



INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FOUNDATION'S LIFE SKILLS SURVEY TOOL USER GUIDE

What is IYF's Life Skills Survey Tool (LiSST)?

The Life Skills Survey Tool (LiSST) was created in conjunction with IYF's life skills framework in 2019 in order to reflect the life skills identified in new framework and provide a more valid and reliable tool for measuring life skills. The tool is a survey designed to measure change in life skills over time. It is aligned to the new life skills framework with 3-5 survey items corresponding to each life skill for a total of 49 survey items intended to measure behaviors and attitudes related to life skills. The items are measured with a five-point response scale from 'Almost never' to 'Almost all the time' and organized by domain.

How was the tool developed?

The development process is mapped in Figure 1 below. The process began with a search of extant internal tools for measuring life skills, including the retrospective survey, life skills questions as part of the baseline and exit surveys, and employer surveys that have been used in previous IYF projects. Additionally, a search of external tools for measuring life skills was conducted. The YP Action inventory of soft skills measurement tools, RAND Education Assessment Finder, USAID reports, and desk research were consulted to document a list of over 100 existing life skills measurement tools. The tools were assessed on a number of parameters such as whether there was evidence of reliability and validity, what the administration characteristics were, whether it was tested in multiple contexts, and whether it was freely available.

From the list of external sources, the specific items for IYF's life skills survey tool were developed. Items from existing, free external tools were adopted or adapted in addition to survey items that had been developed by IYF in the past and new ones that were created to complement the life skills framework. Criteria for developing these items included:

- Alignment with IYF's life skills definitions
- Ease of understanding and interpretation
- Suitability for participants of different age groups and contexts
- Sensitivity to change over time

Items were adopted, adapted, or newly created using these criteria and underwent a series of content review with various internal and external experts. Five Baltimore office staff and four country office staff who had expertise in life skills were consulted along with six external experts from organizations such as Johns Hopkins University, Innovations for Poverty Action, Education Development Center, World Learning, and the World Bank. Items were revised based on feedback received from various consultation meetings.

Once the content was finalized, the survey tool was pretested with 321 youth between the ages of 16 and 24 across the United States in December 2019. Additionally, two focus groups with DC and Chicago youth were conducted to receive

feedback on the survey taking experience and relevance of survey items. Analyses from the pretest and focus groups were completed in February 2020.

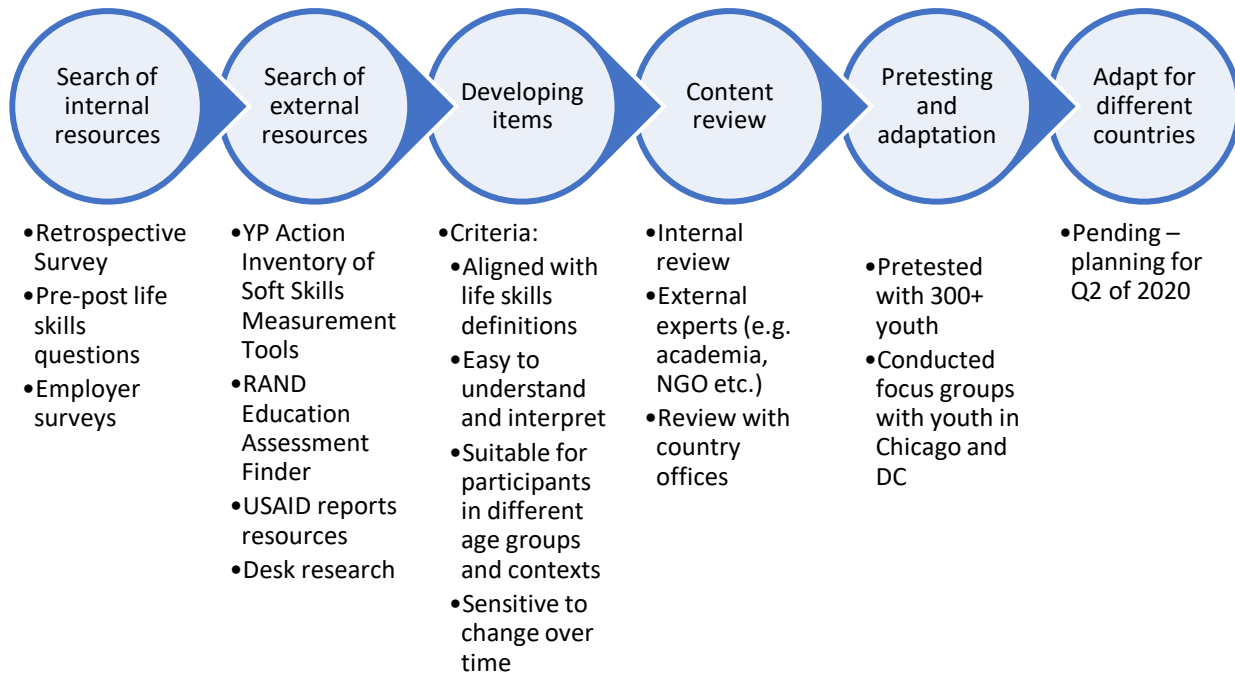


Figure 1. Development process of IYF’s life skills survey tool

What are the survey items included in the tool?

