F | | | Yes | 1 | | Employe d/4 | Very busy |

Counteracting attrition

During the final interview we asked participants to talk about what allowed them to finish a year of weekly/biweekly financial diary meetings. Several participants talked about the *honorarium* which acted as an incentive to their participation. Some talked about the *flexibility* of RA's that could meet them in different locations so that they did not always have to travel for the interview. Others spoke of the importance of *conversing* with someone (research assistant) about finances. Others said they appreciated the positive personality of research assistants and a few said they simply enjoyed meeting. In the case of a participant who almost dropped out, her continued involvement in the program is likely due to the RA's willingness to continue communicating with her even when communication was difficult (lack of phone; only intermittent Internet connection; participant depressed, etc.), travel closer to her for a meeting and ask her what would allow her to continue with FD. Thus, counteracting attrition or retaining participants requires RA flexibility and willingness to meet participants where they are.

Financial tracking and accuracy

In the following graph, interviewers note how participants tracked their finances and then provide an estimate of the accuracy and completeness of their financial picture.

| | Gen der | Yearly income | Source of income | How tracked finances | Accuracy estimate |
|----|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | F | 24,000 | EIA | Tracking sheet | 65% |
| 2 | F | 9,000 | EIA/Disability | Specialized Tracking sheet | 95% (missing account fees) |
| 3 | F | 10,000 | Employed part-time | Tracking sheet (PI) | 97% |
| 4 | F | 42,000 | Employed | Phone apps | 90% |
| 5 | F | 9,000 | EIA | Phone/banking accounts/some receipts | 90% |
| 6 | F | 41,400 | Employed as foster parent | Phone/bank accounts | 50% |
| 7 | F | 26,000 | Employed | | 93% |
| 8 | M | 9,700 | Employed | Tracking sheet (PI) | 93% |
| 9 | M | 8,966 | EIA | Tracking sheet at last minute | 65% |
| 10 | F | 23,000 | Employment @ temp agency | Bank app on phone | 75% (noticed some banking fees or changes with automatic renewals sometimes not recorded) |
| 11 | F | | EIA/Disability | Memory | 65% |
| 12 | F | 18,000 | Retired/pension | Own tracking notebook | 95% |
| 13 | M | 25,000 | Employed part-time/casual | Excel spreadsheet | 98% |
| 14 | F | 11,424 | EIA | Tracking sheet (FD) | 85% |
| 15 | F | 8,160 | EIA | Tracking sheet (FD) | |
| 16 | F | 8,000 | Employed part-time/casual | | 98% |
| 17 | F | 8,808 | EIA | Tracking sheet (FD) and memory | 96% |
| 18 | M | 16,800 | EIA | Bank print-out and limited use of tracking sheet (FD) | 65% |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--------|--|---|---|
| 19 | F | 23,726 | Retired/pension | Tracking sheets (FD) | 95% |
| 20 | F | 2,640 | EIA | Tracking sheet (FD), receipts, phone and memory | 80% |
| 21 | F | 12,000 | EIA/Student | Phone-bank account app and notes for cash | 90% |
| 22 | F | | Employed/bank | | 85% |
| 23 | F | 17,000 | Employed seasonally | Tracking sheet (PI) | 90% (Usually extremely accurate, occasionally significant transactions not accounted for). |
| 24 | F | 21,000 | Employed/daycare | Tracking sheet (FD) | 95% |
| 25 | M | 10,000 | EIA | Tracking sheet (FD)/memory | 75% |
| 26 | F | 14,400 | Employed social worker / recent student | | 93% |
| 27 | F | 2,000 | Employed part-time/student | | 95% (Diary data very accurate, researchers had difficulty reconciling intra-pot transactions) |
| 28 | F | 24,000 | Employed | Tracking sheet | 98% |
| 29 | F | 15,000 | Employment- customer service/sales associate | | 95% |

Interviews

Compensation /Honorarium

When we began the project we met with participants weekly and offered a \$10 honorarium. When we moved into bi-weekly appointments with several participants, we offered them \$15 to meet approximately twice a month. At first, we offered bus tickets to those who traveled to Menno Simons College for the interview. After the first six months we provided bus tickets to everyone

regardless of their transportation method or whether we visited them or they visited us. Not all participants took the bus and some participants sold or gave away the tickets that we gave them. Some participants would have appreciated additional cash to purchase gas instead of receiving a bus ticket that they could not/did not use. We gave out Handi-transit tickets to one participant.

