

The Organizational Readiness Survey: Tips for Effectively Using Results

Adult probation departments across Pennsylvania are using the Organizational Readiness Survey to assess the culture for the implementation of evidence-based practices. Once the survey is complete and the results for each county are aggregated, it is incumbent on management to act on them.

The following are recommendations for following up, whether an area is found to be a strength or an area in need of improvement. Recommendations are offered for each question, except questions 1 and 2, which ask about survey respondents' roles and years of service.

Question 3. How much confidence and trust is shown in staff members by management in the department?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that management has confidence in and trusts them. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• recognize staff's strengths• leverage their existing accomplishments• empower them to be as successful as possible in their jobs• assign them to be mentors.	<p>a. Evaluate unique ways to bridge the confidence gap. Would additional training and coaching be valuable for staff? For management?</p> <p>b. Identify and focus on people's strengths and help them develop these.</p> <p>c. Show support for staff (even when they make mistakes).</p> <p>d. Recognize staff's growth, and gradually delegate new tasks in areas that interest them.</p> <p>e. Allow staff to make their own decisions as appropriate (i.e., avoid micromanaging).</p> <p>f. Involve staff in departmentwide decisions.</p>

Question 4. How free do staff members feel to talk to management about their job?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel comfortable talking to management about their jobs. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk with staff (perhaps in subcommittees or other forums, depending on the size of the organization) about how new projects might impact their jobs, and invite their feedback • encourage staff and supervisors to discuss professional development and career opportunities for staff. 	<p>a. Provide opportunities and safe spaces for staff to talk to management about their jobs. Include options where staff can remain anonymous.</p> <p>b. Evaluate how management responds when staff raise concerns.</p> <p>c. Consider training for management that focuses on a more approachable management style.</p>

Question 5. How often are staff members' ideas sought and used constructively?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that their ideas are sought and used constructively. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involve staff in the development and implementation of new initiatives • encourage staff to think outside the box • share with inside and outside stakeholders when staff are the source of a new policy, practice, or project. 	<p>a. Regularly seek feedback using a variety of methods.</p> <p>b. Value different perspectives.</p> <p>c. Discuss the merit or drawbacks of suggestions regardless of the source.</p> <p>d. Act on staff's ideas or, if you don't act on them, explain why.</p>

Question 6. How predominant is fear, threats, or punishment used by leadership?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate what, according to staff, contributes to a leadership style marked by a lack of fear, threats, or punishment. Continue or expand these strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foster a culture of open dialogue • create a culture of feedback • emphasize reinforcements over punishment. 	<p>a. Shift from a disciplinarian to a coaching and problem-solving management approach.</p> <p>b. Engage in leadership or coaching training.</p> <p>c. Invite staff’s ideas for creating a more approachable work environment.</p> <p>d. Don’t micromanage.</p> <p>e. Focus on catching people doing things right and acknowledge success.</p> <p>f. Recognize that while fear might lead to compliance, it can, in the long term, diminish performance.</p> <p>g. Back up concerns with data.</p>

Question 7. How predominant is rewards and incentives used by leadership?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that leadership’s use of rewards and incentives is a strength. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use rewards as least four times as often as responses to undesired behaviors • promote equity, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to earn rewards based on established criteria • design incentives and rewards that encourage teamwork and collaboration rather than only individual accomplishments • regularly evaluate and adjust the incentives/rewards system • consider long-term motivation and encourage intrinsic motivation. 	<p>a. Identify behavior that the department would like to incentivize and reinforce.</p> <p>b. Identify incentives and reinforcements that the department is able to provide.</p> <p>c. Be transparent about how incentives and rewards are distributed</p> <p>d. Respond to positive behavior as swiftly as possible.</p> <p>e. Be clear about what behavior is being affirmed.</p> <p>f. Find out which incentives and rewards are meaningful to individual staff and customize your responses.</p> <p>e. Offer training opportunities to help staff build skills. As staff gain proficiency, there will be more opportunities to reinforce their contributions.</p>

Question 8. Where is the responsibility felt for achieving the department's goals?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that there is collective responsibility for achieving the department's goals. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • balance control and trust • hold each other accountable for outcomes. 	<p>a. Establish a "we're all in this together" culture.</p> <p>b. Involve staff in the development and implementation of goals.</p> <p>c. Ensure that goals, and staff's role and responsibilities for helping achieve them, is clear.</p>

Question 9. How much cooperative teamwork exists in the department?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that cooperative teamwork exists in the department. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage staff across all levels of the department in developing and implementing initiatives • hold regular team-building activities • take steps to improve teams' communication skills • create a process for resolving conflicts • provide teams with the resources they need to work together • celebrate team accomplishments 	<p>a. Identify opportunities for staff and units to work together on projects.</p> <p>b. Make connections between coworkers, ensuring that their strengths complement one another's.</p> <p>c. Set expectations for the team, and encourage teams to clarify each member's role and responsibilities.</p>

Question 10. What is the usual direction of information flow?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that the direction of information flow is a strength. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate when downward or upward communication is most appropriate • evaluate when other information flows (e.g., horizontal, diagonal) might be appropriate. 	<p>a. Evaluate current channels of communication and identify ways for communication to flow in other directions.</p> <p>b. Explore tools and technology solutions that allow for multidirectional information flow.</p>

Question 11. How is downward communication accepted/received by staff members?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate when and why downward communication works. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep the message simple • avoid complex terms and buzzwords • be honest • encourage staff to ask questions and seek clarification • evaluate which downward communication channels are most effective. 	<p>a. Communicate regularly with staff, ensuring that the communication is timely, relevant, and focused on what staff need to know and why.</p> <p>b. Be transparent.</p> <p>c. Clearly articulate new initiatives and the reasons for them.</p>

