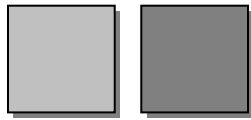


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Handbook

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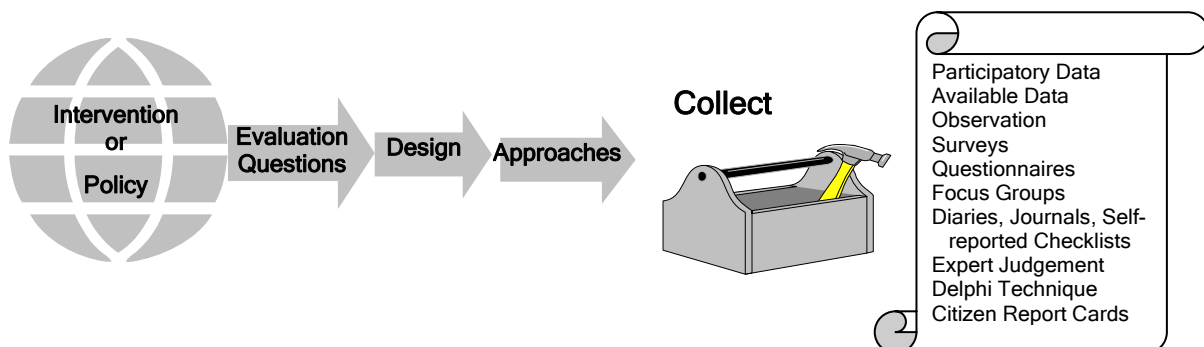
Data Collection Methods

Introduction

You have now learned about evaluation questions and evaluation designs to match these questions. In this module, you will be looking at how you will collect the data to answer your evaluation questions. The module begins with information you need to know about data collection and ends with a “Toolkit” of ways to collect data.

This module has five topics. They are:

- Data Collection Strategies
- Data Collection General Rules
- Key Issues about Measures
- Quantitative and Qualitative Data
- Common Data Collection Approaches: The Toolkit.





Learning Objectives

By the end of the module, you should be able to:

- describe data collection strategies
- list the general rules for data collection
- describe key issues about measures, including: credibility, reliability, validity, and precision
- describe common approaches to data collection and when to use these approaches, including: participatory data, available data, observation, surveys, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, diaries, journals, and self-reported checklists, expert judgment, and citizen report cards.



Key Words



You will find the following key words or phrases in this module. Watch for these and make sure that you understand what they mean and how they are used in the course.

participatory data collection
structured data collection
unstructured data collection
validity
reliability
precision
quantitative approach
qualitative approach
bias
triangulation
global positioning system (GPS)
available data
unobtrusive observer
participant observer
obtrusive observer
in-person interview
self-administered questionnaire
pilot or pilot test
structured survey
semi-structured survey
response rate
cover letter
volunteer sample or self-selected sample
focus group
diary
self-reported checklist
rich data
Delphi technique
nominal group technique
citizen report cards



Data Collection Strategies

You have a number of ways to collect data but there is no one single best way. The decision about which approaches to use depends upon:

- what you need to know
- where the data reside
- resources and time available
- complexity of the data to be collected
- frequency of data collection.



If you need to know whether villagers who participated in an adult literacy intervention can read and write better than those who did not participate, you will need to find a way to collect data about their reading and writing skills. Maybe you can get access to some samples of their writing before and after the intervention, or perhaps you can give them a reading and writing test and compare scores before and after the program.



If you need to know if literacy intervention participants are more actively engaged in their children's education, you might try observing parent-child interactions, or you might ask children, parents, and teachers whether this is the case, before and after the program.



If you need to know if the literacy program participants were satisfied with the quality of the literacy workshops and follow-up, then you will need to gather the opinions of the participants. A structured interview of participants is one option (or a survey, if literacy levels are high enough).

As mentioned briefly in an earlier module, the choice of methods hinges partly on the evaluation question to be answered, partly on how well the intervention is understood, and partly on the time and resources available. There is a trade-off here between in-depth understanding that comes from a case study, for example, and having data collected in a systematic and precise way through a survey that allows valid comparisons to be made.

As each evaluation question has its own mini-design, different data collection methods may be used to answer different questions within the over-all evaluation framework.



Choices:

1. Do you want to obtain numbers or do you want to obtain a more-in-depth understanding?

It helps to know the preference of your stakeholders. Sometimes people like to have concrete numbers. Other times, they might prefer a more in-depth sense of the situation. Sometimes both are important.

2. How structured do you want to be?

You have some choice in how structured you wish to be in collecting data. If you want great precision, then structure is better. If you want depth and nuance, or if you are uncertain about what you want to specifically measure, then a semi-structured or even an informal approach is better.

Structured Approach

Structured data collection approaches require that all data be collected in exactly the same way. This is particularly important for multi-site and cluster evaluations, where you need to be able to compare findings at different sites in order to draw conclusions about what works best. It is also important when you need to make comparisons with alternative interventions to determine whether the one you are investigating is in fact the most effective way of addressing the documented needs.



If you decide your measure for successful land drainage is the moisture content of the soil, then you have to collect measures of moisture content from multiple sites in the drained region over the same period of time (and under the same weather conditions).



If you are going to ask 500 farmers their views about the project, then you will likely want to ask them each the same questions so that you can easily tabulate responses.



If you need “counts” (e.g. 20% of the farmers indicated...), the questions should be narrowly focused, precisely worded with a fixed set of responses in a multiple choice format, so everyone is asked the question in exactly the same way and has to choose from exactly the same set of responses.

If you do not need “counting information” you can use more open-ended or semi-structured questions.



Structured data collection approaches are used to collect quantitative data when:

- You wish to be very precise.
- You are working with a large sample or population.
- You are sure of what you wish to measure.
- You want to show your results numerically.
- You need to make comparisons across different sites or interventions.

Semi-structured Approach

Semi-structured data collection approaches are still systematic and follow general procedures, but data are not collected in exactly the same way every time. These approaches are more open and fluid. People can tell you what they want in their own way. You may vary questions or ask for more detail since you are not following a rigid script.

Semi-structured data collection approaches are often qualitative and used when:

- You are conducting exploratory work in a new development area (empowerment interventions, or those targeted at women).
- You are seeking understanding, themes, and/or issues.
- You want anecdotes, stories, or in-depth information.
- You are not sure of what you wish to measure.
- There is no need to quantify.

If you are working on a Community Driven Development (CDD) project, you may choose to use a semi-structured approach to data collection. CDD is an approach that gives control over planning decisions and investment resources to community groups and local governments.¹ Because CDD programs give control of planning decisions to others, you, as the evaluator, cannot use a fully structured approach because the same questions are not appropriate to all groups; the community groups and local governments will also be involved.

¹ World Bank, *Community Driven Development*
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTCDD/0,,menuPK:430167~pagePK:149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:430161,00.html>



Data Collection General Rules

The following are general rules to help you with data collection.

- Use available data if you can. (Using it is faster, less expensive, and easier than generating new data.)
- If using available data, be sure to find out how earlier evaluators:
 - collected the data
 - defined the variables
 - ensured accuracy of the data.
- If you must collect original data:
 - establish procedures and follow them (protocol)
 - maintain accurate records of definitions and coding
 - pre-test, pre-test, pre-test
 - verify accuracy of coding, data input.

Key Issues about Measures

When you collect data, you will need to keep these key issues in mind:

- Are your measures credible?
- Are your measures valid?
- Are your measures measuring what counts?
- Are your measures reliable?
- Are your measures precise?

Credibility

Credibility refers to how trustworthy or believable your data collection is. In other words, are the data that you are collecting giving you information about the actual situation?

As well, it is important to make sure that the data you are collecting are relevant and they measure the most important information.

Be sure to avoid the trap of measuring what is easy instead of measuring what you need.



For example, teacher opinions may not be the most credible measure for learning the reasons for high dropout rates. The opinions of the dropouts are a more relevant measure.



Validity

Validity is a term used to describe if a measurement actually measures what it is supposed to measure. Are the questions you are asking giving you information about the issues you want to measure?



For example, using waiting lists as a measure of the demand for early childhood education may not be valid. Waiting lists are frequently out of date and parents place children on multiple waiting lists.

Two kinds of validity are face validity and content validity:

- **Face validity** addresses the extent to which the contents of the test or procedure *look* like they are measuring what they are supposed to measure. For example, if you were measuring health status or physical fitness, the measure of how fast one runs 100 meters, may indeed look like it could be a measure of health status or at least physical fitness.
- **Content validity** addresses the extent to which the content of the test or procedure adequately represents all that is required for validity. Again using the example of health status, if a researcher was trying to develop such a measure, then he or she should allow other competent people to examine the content of the proposed test to ensure that all relevant measures are included and that all are weighted appropriately for the proposed test.

Reliability

Reliability is a term used to describe the stability of your measurement: that it measures the same thing, in the same way, in repeated tests.



For example, the measurement tools for some sporting events need to be reliable. The clock, stopwatch, or tape that measures the distance of a jump, must be measure the time or distance in the same way, each time it is used. If it does, it is considered a reliable measure. If it does not, the results of the study (the competition) would be flawed and results of the event could be questioned.



Birth weights of newborn infants are an example of a reliable measure, assuming the scales are calibrated. Attendance rates are an example of a measure with low reliability unless it is precisely defined. Attendance rates on the first day of school and three quarters of the way through the school year are known to vary substantially.

