

## Appendix B: Interview guide

Baseline assessment of the COVID-19 response of evidence synthesis organizations: views and perspectives of the COVID-END partners

### I. Introduction

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My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am currently \_\_\_\_\_.

We would like to invite you to participate in an interview. Our objective is to understand how the evidence synthesis community initially responded to COVID-19 and their early experiences of partnering in COVID-END. The study is being conducted by the Sustaining Working Group of the COVID-END initiative. We are interviewing you to gain a better understanding of your views in relation to your organization's initial response to COVID-19 and its early experiences of partnering in the COVID-END initiative.

Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary; you have the right to decline to respond to any or all questions or stop the interview at any time, for any reason. The interview will consist of open-ended questions and should take approximately 45-60 minutes. Please let me know if you want to be identified or your organization to be identified and to represent this information with your organization's name. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. Alternatively, you may choose not to have your voice recorded. In that case, I will take notes on your responses.

Do you consent to participate in the interview?       Yes       No

Do you consent to identify you/your organization?       Yes       No

Do you consent to having your voice recorded?       Yes       No

If you have any questions pertaining to the study and your participation, please do not hesitate to ask me now. Also, if you have any questions at a later time, please feel free to contact Dr. Elie Akl at [ea32@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ea32@aub.edu.lb).

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

Interviewer to discuss what organizational learning is prior to asking interview questions:  
It is the “...the process of [an organization] improving actions through better knowledge and understanding”<sup>1</sup>.

**II. Description of organization:**

*Data on the descriptions of organizations will be collected through the documentary analysis and email correspondence with partners. It will be validated during the interview as needed.*

1. Organization name: -----
  
2. Position of interviewee in the organization: -----
  
3. Has your organization conducted, is currently conducting, or intends to conduct an evaluation of its response to COVID-19?
  - Yes, (provide data if possible)
  - No

**III. Initial response to COVID-19**

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1. When did your organization first begin to focus (some of) your work on COVID?
  - What triggered it to focus on COVID-19?
  - Who in the organization made the decision to focus on COVID work?
  - Were there any discussions with key internal (e.g., work teams, advisory board) or external stakeholders (funders, other stakeholder groups) about this? (If yes, which groups and their role in the organization (if internal) or the relationship with the organization if external.
  - Did you discuss your plans with other evidence synthesis organisations?
  - Other?

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<sup>1</sup> Lu, S.-L. and M. Sexton, Innovation in small professional practices in the built environment. 2009: John Wiley & Sons.

**At the structural level:**

Did your organization create any new structures/groups (or re-assign existing structures/groups) to undertake COVID related work? Did your organization reduce or stop doing other work to accommodate its COVID related work?

**At the conceptual level:**

2. Please describe your organization's efforts, if any, in adapting norms, rules, vision, methodologies (e.g. rapid assessments or synthesis of evidence) and interpretive schemes (e.g. discussion around goals and strategies of the organization in the context of COVID-19, making sense with the pandemic context for the organization...) that support its response to COVID-19.

*(e.g., producing documents describing new concepts and rules)*

**At the operational level:**

3. What are COVID-related activities that are being conducted by your organization?  
Factors to consider include types of products and target groups
4. What are challenges or obstacles that your organization experienced during its initial response to COVID-19? *(i.e., challenges of responding to COVID-19 related information needs)*  
Factors to consider include human and financial resources, evidence synthesis methods, timeliness of the response, priority setting, staff motivation and well-being, etc.
5. What are the effects of COVID-19 on the ability of your organization to respond to demands related to the pandemic?
6. The pandemic has had unprecedented impacts on knowledge synthesis organizations, can you tell me about what your organization has learned about successfully coping under these conditions?
  - What has contributed to the organization being successful managing (or contributed to your organization's struggling to manage)
  - How have you been able to shift the focus of work to COVID-19? What made it possible for the organization to be able to do this?

- Thinking about the present, what are the immediate concerns about the impact COVID-19 is having on the organization?
- Thinking about the future, what are the organization's longer-term concerns about the impact COVID-19 will have on it?
- In two years from now, how do you see the organization and how might it be different from how it was pre- COVID-19? How come?

**At the relational level:**

7. Please describe your organization's efforts, if any, in building linkages, trust, and collaboration between people involved in the COVID-19 response.
8. What is the role of key organizations or partnerships (outside COVID-END) that were activated to support the organizational response to COVID-19?

**IV. Initial engagement with the COVID-END initiative**

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1. How did your organization come to be involved with the COVID-END network?  
*(i.e., what led to your organization getting involved with the COVID-END network?)*
2. What were your expectations as an organization for your involvement?
3. What has been your experience to date with the COVID-END network?
4. Would your organization like to improve its involvement with COVID-END? How come and if yes, how? Suggestions for future activities.
5. What could be done to improve COVID-END? Suggestions for future activities.