The survey items are listed below, accompanied by the corresponding domain, skill, and definition. The most up to date list of survey items will be found [HERE](#) along with a log of revision history.

DOMAIN	SKILL	DEFINITION	ITEM
POSITIVE MINDSET	Self-confidence	The ability to have a realistic awareness of and positive view of one's ability to achieve	I recognize myself as a valuable person. I express my opinions, even if others disagree with me.



INTERPERSONAL SKILLS		goals without needing input or validation from others.	I know what my strengths are. I can solve my future problems.
	Self-management	The ability to manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in order to take actions that align with personal goals.	I can complete tasks even when I don't like them. I think through the steps it will take to reach my goal. I stay calm even when I feel stressed. I set goals for myself.
	Self-awareness	The ability to recognize one's thoughts, needs, and emotions, and how they influence behavior	I know how to get better at things that are hard for me I recognize how my feelings affect my performance. I recognize when I'm feeling stressed. I know when I need to ask for help.
	Resilience	The ability to withstand and adapt to challenges and changes with tenacity and positive attitude.	I can overcome setbacks to take on an important challenge I bounce back quickly after hard times I react positively to suggestions from others on how I might improve myself.
	Communication	The ability to convey information through verbal and non verbal methods, ask critical questions, and listen actively.	I can express my own ideas clearly. I ask questions to deepen my understanding. I listen actively to understand and learn. I understand the rules and expectations in interacting with others.
	Teamwork	The ability to work within a diverse group for a common goal and purpose by assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work and valuing the individual contributions made by each team member.	I can work effectively with others in a team to accomplish a task. I value the input and contributions of others. I do my share when working in a team.
	Conflict Management	The ability to understand the needs and wants of others involved in a conflict and find a solution that best meets the needs of the group.	When resolving a conflict, I try to understand the needs of everyone involved. I can make compromises in order to resolve a conflict with others. I respect others' opinions during a disagreement.
	HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS	CRITICAL THINKING	The ability to analyze facts, examine an issue from all sides, weigh evidence fairly, and challenge assumptions to inform a judgment.



COMMUNITY MINDSET	PROBLEM SOLVING	The ability to partake in a methodical process of making choices by identifying a problem, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions.	<p>I am able to identify problems that keep me from my goals.</p> <p>I think about how the decisions I make will affect me in the long run.</p> <p>When faced with a decision, I understand that some choices are better than others.</p> <p>I am comfortable asking for advice when making an important decision.</p> <p>When I am faced with a challenging problem, I try to think of multiple solutions.</p>
	CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION	The ability to think beyond traditional ideas and ways of doing things to come up with new, meaningful approaches.	<p>I apply new ideas in a practical way to improve the way things are done.</p> <p>I am comfortable taking risks when trying to solve a problem.</p> <p>I create new ideas to take on everyday challenges.</p>
	RESPONSIBILITY	The ability to take ownership over one's behaviors, acts according to one's values, and contribute with the interests of the larger community in mind.	<p>I accept responsibility for my actions when I make a mistake or get in trouble.</p> <p>I do what I believe is right, even if my friends make fun of me.</p> <p>It is important to me to contribute to my community and society.</p>
	EMPATHY	The ability to understand, share the feelings of others and act to help others.	<p>When I see someone being taken advantage of, I want to help them.</p> <p>I go out of my way to help others.</p> <p>I can easily put myself in someone else's place and understand how they feel.</p>
	CULTURAL AWARENESS	The ability to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs that differ across cultures, and to view and respond to the world with an open mind.	<p>I am willing to be an ally to individuals who are different from myself.</p> <p>I know how to show respect to people with different beliefs, opinions, cultures, and identities.</p> <p>It is important to me to respect the values and beliefs of people who are of a different race or culture than I am.</p>
	RESPONSIBLE DIGITAL PARTICIPATION	The ability to use technology and media in an appropriate, responsible, positive and empowered way to be able to learn, create, and participate in the global community.	<p>I engage in positive behavior when using technology, including social interactions online.</p> <p>When I use technology, I engage in safe behavior, including in social interactions online.</p> <p>I use technology to broaden mutual understanding and learning with others.</p>

The survey items were further mapped to the existing suite of PTS lessons. Please reference the crosswalk [HERE](#).



Is the survey tool a valid and reliable tool?