Precision

Precision is a term used to describe how the language used in the data collection matches the measure. For example, if the question is about countries, then the measures must be at the national level. If the question is about people, then the measures must be on the individual level.

Examples of measures of community health status:



- infant mortality rates
- number of physicians
- number of physicians per 1,000 people
- number of deaths
- percentage of per-school children immunized
- number of clinics per square mile.

Examples of measures of educational quality



- number of students
- teacher-student ratio
- educational background of teachers
- number of books and other learning resources
- number of graduates
- students' test scores
- satisfaction of parents.



Table 8.1: Key Issues about Your Data:

Question	Key Issue
Are your measures credible?	Are your data giving you information about the actual situation?
Are your findings valid?	Do your findings reflect what you set out to measure? If your question is about people's behavior, are you really measuring behavior? If your question is about people's perceptions, are you measuring perceptions?
Are you measuring what is most important?	<p>"Measure what counts."</p> <p>Are you measuring what really matters as opposed to what is easiest?</p>
Are your findings reliable?	Are your data concrete and collected in the same way using the same decision rules every time so that you have consistency in your measures?
Are your measures precise?	<p>If your question is about crop production, then your measures should be based on the quality and quantity of crops. We might want to compare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buyers' assessments of crop quality from the newly-drained land vs. the quality of crops prior to the drainage project; • Price per kilo obtained for the crop at market before vs. after the drainage project, with an additional comparison with the price obtained by un-drained farms over the same period; • Total yield (in kilos per hectare) before and after the project. <p>If your question is about how farms perform financially, then your measures should be based on farm income. We might want to compare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • farm incomes before and after the land was drained • farm incomes for drained vs. un-drained farms in comparable areas.



Quantitative and Qualitative Data

There are two approaches to collecting data, quantitative and qualitative.

A quantitative approach:

- is more structured
- attempts to provide precise measures
- is reliable
- is harder to develop
- is easier to analyze.

A qualitative approach:

- is less structured
- is easier to develop
- can provide “rich data” (detailed information that can be widely applied and linked to other data)
- is challenging to analyze
- is labor intensive to collect
- usually generates longer reports.

Table 8.2: When to Use Quantitative vs. Qualitative Approaches

If you:	Then use this approach:
want to do statistical analysis	Quantitative
want to be precise	
know exactly what you want to measure	
want to cover a large group	
want anecdotes or in-depth information	Qualitative
are not sure what you want to measure	
do not need to quantify	



Obtrusive vs. Unobtrusive Methods

When you collect data, you have the choice of using an obtrusive or unobtrusive method.

Obtrusive methods are approaches where observations are made of behavior with the participant's knowledge. Examples of obtrusive methods are:

- perceptions, opinions, and attitudes gathered through interviews, surveys, and focus groups
- join a group and observe how the interact.

Unobtrusive methods are observations done without the knowledge of the participant. Examples of unobtrusive methods are:

- historical/document/archival data
- watching participants at a sporting event.

With unobtrusive methods you need to decide if those who are being studied know they are being studied. If they know, it introduces a risk of error. Those being studied might change their behavior and/or they might change what they say.

One legendary unobtrusive measure looked at learning about the popularity of museum exhibits in a museum by studying the amount of wear on the tiles in front of the exhibits.



Common Data Collection Approaches: The Toolkits

This module contains a number of “toolkits” to help you learn more about each data collection technique.

The data collection technique you choose will depend on the situation. Each technique is more appropriate in some situations than others. All can be systematic, however, even if they vary in the amount of structure used.

Caution: Gathering data from people:

No matter which method you choose to gather data from people, all the information you gather is potentially subject to **bias** – a partiality that prevents people from considering (or presenting) facts objectively. When asked to provide information about themselves, they may or may not tell you the whole truth. It might be because they do not remember accurately, or they fear the consequences of providing a truthful answer. They may also be embarrassed or uncomfortable about admitting things they feel will not be socially acceptable.



For example, if you are asking questions about the use of protection in sexual intercourse, or when did the subject last see a doctor, he or she may feel embarrassed and not answer accurately. The subject may tell you what he or she thinks you want to hear rather than the actual truth.

There is also some concern that the people who choose to participate in the research may be different from those who choose not to. These are issues in surveys, interviews, and focus groups whether you use structured or unstructured approaches.

Combinations

Typically, a variety of data collection approaches are used in combination to answer different evaluation questions or to provide multiple sources of data in response to a single evaluation. You may collect available data from farmers’ crop yield records, interview buyers of farm produce, and survey the farmers themselves.

Sometimes researchers use focus groups to help develop a questionnaire or to make sense of survey results.

Collecting the same information using different approaches in order to get more accurate information to an evaluation question is called methodological **triangulation**.



Measurement Considerations

If people know they are being studied, they may act differently, so the very act of collecting data may introduce some error into your measurements. The way in which you collect data may also have an effect; for example, women may respond differently to a male interviewer than to a female interviewer. In another example, a person may act differently when their spouse is present during the interview. These are the sort of considerations that you must take into account in designing your collection methodology.

You may have several options in the kinds of measures you can use. If we want to study the economic opportunities for women, for example, we might need to define the range of possible opportunities they might avail themselves of – starting their own business, finding a higher-paying job, or joining forces with other women to buy supplies more cheaply in bulk. We might also want to know what percent started businesses that were financially successful, or that created jobs for other women or family members. Do we want to know how many are passing their new skills and confidence on to their daughters? As we specify what we want to count, we become clearer about what is important in answering our questions.

In the following sections, you will find a set of “toolkits” that introduce you to several methods of collecting data. These are:

- Toolkit 1: Participatory Data Collection
- Toolkit 2: Available Data
- Toolkit 3: Observation
- Toolkit 4: Surveys
- Toolkit 5: Focus Groups
- Toolkit 6: Diaries, Journals, and Self-reported Checklists
- Toolkit 7: Expert Judgment
- Toolkit 8: Delphi Technique
- Toolkit 9: Citizen Report Cards.



Toolkit 1: Participatory Data Collection

Participatory data are data that are collected when interacting with people. Examples of participatory data are:

- transect walks – walks that researchers take around a community observing the people, surroundings, and resources, and which can help identify issues that might need further investigation
- social mapping – can be used to present information on village layout, infrastructure, demography, ethno-linguistic groups, health patterns, wealth and other community issues
- community meetings – information gathered during meetings of people in the community, such as comments, questions asked, etc.

Mapping

One approach that can be used when working in communities is **mapping** – “drawing” a conceptual picture of the various elements that make up a community, including resources and assets, and how they interact with one another. This approach brings together members of the community in order to better understand the community and how the intervention fits (or does not) within the community. It can be used as part of any approach if appropriate to the evaluation questions.

Mapping is a method for collecting and plotting information on the distribution, access, and use of resources within a community.

Mapping is a useful tool in participatory evaluation or any approach involving stakeholders because it provides them with a way to work together. At the same time, it increases everyone’s understanding of the community. It is possible that people have different understandings of the community based on their status and experience.

The process of mapping can be used to generate discussions about local development priorities. It can be used to verify secondary sources of information. Mapping can also capture changes or perceived changes.



There are many kinds of mapping. They include:

- transect mapping
- resource mapping
- historical mapping
- social mapping
- health mapping
- wealth mapping
- land use mapping
- demographic mapping.

While the process of mapping probably applies more to planning interventions and in engaging citizens in a process that allows them to ultimately create a vision of what they wish to happen and a strategy for change, it can also be used in evaluations. It may prove interesting to see if people in the community know about the project you are evaluating, for example. If the community doesn't identify the project as an asset, it will raise the question of why that is the case

It also may help to understand whether the project being evaluated is located in the areas of greatest need or how they are co-located with other resources in the community. If they are co-located with other resources, do they work collaboratively? If not, what are the barriers?

Two approaches are **resource mapping** and **asset mapping**. These are very similar. Both provide a way for people to understand their own community. Resources are often more narrowly defined in terms of institutional resources while asset mapping usually includes the assets of individuals within the community as well. Both assume that those closest to the community understand how it works and why it works. Asset mapping has a more explicit intention to use this process to bring about change.

Resources and assets can include:

- Individual assets: skills, talent, networks, money, property, etc.
- Civic assets: faith associations, clubs, social groups, etc.
- Institutional assets: businesses, schools, health services, economic development and planning offices, social services, agricultural services, public transportation, cultural facilities, charities and foundations, other government offices, etc.
- Environmental assets: parks, clean air and water, roads, farmland, housing, etc.



The mapping process may require participants to observe specific aspects of the community or interview people in the community, especially to identify individual assets. Alternatively, mapping can be done at group meetings. One process is to ask people to draw their community in terms of how they spend their day or in terms of places they are likely to visit during the year. Each person is given a big sheet of paper and magic markers or colored pencils. Each map is hung on a wall and then the whole group discusses common elements as well as differences. Together, they draw the larger map.

It is not unusual for the maps that individuals in a community make to look different. In some places, the map that the women draw will be different from the map that the men draw because their lives and day-to-day experiences are different. In other places, people with different educational and occupational background will draw different maps.

Tools for Mapping

The **global positioning system**, usually called **GPS**, is a navigation system that uses satellites to identify locations on Earth. More than two dozen GPS satellites broadcasts precise timing signals by radio signals to GPS receivers, allowing them to accurately determine their location. They give the longitude, latitude, and altitude of locations, in any weather, day or night, anywhere on Earth.