We also offered participants gift cards worth \$20 to be redeemed at Dollarama or Giant Tiger. We hoped these gift cards would function as incentives midway through the year. The cards were appreciated by EIA recipients.

We also offered additional cash to some participants (additional \$5-\$15) to honor their time and commitment to FD when there was a change in schedule, the birth of a child, or some other extraordinary event.

Locations

We conducted most interviews in four offices at Menno Simons College (FD office, PI's office, RA's office and sessional office). It was important to create a quiet and confidential space for the researcher and the participant, which is why additional interview space was sought within MSC. It was time efficient to meet participants at Menno Simons College so if they did not show up or were running late, RA's could continue working. Often participants would arrive late or need to cancel at the last minute.

We travelled to some of our participants' places of work or volunteering, fast food restaurants near their work or home, and went to their homes on several occasions. There were several reasons why we met participants in different locations. Two participants worked regular hours and could only come to MSC in the evenings. Thus, we met with them during lunch breaks at restaurants near their work. Another participant wanted to meet closer to her home. Some participants had mobility issues (walker or wheelchair) and it was easier and more convenient to meet them at the agency where they volunteered. On some occasions we visited participants in their home. This was especially helpful for doing assets and liabilities and to gain a better sense of a participant's financial capacity. To make regular meetings with one participant, alternating between MSC and where she spent much of her time (university, hospital, home) was important to her continued participation in the program.

We initially recruited several participants from the Indigenous Women's Healing Center and so meeting with them individually in the place where they lived and during an afternoon or morning was convenient for the researcher.

FD team conducted most interviews in person. However, there were two participants that moved away and continued the study via Skype or phone.

Meeting times

When we began with a new participant we met with the participant weekly for the first 6-8 weeks. After that interviewers offered bi-weekly meetings for participants and in many cases it was their decision whether to come weekly or biweekly. At times we met with some participants only monthly. This occurred when a few participants were travelling, we travelled, or participants were simply unable to meet biweekly.

PI tended to meet weekly with many of his participants as they preferred that.

There was at least one participant that RA met with weekly to ensure that she was gathering accurate information. Leaving some participants for more than a week meant a decreased level of accuracy for the data. This was also the case for one of RA's participants. RA commented, "We met on a weekly basis, first, because she found it easier to recall transactions (especially cash), and secondly, because she regularly had a large number of transactions and our meetings were regularly close to an hour, even when conducted weekly." Thus, in order to limit meetings to one hour maximum, this participant needed to have weekly meetings.

Meeting times varied depending on the interviewer and the participant. Some participants averaged 10 minutes for a weekly visit. This was the case when participants came with completed information, the financial check (reviewing their totals of inflows and outflows) was easy and conversations were short. There were other meetings that were regularly 30-50 minutes due to the conversation and the complexity of their finances. Meeting times depended on the level of relationship, the ease of finances, and the availability of the RA and participants.

Relationships

Throughout the interview process, we recognized the importance of creating strong and trusting relationships with participants. We wanted them to continue in the project and we wanted the most accurate data possible. This took a lot of energy and work on the part of the interviewer.

Interestingly when completing the final interview we found that many participants valued the space that was created in the project to simply talk about their finances. This may be related to the fact that 26 of 29 participants did not have a partner with whom to talk about their finances or that FD created a therapeutic space to think about finances.

RA commented on the relational components of the interview process explaining, "This was the case for many of my participants. I think there are opportunities for the process to even more helpful for participants—for example, having quantitative chart available to participants earlier, a chart ready at 6 months and again at 12 months. This would increase the potential to compare any changes in financial habits. I think that the therapeutic nature of meetings was an important benefit for participants, but also posed a challenge for me as an interviewer. With certain participants, I found it challenging to collect the data and ensure enough time to cross-check flows while allowing time for participants to reflect on their purchases, financial situation and life more broadly. I think it would be helpful to consider how interviewers should honor the relationship and therapeutic space more in-depth."

Data

In our interviews, we collected qualitative and quantitative data from our participants. First we reviewed and submitted their financial diary including in-flows, outflows, in-kind donations, credit card and savings information. This quantitative data was submitted to the RA to input. Secondly we asked qualitative questions about how participants were feeling about finances, what else was going on in their lives and what they thought about the project. Sometimes we did not ask any questions and participants simply talked about what was going on in their lives. Each interviewer typed notes from each interview in a participant log.

We also collected general socio-demographic information at the beginning of the interview process and during the final interviews. Within the first 6 weeks and also during final interviews, we requested information on participants' assets and liabilities to better understand their economic situation.

