



## TOOL SIMPLE CODING FOR QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

### OVERVIEW

Qualitative analysis is the act of finding themes and patterns in a set of non-numerical data. It can be used to gain insight into people's experiences, perceptions, and emotions. Analyzing data can be done through different techniques. An accessible tool for interpreting data is coding the information. Put simply, coding is putting the data into different categories. A code or category can be a word or a short phrase that represents a theme or an idea. The researcher derives meaning from the codes/categories, assigning titles to the qualitative themes, and presenting the findings in a meaningful way.

### WHEN TO USE

Though today we have the option of using different qualitative analysis programs, rejoice - the human brain is still a powerful tool for sorting through data. You can use coding in anything related to research or even in analyzing trends and patterns across your organization. For example, at the Civic Canopy, we use this tool to analyze the data we receive in our qualitative interviews with partners after a project has finished.

### HOW TO USE

You've gathered all the qualitative data, be it from interviews, from a staff survey, etc. Now you are tasked with making sense of it all. Begin by reading through all the data first. During this first read-through, you can start jotting down some patterns you notice. Capture these as just keywords, phrases, or ideas you're seeing pop up again and again. As you are reading through the data a second time, start to identify themes by adding them in brackets next to the blurb or quote. For example:

*More sessions like that. Even diving into more of the nonviolent communication and ways to integrate. Those things into how we operate with and the knowledge that while community engagement is so important **[Community engagement, resources]***

*I wasn't sure how a nonprofit operates but now I do thanks to the resources!  
**[resources]***



*Sometimes in large groups, I feel shy to speak up or like what I have to say doesn't matter. At that event, I felt like my voice and thoughts did matter. [inclusion, welcoming]*

*Everything felt so so so rushed! We were barely diving into a topic and then we had moved on. I wanted more time to connect with different people and hear more perspectives. [more time, connecting among participants]*

As you start going through all the data, you will see repetition and similarities among themes. Use the first coding round to create high-level concepts or themes. From there, you can start piecing together how they all fit into each other. Ask another member of your team to look at the data as well and add in their observations to help reduce bias.

This technique can also work in Excel, where you can use tools to quickly organize the data. For example:

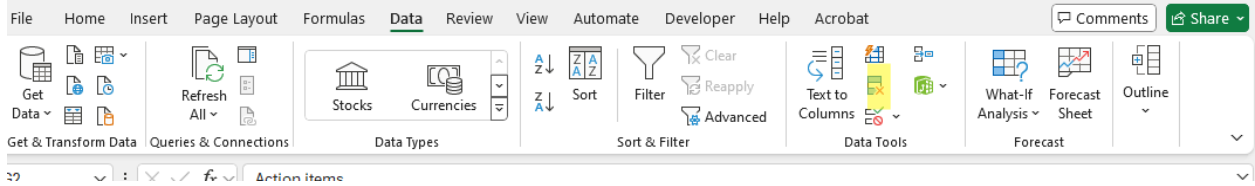
Event	Feedback	Evaluator 1	Evaluator 2
Event Name	3 hours after a workday was a bit tough, short session	Time of day	
Event Name	A definition at the start of what mediation is.	Definition of Terms	Shared Language
Event Name	A little more time to connect with others	More connection	
Event Name	A little more time.	More time	
Event Name	Actionable Items and ongoing progress with laws	Action items	Policy expertise
Event Name	bring in other perspectives	different perspectives	
Event Name	allowing more space for addressing conflict and aiding in mediation	More time	Conflict Resolution
Event Name	some of it was confusing. I am unclear what to do now.	Action items	needing clarity
Event Name	people need to use their inside voices!!	Volume	sharing space

The first column after the feedback given is the big theme that appears multiple times and the next column is an additional theme provided by another evaluator.