GPS has become a vital global utility, indispensable for modern navigation on land, sea, and air in all location of the world. It can also be a valuable tool to assist with mapping. You can use a GPS devise to pin-point a location and learn its latitude and longitude components. These can then be recorded to find the exact location later or to communicate the exact location to another person.

Another tool that can assist evaluators is Google Earth. Google Earth is a free-of-charge, downloadable program from the Internet. It maps the entire earth by pasting images obtained from satellites and aerial photography and geographical information systems (GIS) on to an image of a three dimensional globe. Many large cities are available in a resolution high enough to see individual buildings, houses, and even cars. The degree of resolution available is based somewhat on the points of interest, but all land is covered in at least 15 meters of resolution. You can enter coordinates, or simply use the mouse to browse to a location on the globe.



For example, Google Earth can be helpful for collecting baseline data. You can locate an area with Google Earth, save the image and print it.. The pictures show locations of buildings, forests, rivers, lakes, etc. You can collect data at later dates and compare to the image you captured as part of the baseline data to the current situation.

Figure 8.1 shows a copy of an image from *Google Earth* of Dacca (Dhaka), India. Notice, you can view buildings, a river, and boats or barges on the river.



Fig. 8.1: Google Earth Image of Dacca (Dhaka), India.

Google Earth is available in a free version, and in licensed versions for commercial use. It is currently officially available on Windows XP, Mac OS X and Linux. at the following website: <http://earth.google.com/>

Toolkit 2: Available Data

Sometimes data have already been collected that can be used to answer our questions. When you use data gathered by others, you need to find out how they carried out data collection, how they measured each variable, the decision rules they used to code and clean the data, and how they treated missing data and non-responses.

Examples of typical sources of available data:



- files/records
- computer data bases
- industry reports
- government reports
- other reports or prior evaluations
- census data
- documents (budgets, policies and procedures, organizational charts, maps).

Using Agency Records

Agency records are a common source of evaluation information. Agencies may have already collected the data you need from clients, community, and internal information systems. The agencies may also have summarized and reported the information. Agency reports may include:

- internal management reports
- budget documents
- reports to the public or funding agencies
- some evaluation or monitoring information.



Key Issues to Consider:

- Are the available data valid?
- Are the available data reliable?
- Are the available data accurate?

Collecting Data from Paper Files, Records, or Documents:

Sometimes the data are available but not in a form that is easy to analyze. You may have to collect information that is in files or documents. In this situation, you want to develop a data collection instrument (DCI) that specifies exactly what data you want to collect and how you want to code it. This data collection instrument is like a close-ended questionnaire with specific items that have fixed responses.

Develop an instrument that is easy, simple, and clear. You can use a form that specifies exactly what data you want. Set up your procedures and train everyone who will be collecting the data. You want to make sure everyone codes data in exactly the same way. Establish decision rules for coders and test for inter-rater reliability. Once you have developed an instrument, pre-test it.

When working with official documents that describe current activities or practices, try to verify that the documents accurately reflect what is actually practiced. Observations and interviews may help in verifying actual practices. For example, observe a training program: do they really hold classes every week and are the participants diverse?



If the evaluation is about whether AIDS nurses trained in a government sponsored training program were more effective than other AIDS nurses, a data collection instrument could be used to systematically gather relevant data in their files. The evaluators could select a sample of AIDS clinics and review the records of all the nurses. These records include their educational background, how long they have been nursing, and their performance ratings.



The data collection instrument might look like the one shown in Figure 8.2.

ID #: _____

1. Highest year of education completed: _____
2. Registered Nurse? Yes _____ No _____
3. Completed government training? Yes _____ No _____
4. If yes, year completed training: _____
5. How many years nursing at this clinic? _____
6. How many years nursing elsewhere? _____
7. Performance ratings for the past 5 years:
 Year: _____ Rating: _____
 Year: _____ Rating: _____
 Year: _____ Rating: _____
 Year: _____ Rating: _____
 Year: _____ Rating: _____
8. Performance award received during past 5 years:
 ___ Yes ___ No
 If yes, number of awards received in past 5 years: ___
9. Gender: ___ Male ___ Female
10. Comments: _____

Fig. 8.2: Example of a Data Collection Instrument.

Sometimes it is necessary to read official documents in order to describe current activities or practices.



For example, if you have been asked to determine the factors that contribute to a best practice in delivering a public service, it would be helpful to look at documents.

- When was the program started?
- What were the goals and objectives in the enabling legislation or the authorizing document?
- How many people were involved?
- What departments were involved?
- How did they go about implementing the program?
- What measures did they use to track success?
- What was the budget?

It is essential to try to verify that the documents accurately reflect what is actually practiced. Verification can come in the form of supporting documents that report similar information or through interviews of people who are knowledgeable about the program, its history, and implementation. It helps to seek out people who have different roles, including external people, such as budget staff and clients. Their perspectives can help shed light on the information obtained, as well as provide the unwritten history.

Collecting Computer Data:

- Obtain the database structure, data dictionary, coding schemes.
- Find out what is needed to transfer the data to your computer.
- Verify the accuracy of the data in the computer.
- Transfer the data with a minimum of effort (no re-typing) to avoid introducing new errors from data entry procedures.

Advantages and Challenges of Using Available Data

Advantages: Often less expensive and faster than collecting the original data yourself.

Challenges: There may be coding errors or other problems. Data may not be exactly what is needed. You may have difficulty getting access. You have to verify validity and reliability of data.



Toolkit 3: Observation

Observation enables you to see what is happening. You can see a lot by just looking around. You can observe: traffic patterns, land use patterns, the layout of city and rural environments, the quality of the housing, the condition of roads, or who comes to a rural health clinic for medical services.

When you use observation techniques, you can be an observer in one of three ways: unobtrusive, participant, or obtrusive.

Unobtrusive Observer: No one knows you are observing. For example, if you visit a local market that has been given resources for development, you can observe the activity within the shops, the traffic in the area, and may even enter into casual conversations with shoppers. Of course, to be unobtrusive you must look like someone who would be likely to be seen in that marketplace.

Participant Observer: You actually participate in the activity, typically without anyone knowing you are observing. For example, you may make some purchases in the local market as if you were just a regular shopper but you really are evaluating the merchant-shopper interactions. Participant data are often used to check the quality of customer service, such as tax advice.

Obtrusive Observer: The people being observed know you are there to observe them. For example, if you come into the marketplace with a clipboard and video camera and are introduced as an observer, then everyone knows you are there and for what reason.

If people know you are observing them or their performance, it might influence their behavior. For instance, if you are observing the shopping transactions in the market, you may notice that the merchants make a particularly strong effort with bartering and promotion of their best products. Based on only observations, you will not know whether it is your presence or because they normally engage with their customers so energetically.



You can minimize your influence on behavior by using unobtrusive observation. But observation at one point in time may not give an accurate picture. The activities in the marketplace may be influenced by a recent crime, so the observer may mistakenly assume not many people come to the marketplace. Follow-up or the use of other measurement strategies may help in giving a clearer picture of behavior.

Within any of these options, you may make your observations in a structured or semi-structured way. In structured observation, you may have a very specific checklist to precisely count things according to a specific schedule or a stopwatch to time activities. In semi-structured observation, you will make notes of whatever struck you as interesting, typical, unusual, and/or important. Or you could engage in continuous note taking about transactions as they occur. Alternatively, you could choose to focus on specific actions of shoppers or merchants.

Examples of observations



The following are some examples of ways of using observation to collect data:

- observe classroom activities to measure the amount of time spent on hands-on learning activities
- observe amount of traffic on a road from the village to major town
- observe the amount of male versus female participation in meetings for information on gender issues
- observe program offices to observe relationships and interactions among people in the offices.



The following guidelines suggest ways to plan for an observation.

- Develop a checklist to rate your observations.
- Develop a rating scheme.
- Have more than one observer, if feasible.
- Train observers so they observe the same things.

Be sure to pilot test the observation data collection instrument. To do this, two observers go to the same area and complete their rating sheets. After they complete their sheets, compare them. If there are big differences, give more training and clarification. If there is little differences proceed with the larger study.

For a less formal approach to the observation, you can have a few key questions in mind when you arrive for your observation.

Advantages and Challenges of Observational Data Collection:

- Advantages:** Collects data on actual behavior rather than self-reported behavior or perceptions. It is real-time rather than retrospective.
- Challenges:** Observer bias; potentially unreliable (two observers may see things very differently unless data collection is highly structured); interpretation and coding challenges; sampling can be a problem; can be labor intensive; low response rates.



Toolkit 4: Surveys

Surveys are great for collecting data about people's perceptions, opinions, and ideas. They are less accurate in measuring behavior because what people say they do may or may not reflect what they actually do. A key component of a survey is the sample; ideally, the sample is representative of the population as a whole (Sampling is covered in a later module). Surveys can be either structured or semi-structured.

Structured surveys are precisely worded with a range of pre-determined responses that the respondent can select. Everyone is asked exactly the same questions in exactly the same way, and is given exactly the same choices to answer the questions.

The following shows an example of a structured question that might be found in a structured survey. NOTE: The number of response options you offer should generally be an odd number, (i.e., 3, 5, or 7) so that the neutral response is readily apparent to the respondent. The time to use two options is when, for example, you want only a "yes" or "no" answer. Sometimes, however, development banks use even pointed scales in their project evaluation rating scales, to require the rater to make a choice between a "satisfactory" and "partly satisfactory" rating.

Semi-structured surveys ask the same general set of questions, but leave many, if not all, of the answers open-ended.