Data from the pretest results were analyzed to assess the reliability and validity of the survey tool. A more detailed presentation is available [HERE](#); only highlights are included in this document. Overall, the tool demonstrated strong reliability with Cronbach’s alphas for each domain ranging from 0.84 to 0.87. In addition, average interitem correlations ranged from 0.35 to 0.39. Confirmatory factory analysis was conducted to assess fit of the hypothesized four-domain model. The fit statistics suggested that the model fit well, with the RMSEA at 0.05, SRMS at 0.05, and CD at 0.98. Finally, correlations among average ratings on each of the four domains were significantly related to other measures in line with expectations. For instance, scores in the positive mindset domain were negatively correlated with self-reported sadness or depression while scores in the higher order thinking skills domain were positively correlated with being employed for pay. Overall, the analyses suggested that the life skills survey tool demonstrated strong reliability and validity and thus well positioned for further testing and refinement.

How should I administer the survey?

Below are a few options for administering the survey. Both a paper and electronic copies of the survey can be found [HERE](#). The survey is currently available in English, Spanish, and Swahili.

Option	Approach	Recommended Delivery	Instructions	Best suited for...
1	Pre - post	BEFORE teaching corresponding PTS lessons and AFTER teaching PTS lesson (1-2 weeks before and after training)	Trainer asks participants to complete the survey either online or in paper form before and after training	Trainings that span a longer time period (e.g. 3-4 months) Participants who are easily accessible over a long period of time
2	Retrospective	AFTER teaching PTS lesson (1-2 weeks after training)	Trainer asks participants to complete the indicated retrospective survey once after training is complete.	Trainings that span a short time period (e.g. 1-2 months) Participants who are NOT easily accessible over a long period of time (e.g. mobile populations)

We do not recommend carrying out both approaches simultaneously as each approach is best suited for different scenarios.



Not all domains need to be administered. Choose the survey items in the domains that your curriculum or program focuses on. For example, if your curriculum or program is designed to improve life skills in all domains except the Community Mindset domain, only use the survey items in the other domains. You can create a new version of the paper or online surveys by duplicating and editing the survey. Please refer to the crosswalk of the survey items with PTS lessons to determine which domains should be used for your program. **Please note that you should NOT pick and choose individual items; instead, pick and choose entire domains,** as this was the unit of analysis for reliability and validity testing.

What are some tips and guidance for administering the survey?

- Record some kind of identifying information from participants such as first name, last name, teacher, and birthdate so that you can match both pre- and post- survey responses to the same individual and also link the survey results to other information you may be collecting such as employment outcomes.
- For highly mobile participants (e.g. homeless youth, those with low attendance), administer the retrospective survey during the last or second to last lesson. It is easier to gather participants' responses if they are a captive audience instead of attempting to track down participants upon program completion.
- For those administering the survey online, have students complete the survey on their mobile phones (if they have them) or set up a computer / iPad station for students to complete if hiring enumerators is not possible.

Can I make adaptations to the survey?

It is recommended to keep the survey in its original format as reliability and validity testing was done only on the specified survey items. However, we acknowledge that the survey will not suit all program needs. If making adjustments, we recommend clearly documenting the changes and the reasons. Moreover, once the results of the survey are obtained, reliability and validity testing should be done again since the sample of items have changed. Please consult your MERL contact for assistance on the testing.

For adaptations to different languages, the following steps are recommended:

1. Country office translates tool
2. Receive youth feedback through focus group
3. Pilot test tool with non-program youth
4. Independent translator back-translates to English
5. Conduct training for country office staff on tool administration, data management, analysis
6. Test tool on program youth

How should I analyze the survey?

Paper administration: If using the paper version, scan and have soft copies of all responses where possible. Input responses into an Excel sheet and create averages for all items in each domain for pre- and post-responses. You will have an average pre-test score for each domain and an average post-test score for each domain.



Online administration: If using Form Assembly, there are two options for analyzing the survey data. One, download the responses from Form Assembly into an Excel sheet and create averages for all items in each domain for pre- and post- responses. You will have an average pre-test score for each domain and an average post-test score for each domain.

Scoring: Scoring will depend on the needs and goals of the project. Some options for scoring include:

- Indicating ANY increase in domains between pre- and post- averages.
- Indicating percent change (or decrease) in domains between pre- and post- averages.
- Determining a cut score and indicating any average above that cut score as “proficient”
- Determining whether changes in pre- and post- averages are statistically significant using statistical analyses such as paired t-tests or linear regression.

Please remember to store all responses in STORM where possible, such that we have a central repository for all participant data, including survey data.

We encourage your feedback on the IYF life skills survey tool. Please send any inquiries and suggested improvements to Linda Fogarty at l.fogarty@iyfnet.org.

Thank you!