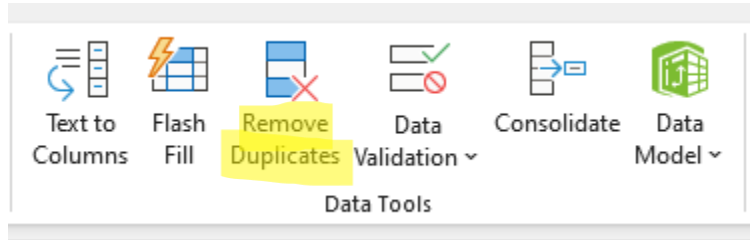
To count the number of times a given theme appeared in Xcel, we need to start by generating a list of all the themes you identified. First, highlight all the cells that have a theme in them. For the example above, highlight everything below Line 1 in the third and fourth columns. Paste the data from both columns into another column.

Next, we need to remove duplicate themes. This will remove any themes that appear multiple times from your new list, leaving you with your overall list of possible themes. Re-highlight your identified themes and then find 'Data' in the upper ribbon. Towards the left of the ribbon on Xcel, click 'Remove Duplicates'. It is an icon with three rows, one blue row on top of a white row and another blue row with a red 'X'.

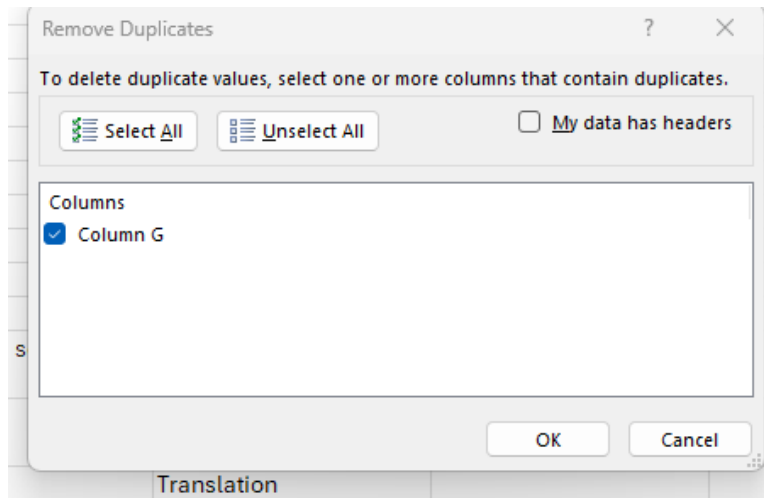
It can look like this on a smaller window:



Or like this in a bigger window:



Then, Xcel prompts you to verify which column you are removing duplicates from:



After you hit 'OK, the data will appear like this:

	G
1	
2	Action items
3	Definition of Terms
4	different perspectives
5	More connection
6	More time
7	Time of day
8	Volume



Once we have all the themes input, use the Xcel equation =*countif* to count the appearances of a theme. In the example above, using Action Items, input this equation into the cell right of Action Items (H2): =*COUNTIF*(C2:D10,G2) then hit enter. C2:D10 is the range of cells to pull data from and G2 is the criteria.

Copy the equation from H2 into the cells in the column. It will leave you with a table like this:

	G	H
1		
2	Action items	2
3	Definition of Terms	1
4	different perspectives	1
5	More connection	1
6	More time	4
7	Time of day	1
8	Volume	1

Once you see the times a theme shows up, you can start working on crafting conclusions and results from the data. For instance, in this data set, we saw that one of the most common themes was that people wanted more time and action items. It is good practice to have a second person add in any themes they notice. When two, or more, people look at the data it can help reduce bias. Once you’ve completed these steps, you can use the frequency of the key themes to draw meaning from your data set.

Note: When using this tool for analyzing qualitative data, it is advisable to have already transcribed the interview to make it easier to add brackets with themes.

## COMMUNITY LEARNING MODEL

### Results

Clear articulation of the results sought is at the center of the model. The desired results and the re-assessment of them drive the community learning process.

Coding is a tool for the Results portion of the Community Learning Model. To learn more about tools for results and the other areas of the Community Learning Model, visit [o](#).