The two examples that follow illustrate the difference between structured and unstructured survey questions.

Example of a structured question



To what extent, if at all, has this workshop been useful in helping you to learn how to evaluate your program?

- little or no extent
- some extent
- moderate extent
- great extent
- very great extent
- no opinion
- not relevant.



Example of semi-structured question

What are three things you learned from the program evaluation workshop that you have used on the job?

With all surveys and interviews, it is essential to **pilot test** (pre-test) your data collection instrument early on. This means asking a small but fairly representative sample of potential respondents to go through the survey and highlight any areas where the questions need clarification. One of the most useful strategies for questionnaires is to sit down with someone while they fill it out, and ask them to reason aloud as they fill it out. This can give you some excellent insights into how people interpret questions. More often than not, things you thought were crystal clear turn out to be confusing or ambiguous in ways you had never anticipated. Pay particular attention when respondents misunderstand a question. If this happens, consider revising the questions and retest.

The following summarizes the advantages of structured and semi-structured surveys.

Structured surveys are:

- harder to develop: you have to be absolutely certain you have covered all possible pieces of information, since there are no “catch-all” open-ended questions that could fill in the gaps
- easier to complete: checking a box takes less time than writing a narrative response
- easier to analyze
- more efficient when working with large numbers of people.

Semi-structured surveys are:

- a little easier to develop: you can include fairly broad open-ended questions that will capture anything else missed in the structured sections, so there is less danger of leaving something else
- labor intensive to conduct
- harder to analyze but provide a rich source of data
- subject to bias in the interpretation of the open-ended responses
- burdensome for people to complete as a self-administrated questionnaire.



Three of the methods of collecting surveys are:

- in-person interviews: group or individual
- self-administered questionnaire
- mail, phone, or e-mail surveys.

In-person interviews are useful when you want an in-depth understanding of experiences, opinions or individual personal descriptions of a process. It is also useful when other approaches will not work; for instance, self-administered questionnaires only work when the population can read the language of the survey and are motivated enough to respond. In-person interviews can be done individually or in groups. In groups, you will ask fewer questions than in an individual interview since everyone has to have the opportunity to answer and there are limits to how long people are willing to sit still. In-person interviews can be longer and more in-depth than questionnaires. Self-administered questionnaires should be short and take no more than 30 minutes to complete (shorter is better).

Another choice for collecting data with a survey is to use the postal system or a technology, such as telephone or the Internet. These can save costs for travel during data collection. You can send questionnaires to any area that has access to these methods of distribution. If the area does not receive postal access regularly or has no telephone or Internet capability, they will be excluded from the survey. In addition, issues of literacy make these approaches less feasible in some areas.

Self-administered questionnaires can also be either structured, semi-structured, or a combination. These are written surveys that the respondent completes. Since it is easier to check a box than write out answers (and there is less chance of losing data because you cannot decipher someone's handwriting or unique spelling), closed-ended questions are best. Typically, a survey includes one or two open-ended questions. These often make you feel more comfortable, in case you missed something. The open-ended questions also make the respondents feel that they can more fully express their views. One or two open-ended questions work; more than that will become burdensome and the respondent may not complete the survey. These open-ended responses can be a chore to analyze but can provide some useful insights and quotable quotes to illustrate major themes of the report. Self-administered questionnaires should be short and take no more than 30 minutes to complete (shorter is better). Of all the approaches, research suggests that people are more likely to give honest responses to sensitive questions by using a self-administered questionnaire.



Advantages and Challenges of Surveys

Advantages: Best when you want to know what people think, believe, or perceive; only they can tell you that.

Challenges: People may not accurately recall their behavior or may be reluctant to reveal their behavior if it is illegal or stigmatized. What people *think they do* or *say they do* is not always the same as what they *actually do*.

Techniques for Developing Questions

Whether you decide to conduct your survey in-person, by mail, phone, or Internet, or to use a self-administered questionnaire, you will need to develop questions. In this section, you will learn how to develop your survey by:

- writing survey questions
- sequencing questions.

Writing Survey Questions

According to the Living Standards Measurement Survey Study (LSMS)², the most important issues in designing a survey are the:

- the analytical objectives
- the measurement techniques to be used.

The LSMS discusses a process of developing questions for surveys. They describe three important ways to ensure a successful questionnaire:

- make sure the right kinds of people are involved in its design
- allow enough time and repeated iterations in the development process
- field test (pilot, pilot, pilot).

² Living Standards Measurements Study (LSMS). *A manual for planning and implementing the LSMS survey*, Working paper No.126, World Bank, Washington, DC, 1996. pp 21 – 52.



The Right Kinds of People

The LSMS suggests that drafting survey questions and coordinating inputs from others is best assigned to a small group who:

- know what subjects are of policy and analytic interest to the evaluation
- have experience using data from similar surveys on a variety of topics.

LSMS points out that it is crucial for the team of question writers to have extensive local expertise when designing the questions. Such writers will bring with them the knowledge of the country's society and of existing programs. They also know what issues should be emphasized. In some cases, they may also be familiar with earlier local surveys about some of the topics covered, which may help them design pre-coded questions. In addition, they will know the network of people and institutions that should be contacted during the survey design process.

To help define the basic and subsidiary objectives of the survey, the team writing the survey questions must also get input from policymakers and program managers.

Once the people writing the questions are in place, it is time to start the process of developing the survey.

This is best done in levels.

- The first level for developing the survey is identifying the important issues to be covered.
- When the important issues are identified, this will help establish the relative weight of the different modules in the survey.
- Important issues can then be identified within sectors.
- Question writers may need to learn more about how specific programs work.
- Once this background work is done, the actual writing of the survey may begin.



Table 8.3 shows how progressively more detail is required at each level of the process.

Table 8.3: Levels of Refinement in Determining Questionnaire Content.³

Level	Description
Overarching Objectives	Define the objectives: for example, to study poverty; to understand the effects of government policies on households
Balance between Sectors	Define which issues are most important: for example, the incidence of food price subsidies; the effect of changes in the accessibility or cost of government health and education services; the effect of changes in the economic climate due to structural adjustment or transition from a centrally planned to a market economy.
Balance within Sectors	Within the education sector, [for example,] define which of the following are the most important for the country and moment: the levels and determinants of enrollment, poor attendance, learning, and differences in male and female indicators; the impact of the number of years of schooling on earnings in the formal sector and agriculture and the question of how or if they differ; which children have textbooks or receive school lunches or scholarships; how much parents have to pay for schooling.
Write Questions to Study Specific Issues or Programs	In a case where it is decided that it is important to study who has access to textbooks, for example, the question writer will need to know: how many different subjects are supposed to have textbooks available; if the books to be given out by the government are to be given to each child individually or are to be shared; if they are to be taken home or used only in the classroom; if they are to be used for only one year or several; if they are to be paid for; when the books are supposed to be available; and are textbooks bought from bookshops better or worse than those provided by the school.

Many times, the step of communicating and consulting with policymakers is not given enough attention. Many policymakers are not familiar with surveys and may have difficulty interpreting complicated data derived from questionnaires. As well, they may not know how to imagine how the answers to the questions will be analyzed. For this reason, it is important to show policymakers and program managers examples of tables or other analyses that could be produced from the survey as well as the survey itself.

³ LSMS. *A manual for planning and implementing the LSMS Survey*, p 23.



Iterative Process

According to the LSMS⁴, the process of survey development is an iterative one. Once the initial version of the survey is drafted, the various interested parties should review the draft in detail. During their review, they should make notes and share their criticisms and suggestions. Revisions are then made to the original draft. This process may be repeated several times.

Translating the Survey

In cases where one or more different languages are needed to collect data, the surveys must be translated so that everyone involved in the iterative process can participate. It is the responsibility of those writing the surveys to make sure that all questions and instructions are written so that people speaking different languages are involved in the survey.

When translating surveys, a person who knows both languages and is familiar with the purpose of the questions should do the first translation. A person who was intimately involved in designing the questionnaire should do a back-up translation. This helps avoid contaminating the interpretations with prior knowledge.

In most cases, surveys are printed only in the official language(s) of the country and teams of interviewers with skills in communicating in a number of local languages are used to collect data. In these cases, a few key questions or phrases are translated into local languages and presented in the survey manual. For less commonly spoken languages, local interpreters may have to be used.

Questions used in surveys should always be worded in simple terms used in the language that is commonly spoken. Questions should not be written in an academic or formal language style. In local languages, the gap between the spoken and written languages and the difficulty of balancing simplicity and precision may be greater. This is especially true for those languages that are not commonly used in writing.

⁴ LSMS, *A manual for planning and implementing the LSMS survey*. pp 25 – 32.



Field (Pilot) Testing

Once the survey is agreed upon, it should go through a field or pilot test with a small number of subjects. Based on the results of the field test, revisions may be needed. If the first field test suggests many changes, another field test may be needed, covering some or all of the survey.

The field test is one of the most critical steps of preparing a survey. The goal of a field test is to ensure that the survey is capable of collecting the information it is aimed to collect.

A good field test will look at the survey at three levels:

- as a whole – Are all parts of the survey consistent? Are there areas that ask the same question?
- each section – If the survey has more than one section, does the information looked for in each section collect the intended information? Are all major activities accounted for? Are there any questions that are not relevant?
- individual questions – Is the wording clear? Does the question allow ambiguous responses? Are there alternative interpretations?

When conducting a field or pilot test, it is important to test the survey with samples from diverse areas and all major socioeconomic groups, for example:

- rural and urban
- individuals employed in the formal sector and informal sector.

