

# Internews Open Source Software Lightweight Needs Assessment Instructions

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## Introduction: Using the Lightweight Needs Assessment Instrument for Open Source Tool Teams

This instrument was originally designed to serve as a lightweight needs assessment process for open source security tools participating in an Internews program called [BASICS](#) (Building Analytical and Support Infrastructure for Critical Security tools). The assessment was created by Dr. Gina Helfrich, Program Officer for Global Technology at Internews.

Internews is pleased to make the Open Source Software Lightweight Needs Assessment available to the larger open source community for use in understanding the needs, pain points, opportunities, and strengths of open source tool teams.

This assessment was developed based on a number of existing resources. In particular, it adapts concepts from:

- the Internews Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA)
- the [SAFETAG](#) Capacity Assessment
- the Linux Foundation's [CHAOSS](#) (Community Health Analytics Open Source Software) project<sup>1</sup>
- the Apache [Project Maturity Model](#)<sup>2</sup>
- the OSS Watch [Openness Rating](#)<sup>3</sup>
- and the URSSI [maturity model for open source software](#).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Openness Rating: How open is your software project?* by **OSS Watch Team** is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

<sup>4</sup> Copyright © 2019 Sebastian P. Benthall/URSSI.

Tool teams who undergo the Open Source Software Lightweight Needs Assessment should walk away with a robust Capacity Action Plan to help guide priorities for the project team over approximately the next year. Outcomes from the assessment can be used to develop grant proposals and a clear rationale supporting the project's need for various resources.

The assessment can either be conducted by an external evaluator or by the tool team themselves. Two versions of the Internews Open Source Software Lightweight Needs Assessment Handbook are available (one "for External Evaluators" and one "for Tools Teams"), depending on which route you choose.

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## Instructions for External Evaluators

### **Prepare for the Assessment Process**

First, have the tool team complete the Self-Assessment Scoring Sheet, including writing a short Justification for their self-score.

They will need to reference the self-scoring rubric throughout the self-assessment, which is available [here](#).

Encourage tool teams to include as many core developers/project leaders as possible in the process of self-scoring. Only ONE self-assessment form should be completed per project/tool.

### **HOW TO SELF-SCORE**

For each assessment area, read the descriptions under each number. Choose the number whose description most closely matches the case for your tool team.

Finally, have the tool team rank their top 5 areas to work on (out of the 10 total areas).

### **Review the Self-Assessment Scoring Sheet**

The evaluation team should look at the importance and ranking that the tool team has given for each assessment area on their self-scoring form. Take the top 5 areas ranked of most importance and prepare to further explore those areas with the tool team.

For each assessment area to be discussed:

1. Read through the tool team's justification for their ranking in that area
2. Refer to the associated questions for that assessment area in the Internews Open Source Software Lightweight Needs Assessment Handbook for External Evaluators
  - document as many answers to the questions as you can based on publicly available information about the open source project
3. Note any follow-up questions you'd want to ask the tool team as a result of comparing your research to the scoring rubric, their self-score, and their scoring justification
4. Determine whether you think the self-score is accurate based on your research
  - If you think the tool team warrants a different score, make note of where you would place them and why

### **Reference Materials**

Both the tool team and the evaluation team should have a copy of:

- the tool team's self-scoring answers
- the self-scoring rubric, which is available [here](#)
- the Internews Open Source Software Project Capacity Action Planning (CAP) Workbook
  - If possible, transpose the scores, importance, and justification from the Self-Assessment Scoring Sheet to each area in the CAP Workbook
  - At minimum, transpose answers for the Top 5 areas

Ensure the evaluation team has access to:

- the research conducted in (2) above
- the follow-up questions noted in (3) above
- the suggested score & rationale in (4) above
- the Internews Open Source Software Lightweight Needs Assessment Handbook for External Evaluators

### **How to Facilitate a Conversation Based on the Assessment Questions in the Handbook**

Discussion should proceed **one assessment area at a time**. Do not move on to a new assessment area until you have finished discussion of the prior one(s). Consider starting with the most highly prioritized area and move to the next most important area each time.