Qualitative data/ Logs

After each interview, interviewers recorded qualitative comments about the interview. We wrote these logs for a variety of purposes: to help explain the quantitative data, to reflect on the data collection process, record how information was collected from the interviewee (phone, sheets, memory, etc.), to reflect on the interaction with the participant, and to record "interesting" information about the participant. The logs were also used as helpful background information for another interviewer. If an RA was going on a long trip or when there were interviewer transitions, the logs provided a window into a participant's life and method of sharing data.

On many occasions we wrote about participants' process of financial decision-making as we were privy to hear them speak of their ideas and decisions. For example, participants would talk about when they decided not to use their credit card and/or to take out cash in larger quantities.

Some logs are more complete than others. At times interviewers may have forgotten to input information in the log and so there are some weeks that are missing data. There is also great variety in terms of what information is logged. I tended to provide insight into participant's emotional life and would often write down stories that participants told me about their life. On a few occasions I wrote about my bias in approaching different participants or listening to their conversation. I conducted an informal review of PI's logs and found that PI wrote most often about the following information:

1. Participants job(s) or work situations
2. Participant's housing challenges (moving, finding a new place, housemates, etc.)
3. Insights on how participants choose to spend money
4. Interviewer reflections on what needs to be corrected with participant in next meeting (i.e. ending and beginning balances)
5. Participant's interest and orientation to future finances
6. Participant's medical condition which impacts ability to work and save
7. Types of assistance provided by interviewer (help with form, talking through decision)
8. State of the participant's diary (complicated, complete, etc.)
9. Participants loans to others

Modules

Income Tax

While we gathered qualitative information from regular interactions with participants we also had more in-depth questions on other financial subjects. We designed the income tax module with academic team member, Jennifer Robson and sought to gather information about how participants get their taxes done, what they do with their tax money and how they understand the notice of assessment. We conducted this module (interview schedule) with seven participants and offered an additional \$5 for their time to respond to our questions. Results of this module can be found in a separate report titled, Income Tax Module.

Financial Literacy

We also designed a financial literacy module to ask participants about the importance of tracking spending, savings, credit cards and other ways of managing finances. For this module we audio-recorded interviews which lasted from 12-45 minutes approximately. We conducted this module with 18 participants. On most occasions this interview was done after finishing a weekly session. On a few occasions this was a separate meeting where we offered participants a full \$10 or \$15 honorarium. A few interviews have been transcribed, however a final report has not been created as of August 2019.

Final Interviews

We also designed a set of questions to ask participants about their experience and learning during a final interview. For many participants we were able to audio-record these interviews. In the table below, several participants have N/A as these participants dropped out before we were able to complete a final interview with them.

| | Tax module | Financial Literacy module- audio | Final interview- audio | Final interview- notes only |
|----|-------------------|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | | | N/A | N/A |
| 2 | | | | √ |
| 3 | √ | √ | √ | |
| 4 | | √ | √ | |
| 5 | | √ | | √ |
| 6 | | √ | √ | |
| 7 | | | N/A | N/A |
| 8 | √ | √ | | |
| 9 | √ | √ | √ | |
| 10 | | √ | √ | |

| | | | | |
|----|---|----|-----|-----|
| 11 | | √ | | √ |
| 12 | | √ | √ | |
| 13 | | √ | √ | |
| 14 | √ | √ | √ | |
| 15 | | | N/A | N/A |
| 16 | | √ | | √ |
| 17 | | √ | √ | |
| 18 | | | | |
| 19 | | | | √ |
| 20 | | | N/A | N/A |
| 21 | | | √ | |
| 22 | | √ | N/A | N/A |
| 23 | √ | √ | | |
| 24 | | √ | √ | |
| 25 | | | N/A | N/A |
| 26 | | | | |
| 27 | √ | √ | √ | |
| 28 | √ | √ | | √ |
| 29 | | √ | | |
| | 7 | 18 | 12 | 6 |

Quantitative data collection/Financial diary instruments

We collected quantitative data in a variety of ways. PI created his own sheets for his participants to record their financial information. Participants filled out the sheet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis and PI submitted this form to the quantitative RA to input into the database. PI also devised a couple of simple sheets for those requiring a different type of tracking form. He performed the financial check on the form and with participants in most cases.