If the field test is only needed in one language, it usually takes about one month to complete. If the final survey is to be done in more than one language, it will take more time because a version in each language should be field-tested.

At the end of the field test, one or two weeks should be set aside to review the results. The team(s) working on the field test should meet to discuss and agree upon changes needed for the questions or instructions in the survey. The group should be sure to address the survey as a whole, each section of the survey, and each question and instruction.



Sequencing Questions⁵

Carter McNamera, author of *Field Guide to Consulting and Organizational Development with Nonprofits* suggests using the following suggestions to sequence questions in surveys.

- Get the respondents involved in the interview as soon as possible.
- Before asking about controversial matters (such as feelings and conclusions), first ask about some facts. With this approach, respondents can more easily engage in the interview before warming up to more personal matters.
- Intersperse fact-based questions throughout the interview to avoid long lists of fact-based questions, which tends to leave respondents disengaged.
- Ask questions about the present before questions about the past or future. It is usually easier for them to talk about the present and then work into the past or future.

The last questions might be to allow respondents to provide any other information they prefer to add and their impressions of the interview.

⁵ Carter McNamara, *General guidelines for conducting interviews*. Online at: <http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/interview.htm#anchor615874>



Techniques for Conducting Surveys

The following is a list of guidelines for conducting surveys.

General Guidelines for Conducting Surveys

The following are general guidelines for conducting interviews:

- Keep it simple, clear, easy, short.
- Locate other people who have done the kind of evaluation you are interested in and locate surveys similar to what you think you want to do.
- Make sure people know why you are asking them to participate.
- Ask questions that are easy to answer and do not frustrate the respondent's desire to be clear in his or her responses.
- Do not ask them for information that requires them to go to a file or other source. If you must do this, you need to let them know in advance so the material can be assembled before the survey administration.
- Respect their privacy. Treat surveys confidentially and have procedures in place to assure privacy. Make sure you can insure confidentiality. Never promise confidentiality unless it can be absolutely delivered.
- Respect respondents' time and intelligence.
- Tell them how they were selected and why their participation is important.
- Do no harm: keep responses confidential. For example, in your report, use aggregate responses; and assign an identification number to the data and destroy the link to the person's name.

Source: Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, *General guidelines for conducting interviews*



Techniques for Interviewing

In this section you will learn how to interview to collect your survey data. You will find the following information:

- developing an interview
- suggestions for interviewing people
- obtaining participation for in-person interview
- dealing with cultural differences

Developing an Interview

Table 8.4 summarizes the steps for developing an interview.

Table 8.4: Developing an Interview

Step	Procedure
1	Define the purpose of the interview. Link your purpose to the evaluation objectives.
2.	Decide whether you want to ask open-ended or close-ended questions.
3.	Draft interview questions and sequence the questions so they flow.
4.	Prepare an Introduction and Closure for the interview, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purpose of the interview • how and why they were selected • close with asking whether they have questions or comments • thank you and follow-up
5.	Prepare to record responses.
6.	Pre-test the instrument.

Suggestions for Interviewing People

Much can be learned from listening to others. Interviews can be informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, or highly structured interviews. The lines between these kinds of interviews can become blurred. Interviews are usually best when they are conducted like conversations. The participants need to feel comfortable; it helps if they know why their views are being sought and by whom. Typically, they are more comfortable if the interview is confidential.



Data Collectors

Porteous, Sheldrick, and Stewart⁶ suggest that people conducting interviews should possess the following abilities:

- to engage and encourage people to share views
- to start and maintain discussions with strangers
- to refrain from expressing own opinions.
- to maintain confidentiality
- to speak clearly
- to read/write/speak in the language of data collection
- to deal with difficult people
- to provide consistency.

They also suggests that people who conduct interviews should have the following kinds of knowledge:

- an understanding of the purpose of the evaluation and the specific evaluation questions
- a familiarity with the data collection technique and their role in it (previous experience is preferable.)

Porteous, et al, also suggest that interviewers should possess the following traits:

- excellent memory
- flexibility
- friendliness
- good sense of timing
- good listening skills.

⁶ Nancy L Porteous, B.J. Sheldrick and P.J. Stewart (1997). Program evaluation tool kit: A blueprint for public health management. Ottawa, Canada: Ottawa-Carleton Health Department. Available online at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/php-ppsp/toolkit.html> (English) or http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/php-ppsp/toolkit_fr.html (French)



How many interviewers will you need? This will depend upon many things. Porteous, et al suggest you consider the:

- type and length of the survey instrument
- number of people from whom you need to collect data and their schedules
- how difficult it is to reach people
- overall timelines of your evaluation.

Considering the above factors provides a kind of “guesstimate.”



For example, consider a survey to collect information about attitudes towards injury prevention. The survey will be collecting information by telephone. For this survey, the “guesstimate” of the number of interviewers needed might involve the following reasoning:

- each interview takes about 10 minutes to complete
- you need to interview parents who work outside the home
- one interviewer can do roughly three 10 minute interviews an hour (includes the time the interviewer is actually interviewing someone plus the time it takes to successfully contact and enlist them)
- the best time to reach most people is probably between 5pm and 9pm in the evenings and from about 10am to 5pm during weekends
- can collect data for four hours, five days a week and seven hours a day on weekends (for a total of 34 hours of available interviewing time per week)
- you need to complete 200 interviews, so based on three interviews an hour that will take about 66 hours
- one person working full-time could complete the interviews in a little over two weeks, which may be a bit draining and intense for one person
- you really need to get the data gathered and analysed as quickly as possible.

Based on this reasoning, you decide to use two interviewers, providing for about 100 interviews to be performed in a little over one week.

Porteous, et al’s rule of thumb for the number of data collectors is: “For consistency’s sake, involve as few data collectors as possible.”



Once you have selected your data collectors, you need to establish a protocol to help maximize the consistency of data collection.

Porteous, et al suggest that your protocol include the following:

- a description of the program and respondents
- a clearly stated purpose of evaluation and of the data collection tool
- how to introduce and explain the tool
- how to record answers
- an outline of what the data collector is supposed to do, when, why, where, with whom, and how
- who to refer the respondent to if the subject matter is upsetting
- how to answer questions respondents ask.

They also suggests including the following in training data collectors:

- cover all information in protocol
- meet together
- start by giving a brief overview
- explain roles and responsibilities
- walk data collectors through their tasks
- review data collection technique.

Just as LSMS suggested field testing, Porteous, et al also suggest doing a “walk through” or trial run of your interview. The trial run gives data collectors a chance to ask questions. It also allows them to:

- consider role-playing specific scenarios
- have interviewers do mock interviews with each other
- audio or video tape these mock interviews.

During the trial run, be sure to provide feedback so that you can learn more about your survey instrument. If the data collectors are not comfortable, you can do additional training.

How much pre-testing do you need to do? The number of tests depends on type of tool and its complexity. In addition, if you have significant changes after the first pre-test, you may have to pre-test again.



Porteous, et al suggest the following guidelines for interviews:

- do three or four face-to-face interviews
- often with focus groups, first focus group is considered pre-test
- consider your first interviews as pre-tests (particularly with focus groups), but if there are few or minimal revisions required, you can include the responses from the pre-test in real evaluation.

For self-completed questionnaires, Porteous, et al suggest:

- general rule of thumb is to do ten self-completed questionnaires in the pre-test phase (you may need more if your questionnaire has a lot of skips)
- at a minimum, make sure that at least two people go through each line of questioning
- may only have to pre-test it with five people if questionnaire is very simple and respondents are very homogeneous
- usually do not include the responses from pre-test in the real evaluation.

Semi-structured or Unstructured Interviews

Semi-structured or unstructured in-person interviews are useful when the evaluator wants an in-depth understanding of reactions to various experiences or the reasons for holding particular attitudes. It is often more practical to interview people about the steps in a process, the roles and responsibilities of various members of a community or team, or a description of how a program works, rather than to attempt to develop a written survey that captures all the possible variations. With good rapport and interesting questions, people will often be willing to be interviewed for an hour or more, whereas they would be very unlikely to spend that amount of time filling out a questionnaire. It is better to have two people conducting the interview. In this way, the interviewers can compare notes. Also, it helps to later resolve disputes about what was said.

Semi-structured interviews should have a purpose; you need to know what questions you want to ask and what information you would like to obtain. Taking good notes is essential. It is hard to write as quickly as people speak, so it is important to try and capture the key points and words that will spark your memory.



Leave time after each interview to review your notes and make additions, and write up your notes soon after the interview. When traveling to other countries or distant regions within a country, you may think that the way to maximize the use of your time there is to pack in as many interviews as possible. However, it is extremely important to leave time between interviews to do at least a preliminary write-up of your notes. It is surprising how difficult it is to make sense of the notes taken during an interview even just a few days later.

For some key interviews, you may want to have the interviewees read the summary of your notes to ensure you are correctly capturing their words. Sometimes when you are interviewing government people, they assume their responses are public. There are times when they want to say something but they do not want it attributed to them. When you guarantee confidentiality, it is your moral obligation to protect your sources.

In-person interviews can be done individually or in groups. In groups, fewer questions are asked than in an individual interview. Since people engage in dialogue, a few questions can generate much discussion that takes a lot of time. There are limits to how long people are willing to sit still, so a few, well-chosen questions are used.

Semi-structured in-person interviews can be useful when the participants may have difficulty with a written survey or when you want to be able to ask clarifying or probing questions (qualitative questions).

