

Figure 2.2 Indicator Checklist

Short and manageable

Don't get overwhelmed with the amount of data you need to collect. The data collection process is only one step in managing an indicator program—reporting and disseminating information are equally important.

Since you are going to update data on a regular basis, you want to be able to do it efficiently so you can release the new data to the target audiences in a timely fashion.

Accessible data

The extent of effort required to gather indicator data will help determine which indicators to include. Is the information routinely available and updated? Is the information available at the geographic level (e.g., county, city, or neighborhood) or population level (e.g., adolescents, pregnant women) desired? Will additional data analysis be required to adjust the data to the level of interest?

Interpretable and meaningful data

Percentages and raw numbers that show the direction of changes over time and community comparisons are simple, meaningful data types that also make an impact. If possible, avoid complex data analyses that may be difficult to explain and illustrate to your audience.

Consider data that move from the general to the specific

Set the stage with the scope and scale of the problem, and then show indicators that illustrate specific harms that the problem is causing the community.

Do not select indicators just because the data are available

Make sure the indicators you select are directly related to your strategy to prevent and reduce harms from substance use in your community.