The RA's used a standard form initially created by MFO and subsequently modified by the team. The RA's provided participants with a form to record their financial information and then in the meeting with participants, the RA re-wrote this information on the MFO-modified form to submit to the quantitative RA. This allowed the RA's to have more standardization/simplification of

common items. For example, noting groceries instead of meat and vegetables. This also gave the quantitative RA only one type of writing to decipher for data input.

The RA's would often conduct the "check" on the form itself, although there was much variety in the check depending on the participant, the RA and the amount of time available to conduct the check.

The quantitative RA would enter all the quantitative information into the database and clean the data via Excel.

Issues with quantitative data collection

Incomplete data: On many occasions participants arrived having filled out the tracking sheet earlier that day and not over the period of collection. Other participants did not track their cash or credit card regularly. These practices made it difficult to assure that we were getting complete financial information from our participants.

Memory issues: Again, some of our participants relied on their memory for certain types of inflows and outflows—oftentimes cash. We had one participant who compiled her weekly finances depending on her memory for exact amounts and did not provide us access to statements, making it difficult to assure that we had an accurate picture of her finances.

Rounding: Some participants who did not want to provide specific data rounded their figures. For example, one respondent often did not want to tell me how many times she ate at McDonalds or Taco Bell so she would round the amount and not provide specific dates.

In-kind: Some participants were very diligent in recording in-kind components of their finances (meals that they received for others; rides that they received or gave, etc.). However for the majority thinking about these in-kind services was not something that came naturally. Likely we missed out on significant information from the in-kind donations.

Loans/reimbursable expenses: Several participants gave loans to family and friends. At other times participants spent money that was to be reimbursed by others. However, they did not always track when these funds were returned to them, making it difficult to have a complete picture of their finances. We also wonder about our behavior of asking about loan payments and whether this questioning would cause them to change their behavior.

Quantitative data

Having acquired an Access database from MFO, we worked with it to input data. The data was then cleaned and considered in MS Excel. There were a variety of data input and cleaning issues that emerged in the process. Firstly, we had several RA's inputting data into the access database resulting in variety in terms of categorization. Data cleaning did not occur as regularly as hoped and sometimes it was weeks or months until data was inputted. Thus it was difficult to ensure accurate data input on a regular basis.

Issues with data input (submitted by RA)

Interview cycle: The interview cycle for each participant was different. Some participants come weekly and provide quantitative data on a weekly basis whereas others come bi-weekly. Other participants did not come on the same day each week resulting in some periods covering a random number of days which made it difficult to keep consistency in the number of weeks for each participant.

Type of data inputted: In terms of the type of data inputted, some participants track each cent that they spend, some transactions as small as \$0.30. Inputting so many transactions results in too many transactions to input.

Inflows vs. outflows: The best method to record certain transactions as Inflow or Outflow is not very clear. For example if a person withdraws money from their Savings account should it be recorded as an Inflow or not? Should Cash withdrawal be recorded under Outflow as well as Inflow? Part of this issue stems from participant use of their Savings account as a Chequing account. Participants often deposit and withdraw money from their savings account and thus it becomes questionable whether to record this money coming from savings account as an “Inflow”.

Categorization: There are also many issues with categorization. It is difficult to define Standard Item for certain transactions for specific participants. For example, one often spends on Food, Gas, and Transportation on behalf of his company (Work Expense) which gets reimbursed later. Firstly we are not sure how frequently this gets reimbursed and we cannot track this separately when it is reimbursed with the pay check. Secondly this inflates the idea of his income. This month he might be getting a pay check of \$1500 and another month he might get a pay check of \$3000 including reimbursements. Another example of the difficulty of categorization is that some participants pay for Immigration related expenses like for photographs, post, finger prints, passport etc. There are no defined categories for such expenses.

Issues with data cleaning (submitted by RA)

Cycle: Since transactions are not consistent with weeks it becomes difficult to keep a track of dates/weeks in Master File.

Hand written vs. computer generated: It takes more time to input data from hand written sheets as compare to other participant’s data who input and generate a spreadsheet in Excel. The print out of these Excel sheets are nice and easy to input.

Intra-household transactions: It is difficult to keep a track of money that flows frequently among family/friends. We call these “Intra-household” transactions in our Project. Sometimes family members/friends are borrowing this money as a loan and they return it later but the question is how soon they will return it? A month or a year? And other times this money never comes back.

Tracking cash: People withdraw cash from their account and often do not keep a track of how much cash they have with them every week. So cash tracking is also a challenge.

Credit and debit cards: Some participants put money into their credit cards as soon as they make a spending. They are using Credit card more like a Debit card which creates confusion.