Consider tape recording the interview. If you do, be sure to check with the interviewee and get permission before recording.

In some situations, you may want to send out the questions ahead of time, so people feel comfortable with the line of questions that will be asked, assemble needed information, or be aware of the time needed for the interview.

Structured Interviews

What makes a good interview? Partly being a good listener. Avoid joining into the conversation or using visual cues such as nodding or shaking the head. Accept whatever they say with empathy and without judgment. You are there to ask questions and record answers.

Instead of writing up your notes, you may want to dictate them onto a tape recorder.

Be sure to thank the interviewees. You may even want to send a thank you note.



Table 8.5 summarizes the steps for conducting interviews.

Table 8.5: Conducting Interviews

Step	Procedure
1	Let interviewees know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purpose and timing of the study • why they are being interviewed • how they were selected • how the data will be used • whether it is confidential • how long the interview will take • whether you might want to talk to them again • whether they will get a copy of the final report • that a summary of your notes will be made available to them if desired.
2.	Try to pick a time and place that is quiet and free of distractions
3.	Ideally, have a second person to help take notes.
4.	Consider tape recording the interview. If you do, be sure to check with the interviewee and get permission before recording.
5.	Stick to your script. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if asking close-ended questions, ask them exactly the way they were written • if asking open-ended questions, “go with the flow” rather than always directing it.
6.	Be aware of cultural norms, such as eye contact, direct questions, or gender issues.
7.	Balance: if you ask about what they think are the major supports, follow with what you think are the major barriers.
8.	Try to avoid asking “why” questions, if doing so is seen as aggressive or critical.
9.	Accept whatever they say with empathy and without judgment.
10.	Take good notes without distracting from the conversation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write while maintaining eye contact. • Write key words or phrases, not verbatim. • If someone is saying something you want to capture, it is OK to ask them to repeat it or finish what you are writing before asking the next question. • If someone says something important, you may want to ask “Would you mind if I use your exact words?”
11.	Write up the interview. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every word and idea is valuable. • Take time to write up your notes as carefully and in-depth as possible. • It is best to do at least a brief clean-up of notes immediately afterwards (leave an hour between interviews.) • Write up full notes within a day of the interview



Obtaining Participation for In-person Interviews

- Identify who you are, the purpose of the study, why you want to survey them, how they were selected, and how the information will be used.
- It is general practice to send a letter ahead of time to explain all this to those you want to interview prior to calling to set up an appointment; you may want to include a copy of the interview guide as well.
- Keep it simple and respect their time. Tell them ahead of time about how much time it will take and stick to that.
- Offer to share a summary of what you understand from the interview. This might be especially useful to give the interviewee (especially if it is a high ranking official.)
- In-person interviews can take up to an hour, even two hours if it is really interesting to the interviewee.

Dealing with Cultural Differences

When you are conducting an interview, you must pay attention to the reactions of your subject. Each culture has its own values and customs. A question or gesture may offend people from one culture and not another. The interviewer must be ever vigilant in an attempt to learn information, but not offend people.

Before each interview, you should attempt to learn more about the culture of the person you will be interviewing. You might want try asking someone who is familiar with this culture general questions about the culture.

Try to find out how this culture feels about human interactions during an interview, such as:

- the amount of physical space between people who are talking with each other
- the amount of eye contact that is appropriate
- the significance of voice inflections when asking questions, and the significance, if any, of head movements and other body language during a conversation.

One key area to investigate for each culture is the role of gender. Be sensitive to the role of gender.



For example, in some cultures, it may be inappropriate for a male interviewer to be alone in a room with a woman who is being interviewed. A general practice of always having an opposite-gender witness present would come in handy for such times.

Another example is of a female is interviewing a male. In certain cultures the male might react very adversely, or may "clam up" altogether, if forced to answer pointed questions from a female interviewer.

Regardless of cultural differences, there are some constants for cultures from all parts of the world:

- Every person appreciates being treated with respect.
- Even those who come from cultures noted for self-sacrifice and community thinking have a sense of self-value and appreciate being treated as individuals.
- Every person appreciates feeling as if his or her opinion matters to you.

Advantages and Challenges of Interviewing

- Advantages:** Can be structured, unstructured, or a combination.
- Can explore complex issues in-depth.
- Forgiving of mistakes: unclear questions can be clarified during the interview and changed for subsequent interviews.
- Can last one hour or more, depending on perceived importance and interest.
- Can provide evaluators with an intuitive sense of the situation
- Challenges:** Can be expensive, labor intensive, and time consuming.
- May not be able to explore why people have different viewpoints.
- Selective hearing on the part of the interviewer may miss information that does not conform to pre-existing beliefs.
- Cultural sensitivity: gender issues.



Techniques for Developing Self-Administered Questionnaires

Writing survey questions is hard to do because they have to be understandable to everyone. Words have multiple meanings and connotations. If a question is asked in a way that people do not understand or understand in a variety of ways, people will be essentially be responding to a different question. There is also a risk of getting useless data when questions are poorly constructed. For example, the agency head may want to find out how much computer-training people in his organization have had. You might ask a series of questions:

- A. Have you had any training in the past three months?
- B. Have you had any training in the past six months?
- C. Have you had any training in the past year?

The problem with asking this set of questions is that everyone who had training within the past three months will answer “yes” all three questions. When they check yes to A, B and C, the data are essentially useless. When writing a survey, it is important to make sure the “gates are closed”, so that people cannot slip through to other questions with the same information. How can these questions be saved? One possibility is to ask: how many training courses have you attended in each of the following time periods:

- a. 1-3 months ago: _____
- b. 4-6 months ago: _____
- c. 6-9 months ago: _____
- d. 10-12 months ago: _____
- e. 12-24 months ago: _____

Poorly worded questions may frustrate respondents, causing them to guess at answers or even throw the survey away. Either way, the results will be compromised. Since poorly constructed questions cannot be saved in analysis, prevention is the best strategy. Leave plenty of time to have people review the survey and to pre-test it. Some tips and tricks in writing effective survey questions are in Table 8.6. These are intended as guidelines rather than an exhaustive list of procedures.


Table 8.6: Questionnaire Tips and Tricks

A.	If possible, use an existing questionnaire as a guide. Modify as needed to fit your situation. It is easier to modify than it is to create one from scratch.
B.	<p>Basic guidelines on writing questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simple, clear language that is appropriate for the respondents. • Ask only one question at a time, for example: “To what extent, if at all, is the material clear” rather than “To what extent, if at all, is the material clear and helpful.” If the material is clear but not helpful, there is no way the person can give an accurate answer. • Write your questions so that everyone feels their responses are acceptable. Lead into your question by giving the range: "To what extent, if at all,..." Or "How important or unimportant are...." • Provide appropriate response categories that are mutually exclusive. If asking age groups, make categories; 20-30, 31-40, 41-50 rather than 20-30, 30-40, 40-50. • When possible, write questions so that responses range from negative to positive: To what extent, if at all, was ... - Very Unhelpful ←.....→ Very Helpful • Avoid "yes" or "no" responses. Instead, try to capture a range of views by asking people to answer along a scale. For example, provide a 5 point scale ranging from a "little or no extent" to "very great extent" • Avoid absolutes at either end of the scale (few people are absolute about anything). For example, you can soften the ends by using "always or almost always" at one end of the scale and "never or almost never" at the other end of the scale. • Ask questions about the current situation. Memory decays over time. • Leave exits (use "no basis to judge" and "no opinion" categories). If you do not provide them an exit, they may make meaningless responses but you will not know that. • Avoid using double negatives.
C.	Make the survey easy for people to complete. Provide them with boxes they can check. Provide sufficient instructions so respondents know what they are to do: indicate, "check only one" or "check all that apply" when appropriate.
D.	Ask general questions first, then demographic questions, then more specific questions, and then one or two final open-ended question: "any comments or anything else we should know?"
E.	Demographic questions: only ask what you will use. Be sensitive that some people can be identified by demographics.
F.	Have your draft questions reviewed by experts.
G.	If the questions need to be translated, Have that done, and then have them translated back to the original language to check the translation.
H.	<p>Pre-test, Pre-test, Pre-test!! Do as many rounds of pre-testing until you feel you have caught the major errors. Have typical respondents answer the questionnaire rather than just read it. Then go back through each question to get their feedback about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is each question clear? • Did they understand what was being asked? • Are there unknown words or unclear phrases? • Is there a better way to ask each question?



Keep the questionnaire simple, using as few questions as possible. It is sometimes helpful to go through and decide which questions are essential, which ones are nice to know if there is room, and which ones are not needed. It also helps to develop your plan for how you will analyze the data. This helps eliminate unnecessary questions, and is a check to make sure everything needed has been asked.

Pre-test your questionnaires. Select a few typical respondents. Be present when they complete the survey. Keep track of how long it takes to complete. Observe if they seem to have difficulty or turn to previous pages.

After they have completed the pre-test survey, de-brief them to gather further insight. Ask:

- What was clear, what was not?
- What questions are missing?
- What questions are unnecessary?

Make changes based on results of pre-test, and *pre-test again*.

Response Rates

One of the major issues in survey research is the **response rate**. Response rate is the percentage of people who actually participate out of the total number asked. A good evaluator always gives the number of people (or units, such as organizations) surveyed, the number who responded, the response rate, and a description of efforts that were made to increase the response rate (i.e. follow-up telephone calls.)