- 1) For each area to be discussed, present the tool team's self-score and summarize their justification. Then, tell them whether you agree with their scoring and present your reasons, based on your research. Ask any follow-up questions you have already identified in the course of your research.
- 2) Next, talk through the Discussion Questions with the tool team. Try to steer the conversation towards answers that will ultimately prove useful in designing their capacity action plan. (In other words, focus on the practicalities at stake.)
- 3) Ask the tool team to re-assess their self-scoring for this area. Based on your conversation, do they want to revise their self-score? If so, note the new score. Be sure to emphasize that it is in the tool team's interest to score each area as accurately as possible, so that they have a clear rationale for support in the areas where they most need help.
- 4) Finish your discussion of the assessment area by asking the tool team to answer the associated open-ended questions in their Capacity Action Planning Workbook. The tool team should discuss their answers out loud with the evaluation team prior to documenting them in the Workbook.
- 5) Conclude by walking through the questions for the Strategic Planning & SWOT Analysis. Have the tool team discuss their answers out loud with the evaluation team prior to documenting them in the Workbook.

*Remember: There are no "right" answers to this assessment! A certain amount of subjectivity is intrinsic to the scoring process. If a tool team feels strongly about scoring themselves a certain way, there is no need to push back even if the evaluation team might disagree with their score.*

## Instructions for Tool Teams/Project Leaders running their own assessment process

### **Complete the Initial Self-Scoring Process**

Include as many core developers/project leaders as possible in the process of self-scoring. Only ONE self-assessment form should be completed for the project/tool.

Use the Internews Open Source Software Project Capacity Action Planning (CAP) Workbook to record your self-scoring, justification, and importance level for each area to be assessed.

First: Go through the CAP Workbook and fill in your scores, justification, and importance for each area. You will need to reference the self-scoring rubric throughout the self-assessment, which is available [here](#). For now, skip answering the long-form questions – you will come back to these later in the assessment process.

### **HOW TO SELF-SCORE**

For each assessment area, read the descriptions under each number. Choose the number whose description most closely matches the case for your tool team.

Finally, rank your top 5 areas to work on (out of the 10 total areas).

### **Reference Materials**

Ensure you have a copy of:

- The Internews Open Source Software Project Capacity Action Planning (CAP) Workbook
- the tool team's self-scoring answers (marked in the CAP Workbook)
- the self-scoring rubric, which is available [here](#)
- the Internews Open Source Software Lightweight Needs Assessment Handbook for Tool Teams

### **Further Explore Priority Areas**

Take the top 5 areas ranked of most importance and prepare to further explore those areas with the tool team. (Of course, you can go through as many of the assessment areas as you like or have time for.)

Discussion should proceed **one assessment area at a time**. Do not move on to a new assessment area until you have finished discussion of the prior one(s). Consider starting with the most highly prioritized area and move to the next most important area each time.

- 1) Refer to the associated questions for that assessment area in the Internews Open Source Software Lightweight Needs Assessment Handbook for Tool Teams
  - document as many answers to the questions as you can

- 2) Next, talk through the Discussion Questions in the Handbook. Try to steer the conversation towards answers that will ultimately prove useful in designing your capacity action plan. (In other words, focus on the practicalities at stake.)
- 3) Re-assess your self-scoring for this area. Based on your conversation, do you want to revise your score? If so, note the new score. It is in your interest to score each area as accurately as possible, so that you have a clear rationale for support in the areas where you most need help.
- 4) Finish your discussion of the assessment area by answering the associated open-ended questions in the CAP Workbook. The tool team should discuss your answers out loud together prior to documenting them in the Workbook.
- 5) Conclude by walking through the questions for the Strategic Planning & SWOT Analysis. The tool team should discuss your answers out loud together prior to documenting them in the Workbook.

*Remember: There are no "right" answers to this assessment! A certain amount of subjectivity is intrinsic to the scoring process.*