Data handling: Due to different RA's associated with the project, data handling has not been consistent and data duplication has been another issue.

Recommendations

Recruitment

1. Continue to develop relationships with the following organizations and share initial results from Phase I.
 - a. Norquay Low-income tax clinic
 - b. SEED
 - c. Legal Help Clinic
 - d. Asset Builders Network
 - e. IRCOM
 - f. Elmwood Food Bank
 - g. Assiniboine Credit Union
 - h. MB Low-income Intermediary Project
 - i. Society of Manitobans with Disabilities
2. Use similar method to recruit from Norquay Low-income tax clinic in Feb/March 2020
 - a. Have sign-up sheet and request additional information (number in family, major source of income (employment vs. EIA), participant availability day/time, etc.) during recruitment phase
 - b. Advise potential participants of staggered start dates.
 - c. Talk to this organization about also presenting at other locations where there may be more employed people or families who drop off their taxes to be completed.
3. Present about FD project to IRCOM staff, suggesting the best type of participants (advanced English, basic literacy, etc.)
4. Request to present project at SEED staff meeting.
 - a. As noted above, many participants had a previous connection to SEED so ask staff at SEED if they could send out promotional information to all former program participants.
5. Present to Asset Builders Network in meeting.
6. Invite participants to think about who else might want to participate in this program and ask them to share FD contact information.
 - a. Participants from Phase 1 have the potential to bring in a lot of new participants. This recruitment should begin in the fall 2019 meeting as each researcher can communicate with their participants in their preferred communication method. One benefit of this method is that potential participants would get an honest assessment of the challenges and benefits of participation, and this may lead to the recruitment of committed participants who are less likely to drop out.
7. Contact local Unions and meet with them to see how they could promote project or provide space for meetings

Forms

1. Change consent form to bring in bank and credit card statements
2. Simplify assets and liabilities form and create more questions about types of informal loans
3. Change socio-demographic form to collect precise information on employment.
 - a. Include many categories of employment (as listed above)
 - b. Ask participants their assessment of their employment (enough, precarious, etc.)
 - c. Ask participants if they have ever worked for income.
 - d. There may be better ways to categorize employment such as the suggestion of three broad groups: unemployed, precariously employed and fully employed.
4. Change socio-demographic form to invite participants to consider their major source of inflows and outflows
 - a. Color in a pie chart for source of the majority of their inflows and compare that to the actual at their time of graduation.
 - b. Color in pie chart for source of outflows and spending and compare at graduation
5. Change socio-demographic form to collect information on housing
 - a. Create more complete list of housing categories
 - b. Collect more accurate and detailed information about types of housing
6. Change socio-demographic form on family/poverty
 - a. Add question about income level of parents
 - b. Add question about whether participant spent time in foster care

Compensation

1. Continue offering regular honorarium
 - a. \$10 for weekly interview
 - b. \$15 for bi-weekly interview
2. Continue interview module incentive
 - a. \$5 if added on to regular interview
 - b. \$10 if additional interview added to regular bi-weekly or weekly schedule
3. Ask participants who do not ride bus if they would prefer \$5 for gas instead of bus tickets
4. Provide gift card incentive after first 3 months (\$20 gift card) and again at 9 months of participation (\$20 gift card)
5. Continue to offer Handi-transit tickets to those who use Handi-Transit
6. Recognize importance of honorarium/compensation
7. Find ways to honor reality that some participants value the relationship and therapeutic space to talk about their finances as most important
8. Coordinate office space and time for interviews; find more office space as needed
9. Continue offering flexibility to meet in different locations as needed
10. Consider/mandate having one meeting in participant home to conduct Assets & Liabilities and provide additional information about participant as needed

Quantitative data collection & cleaning

1. Mandate sharing of bank and credit card statements
2. Bi-weekly data input and cleaning so that interviewers can take questions back to participants in a timely manner.

3. What is the best way to collect data that respects what participants want out of the FD project?
 - a. Review and analyse final audio interviews and notes to know what participants liked/found helpful/enabled them to continue, etc.
4. Create a simpler assets and liabilities form that better captures the type of assets that low-income people have so that this form can also be a teaching tool.
5. Standardize and consolidate transactions that are less than say \$3. For example, if they are having coffee 4 times a week, each costing \$1.12, they can record “Coffee” equal to \$4.48 as a single transaction instead of having 4 transactions.
6. New Standard Items should be created for immigration-related expenses (common to some of our participants) and we need to revise our Standard Item list according to what we have seen in Phase I.