What is desirable as a response rate varies, depending on the circumstances and uses of the survey data? The problem with low response rates is that it becomes a **volunteer** or **self-selected sample**. The problem with a volunteer sample is that people who choose to participate might be different from those who choose not to. Maybe only people who are really angry at management will choose to answer a survey; this will result in a more negative assessment of management than would have been the case if everyone, or at least a more representative group, had participated. For example, an organization conducts an employee attitude survey of all employees but just thirty percent of the people complete the survey (30 % response rate). If the most dissatisfied tended to answer the survey while those who were satisfied did not, it will be hard to use the data to really understand the views of all employees. It is possible that they are the only really dissatisfied people in the organization. It would be a mistake to make decisions based on these results without getting some other verification.



One data collection method used to evaluate the impact of active labor programs was a survey. One country sent surveys out to a random sample of all those registered with the Labor Office; the response was less than 20%.

With a low response rate, some might be concerned that the group of respondents is not representative of the population. Sometimes it is possible to check demographics to determine if the respondents are generally similar to the larger population. For example, a researcher can look at the demographics of the survey respondents to see if they generally match the larger population in terms of such characteristics as age and gender. If it is similar, the researcher may cautiously proceed. If the survey demographics are wildly different, the survey results should be interpreted with caution. Evaluators should report such analyses of non-respondents and conclusions for validating survey findings.

Survey results with low response rates must always be reported in terms of the number of respondents, recognizing that these results may or may not be an accurate reflection of the larger group of employees. That is, the data should be expressed as “of the respondents” or “75% of the respondents reported...”

Participation in surveys is usually voluntary, so the strategy must be to increase the willingness of people to participate. For all survey methods, it is essential to let the respondents know who is doing the evaluation, the purpose of the survey, how they were selected, how the information will be used, and whether they will get a copy of the report. An accurate estimate of the amount of time that will be needed should be stated. Anonymity should be assured and absolutely protected. A contact person and phone number should also be provided in case they wish to verify the legitimacy of the study. Some tips are presented in Figure 8.3.



Checklist for Obtaining Good Response Rates for Mail Surveys

- Survey must look professional: printed, maybe in booklet form or on colored paper, and error free.
- Make sure you have a person they can call if they have questions or want to verify the legitimacy of the survey.
- You have to induce them to participate. Do this in the cover letter, which identifies who you are, the purpose of the survey, and why their participation is important.
- Make it personal. Personally address the letter and envelope.
- If you assure anonymity, mean it. Never, ever ask people to self-identify on a survey. This means that you do not ask names or identifying numbers.
- Provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope.
- Be prepared to do one to two follow-ups.

Fig. 8.3: Obtaining Good Response Rates for Mail Surveys

When considering whether to collect data by mail, by phone, by e-mail, or with an in-person interview; it is important to bear in mind the trade-offs involved. Table 8.7 presents some guidelines about the pros and cons of each method, and when each should be used. Of course, now, Internet surveys are more common. But when doing evaluation, issues of literacy, telephone access, and Internet access may make these approaches less feasible.

Cover Letters

When you are sending a questionnaire by mail or email, you will want to include a **cover letter**. The cover letter will introduce you and give the participants more information about the purpose of the questionnaire.

The cover letter should include the following:

- be personally addressed
- identify who is asking for the survey
- state the purpose of the interview and an overview of questions
- state how the information will be used
- assure confidentiality and/or anonymity
- provide a name and phone number (or email address) of contact person
- provide instructions for returning the survey.

Table 8.7: Comparison of Mail or Internet Survey, Structured Interviews, and Semi-structured Interview Data Collection Options

Option	When to Use	Characteristics	Strengths	Limitations
Mail survey or Internet survey	Many people Dispersed Moderately complex questions Sensitive questions	Structured Easy to fill out Takes less than 30 minutes	Inexpensive Easy to analyze Reach large sample Comparable data Consistency Greater anonymity	Time consuming to develop and conduct Must know what you want Unforgiving with mistakes Response rate is a challenge Assumes literacy Impersonal Assumes access to the Internet
Structured interviews	Complex questions	Structured All interviewers ask the same questions	Allows for clarification of questions	Time consuming to conduct Expensive Interviewers could bias responses
Semi-structured interviews	Complex questions Complex processes Exploratory	A handful of broad, general questions	Allows for probes and clarifications Doesn't filter, preclude, or limit responses More forgiving of mistakes	Time consuming to conduct Interviewer bias Interviewer skill Tape record Data not comparable Analysis is labor intensive



Toolkit 5: Focus Groups

A **focus group** is a type of qualitative research methodology in which small homogenous groups of people are brought together to informally discuss specific topics under the guidance of a moderator. But the structure of the focus group is anything but informal. There is a script, a set of open-ended questions that are prepared ahead of time. The moderator can improvise, though, with probes or additional questions as warranted by the situation. The group process tends to elicit more information than individual interviews because people express different views and engage in a dialogue with each other. The moderator is able to facilitate the dialogue as well as explore their reasons and feelings behind those differences. The conversation is often not linear; participants may bring up information or different perspectives at any time.

Purpose of Focus Groups

Billson and London⁷ describe the purpose of focus groups is to elicit reliable data, not just interesting information. Focus groups can:

- help develop a survey questionnaire
- clarify sample selection
- contextualize survey data
- be used in tandem with surveys
- be used as a separate data collection tool.

⁷ Janet Mancini Billson and Normal T. London, *Conducting professional focus group research*. Presentation at IPDET, July 8, 2004.



The purposes of focus groups can also be grouped into four categories:

- exploring
 - explore issues, language
 - test methodological approaches
 - understand the setting
 - formulate hypotheses
- triangulating
 - use multiple methods to enhance validity of data
 - enrich and broaden data
- pre-testing
 - test questionnaire items
 - assess initial reactions to programs, products, or ideas
 - explore impacts on relevant groups
- uncovering meaning
 - identify meaning on multiple levels
 - explore unexpressed meanings, beliefs, values, and motivations
 - elaborate upon complex accounts.

Billson and London also identify the following situations where you can consider using focus groups to collect data:

- group interaction
- complexity of resources
- “how” and “why” rather than “whether” and “how much”
- contextual responses not “yes” or “no” responses
- triangulation of multiple methods
- immediate feedback
- complexity of behaviors and motivations
- the range of intensity of opinions
- views on sensitive topics
- when respondents are not comfortable with “paper and pencil” methods.



Billson also lists the following situations where you should not use focus groups:

- if you want to gather statistical data
- if language barriers are insurmountable
- if you have little control over the situation
- if you cannot establish trust
- if you cannot ensure free expression
- if confidentiality is critical.

Focus groups can contribute critical data for organizational analysis but should not be asked to directly:

- solve problems
- resolve conflicts
- make decisions
- build consensus.

You might consider using a focus group to gather data for a **needs assessment**, where you look for expectations for staff, participant, and/or beneficiaries to help you identify and define needs. You might also want to monitor staff debriefings, mid-term reviews, and/or progress monitoring. Focus groups can also help with program evaluations during workshops and conferences, rapid assessments, and/or participatory evaluations.

Typical Elements of Focus Groups:

The following are common elements of most focus groups.

- small groups (6-12 people)
- The composition of people in a focus group depends upon the purpose of the focus group. Some focus groups are homogenous; others are diverse. It is important to consider status. Most focus groups comprise people from similar status (i.e. teachers in one group, students in another, or supervisors in one group, employees in another group). Some focus groups may contain people of diverse backgrounds. Who can and cannot be in the same focus group will be very culturally or situationally specific.
- comfortable, safe surroundings
- refreshments are essential
- monetary incentives may be used.



- transportation and/or childcare arrangements are often needed
- skilled moderator (or facilitator)
- note taker (takes notes, manages the audio taping and handles whatever comes up)
- sessions are tape-recorded and ideally, a verbatim transcript is prepared for each focus group.
- begins with a very clear explanation about the purpose, why their views are important, how they were selected, what a focus group is, and the rules of the process.
- key rule is stated and understood: "what is said in this room stays in this room"
- moderator guides the process, keeps the group focused, makes sure everyone has the opportunity to voice their views and that a few people do not dominate the conversations.
- few questions are asked by the moderator, who follows a guide developed specifically for the session.

all questions are open-ended, moving from an easy, conversational question to the more serious questions, and ending with a summary and wrap-up questions that allow for impressions to be corrected if necessary, and any additional comments and ideas to be recorded.

Advantages and Challenges of Focus Groups

Advantages: Relatively quick and easy; may take less staff time than in-depth in-person interviews; provides flexibility to make changes in process and questions; ability to explore different perspectives. It is fun! It is different than a group interview.

Challenges: Analysis is time consuming; potential challenges include participants might be different from rest of population, risk of bias in interpreting the data; and the risk of the group being influenced by moderator or dominant members of the group.



Techniques for Focus Group Research Design

Billson notes that, when setting up a focus group, the researcher(s) are responsible for deciding all of the logistics of the focus group, including:

- who should be in the focus group
- how many focus group sessions to conduct
- where to conduct the sessions
- when to conduct the sessions
- what to ask the participants
- how to analyze and present the data.

A typical focus group project requires six to eight weeks lead time. The length of time depends upon logistical factors and how complex or urgent the project is. It also depends on the accessibility of the decision makers and the difficulty you might have in recruiting the desired sample of participants.

The process of focus group research works best if it follows a process that flows from one key step to another.