Question 12. How accurate is upward communication?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that upward communication is received as intended. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that messages reach the right people • encourage staff to drive the content of upward communication (i.e., to initiate content and not only respond). 	<p>a. Foster a culture of open communication, ensuring that staff feel free to share their views honestly, know that their voices are encouraged and appreciated, and understand that speaking up won't negatively impact their jobs.</p> <p>b. Create a structured, transparent process for upward communication.</p> <p>c. Set up processes to reduce or eliminate message filtering by management. For example, keep the line of communication short. The fewer layers there are between staff and management in the upward communication process, the fewer opportunities there are for people in the line of communication to revise and change the meaning of the original message.</p>

Question 13. How well do management in the department understand the problems faced by staff members?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that management understands the problems that they face. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regularly check in with staff • ask what supports would be helpful • invest in staff training, if appropriate • modify policies and practices as needed. 	<p>a. Talk <i>with</i> staff, not <i>at</i> staff. Actively listen, check for understanding, and paraphrase what you hear.</p> <p>b. Demonstrate respect and empathy.</p> <p>c. Job shadow staff to better understand their concerns.</p> <p>d. If there are problems that cannot be corrected, explain why.</p>

Question 14. At what level are decisions affecting the entire department made?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that the level at which decisions affecting the entire department are made is appropriate. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example, ensure that the appropriate people/levels of management are making long-term and mid-term decisions, and decisions affecting day-to-day operations.</p>	<p>a. Involve staff in decision-making processes, whenever possible, so that departmentwide decisions reflect multiple perspectives.</p>

Question 15. Are staff members involved in decisions related to their work?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that they are involved in decisions related to their work. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example, provide staff with opportunities to explore how a new initiative will impact their current job.</p>	<p>a. Involve staff before final decisions are made. b. Encourage and be open to their ideas and perspectives.</p>

Question 16. How are the department's goals established?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that the process of goal-setting is a strength. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involve staff in creating, reviewing, and evaluating goals and their outcomes. • keep goals flexible but not too flexible. 	<p>a. Have a clear process for setting, revising, and evaluating goals. b. Connect goals to the department's mission, vision, and values. c. Set a reasonable number of goals, staying focused on the most important ones.</p>

Question 17. How much covert resistance to the department's goals is present?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that there is a lack of covert resistance to the department's goals. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example, encourage open dialogue and feedback.</p>	<p>a. Look for signs of covert resistance (e.g., lack of participation, closed body language, skeptic looks, lack of eye contact).</p> <p>b. Point out what you see.</p> <p>c. Encourage people to express their doubts or negative opinions.</p> <p>d. Restate their concerns and let them know that you hear what they are saying.</p> <p>e. Encourage them to assess their level of resistance.</p> <p>f. Ask them how this level can decrease.</p> <p>g. Respond and reinforce what they need in order for their level of resistance to decrease.</p>

Question 18. Are there informal groups of staff resisting the direction/goals of the department?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that there is a lack of informal resistance to the department's direction/goals. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involve staff in establishing the direction/goals • measure and share outcomes of the direction/goals so that staff can understand the impacts • highlight successes but also be vulnerable and acknowledge challenges. 	<p>a. Communicate clearly the reasons for the direction/goals and the expected impacts.</p> <p>b. Provide formal opportunities for staff to voice concerns.</p> <p>c. Address the reasons for resistance (e.g., mistrust of the department, poor communication about the change, lack of training, fear of failure, unrealistic timelines).</p> <p>d. Enlist staff who are respected to champion the department's direction/goals.</p> <p>e. Assign staff to roles that better align with their views, when possible.</p>

Question 19. How is data commonly used in the department?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that the department uses data effectively. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example, identify other opportunities to use data to measure outcomes and to improve policies and practices.</p>	<p>a. Create a data-driven culture. b. Determine what outcomes to measure and what specific data to collect. c. Develop a plan for how to collect, use, and share data within the department and with key external stakeholders. d. Develop strategies to address areas of concern as indicated by the data.</p>

Question 20. How is data commonly used with staff?

Tips if a Strength	Tips if an Area that Needs Improvement
<p>a. Evaluate why staff feel that the department’s use of data with them is a strength. Continue or expand effective strategies. For example, identify other opportunities to use data to measure staff outcomes and to help them build their skills.</p>	<p>a. Create a data-driven culture. b. Determine what data to share with staff, ensuring that key data is shared. c. Clearly articulate the “why” behind the collection and sharing of data. d. Develop strategies to address areas of concern as indicated by the data.</p>

Other General Tips

1. **Be Open:** Build a culture of open communication.
2. **Be respectful:** Let staff know that you appreciate their feedback, reassure them that you have heard their concerns, and respect their ideas and perspectives.
3. **Have a Thick Skin:** Be open to feedback that may be difficult to hear and try not to be defensive.
4. **Discuss Results:** Aggregate and discuss results among management. Identify priority areas.
5. **Share Results with Staff:** Be transparent and share the survey results with staff. Focus on strengths as well as areas for improvement. Invite a cross-section of staff to be part of the committee that is driving the change initiative.
6. **Act:** Even before implementing the survey, commit to addressing the issues that the survey uncovers. Let staff know that you plan to act, and keep your commitment.
7. **Include QA and CQI:** Make quality assurance and continuous quality improvement processes—including those related to organizational readiness—part of the implementation plan.