The following is a short description of each of the key steps: ⁸

- **Step 1: Clarify the key research questions**
 - Conceptualization comes first, which means clarifying the key research questions. If clients and researchers are not clear about the key question that the focus groups are supposed to answer, the entire process will be frustrating.
- **Step 2: Design the research approach**
 - You need to design a research approach that has the power to answer your key research questions. Design is just as important as a clear question.
- **Step 3: Develop your protocol** (moderator's guide)
 - Your moderator's guide needs to develop all of the needed protocol (structure or code of behaviour) for the evaluation that does not bias responses but directs the group towards key issues.

⁸ Janet Mancini Billson, *The power of focus groups: A training manual for social, policy, and market research – Focus on international development*. pp 14-16.



- **Step 4: Recruit your participants**
 - You need to recruit the appropriate respondents.
- **Step 5: Specify your moderation techniques**
 - You need to identify and use good moderation techniques during the focus group sessions.
- **Step 6: Debrief observers/researchers/clients and record additional information**
 - Immediately after each focus group, when the data are fresh, you need to share insights generated during the focus group with clients and other interested parties. You need to record additional information not openly discussed (impressions, conclusions, etc.) for use in the next step.
- **Step 7: Analyze your data**
 - If the focus group has worked well, it will produce a mountain of words and ideas. These are qualitative data that require special analytical techniques.
- **Step 8: Present your findings**
 - You want to report findings in a way that is meaningful and useful to others, particularly to your client. You can use oral, written, or video formats, or a combination.
- **Step 9: Follow-up with your client**
 - In the interest of improving future focus group findings, it helps to follow up with clients (including supervisors, division chiefs, and other interested parties) and other researchers. You can learn how to conduct future projects and implement project findings and to explore ways to conduct future projects.

Figure 8.4 illustrates the above process for focus group research.

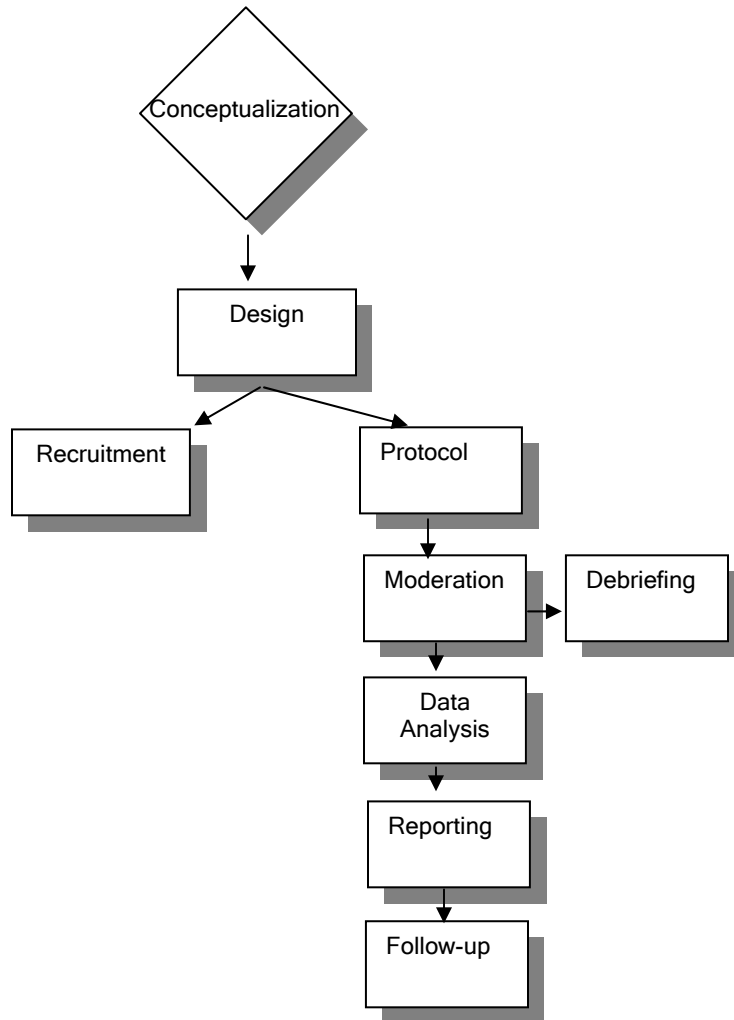


Fig. 8.4: Model for Focus Group Research Design. Source: Billson, p.15)(



Techniques for Planning Focus Groups

Focus group sessions normally range from one to two hours in duration. For most projects, 100 minutes allows time to follow through on each major line of questioning without exhausting or boring the participants or the moderator (see Billson⁹).

Occasionally, a session may last for as long as three to five hours, with a planned break. These longer length focus groups sessions are used with groups of executives, in-house management, and very high-level participants who can be expected to have an enormous amount of specific information to share.

You will need several weeks of time before the session for planning. Be sure to set aside enough time to define your research question, develop the research design, recruit your participants, prepare and revise your moderator's guide, and arrange for facilities and other logistics.

Have clear starting and stopping times. Consider the need for food. You may want to have light food and coffee or tea served, or lunch if appropriate. In some situations, you may need to arrange transportation for some participants.

Focus group participants are invited to participate and are told, at least in general terms, who is doing the research, its purpose, and the nature of the questions. While marketing researchers might use a room with a two-way mirror so the participants can be observed, this is not typically available to most evaluators because of budget constraints. Focus groups should be held in a neutral setting, if possible. It is sometimes better to choose an easily accessible location, however, over a neutral one.

Typically, participants sit around a table or chairs arranged in a circle, to facilitate conversation among participants. It is possible for a few observers to be present in the room while the focus group is conducted. They should be introduced at the beginning of the session.

⁹ Janet Mancini Billson, *The power of focus groups: A training manual for social, policy, and market research – Focus on international development*. pp 21–25.



Facilities for Focus Groups

The ideal focus group setting is a commercial facility specifically designed and staffed to place participants, clients, and moderators at ease. These facilities contain high-tech audio and video recording equipment installed and monitored by a technician to ensure the quality of the recordings – the optimal conditions for a session.

If you do not have access to a specific, specially equipped focus group room, you might consider using a hotel meeting room, a school or church meeting area, or some other informal setting.

Materials Needed

Audio recorders or videotape recorders are extremely useful in providing an accurate transcript of a session. If professional services are unavailable, we might be able to arrange for an amateur audio or video recording. Or we might only have notes taken by a colleague sitting in the same room as the focus group participants. Although in-room observers and note-takers can create problems with confidentiality and perceived “safety” of the group, most participants soon forget that they are being taped or that an observer is taking notes.

Taking notes on a laptop computer can speed up the initial data analysis and report writing. If you are not using audio or video taping, it is strongly recommended that you have two note-takers to document the sessions. The moderator should not have to take notes. This takes the pressure off the moderator, so the moderator can concentrate on one thing – ensuring that participants answer the research questions.

To assist with communication during the meeting, consider using name tents (place cards printed in large type and folded to sit upright on a surface; MS word has templates for creating these). Alternatively, you can use name badges, although some people feel uncomfortable wearing these. Either option allows you to refer to the participants by name.



Number of Focus Group Sessions

There is no fixed rule about how many focus group sessions to do. The general rule is to do them until the same themes emerge or until no new information emerges. This usually happens after three to six sessions; however, sometimes it is necessary to do more to meet other requirements, such as covering a variety of groups or neighborhoods. If many focus groups will be conducted, the protocols can be adjusted. It may be useful to ask a core set of questions at every focus group and then add different questions or more extensive probes once it becomes clear that the themes are consistent. It helps for the evaluation team to debrief among themselves after each session so decisions can be made about adjustments to the protocols in subsequent sessions. This is a very adaptable and fluid approach to data collection.

Do not over-schedule. Two or three focus group sessions in one day are the maximum one facilitator can achieve.

Recruitment

The key factor for recruitment is that the approach to selecting participants must not bias the research results in any predictable way. No category of potential participants should be overlooked if their responses can be expected to alter the results significantly.

When you select participants for focus groups, consider the following:

- participants should reflect diverse constituencies and diverse views
- you may need to use homogeneous groups, because:
 - mixing gender or race may be an issue
 - mixing social class may be an issue.
 - mixing managers with staff may be an issue
 - mixing clients with staff may be an issue
- cultural norms are important.



Focus Group Protocol

The protocol¹⁰ for a focus group is called the moderator's guide. This guide must provide a structure to the session that will direct the group toward exploring the key issues, and provide for the collection of relevant and unbiased data.

A focus group session does not consist of the moderator going around the room and asking each person to respond to each question. That style of questioning is more like a survey and will not produce the same quality of data as a focus group. The questions during a focus group should inspire each person to ponder how they feel, what they believe, and what they think. Then you can explore the complexities for each response.

Focus Group Questions

Before you begin designing your questions, clarify how the data will be used. The following are additional principles to follow for designing questions:

- Avoid vague, confusing wording.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Avoid assumptions that are leading or misleading.
- Avoid questions that introduce bias into the thinking of the respondents, skewing the responses.
- Avoid supplying alternative responses.
- Make it interesting.

Mechanical questions elicit mechanical responses. In a focus group, a more effective way of approaching questions is to ask open-ended questions. A way of looking at this is to use what is called the "protocol funnel". A protocol funnel begins with questions asking for a broad conceptualization and goes through stages to finish with probing questions.

¹⁰ Janet Mancini Billson, *The power of focus groups: A training manual for social, policy, and market research – Focus on international development*. Slides 35 – 54.



Figure 8.5 illustrates the protocol funnel.

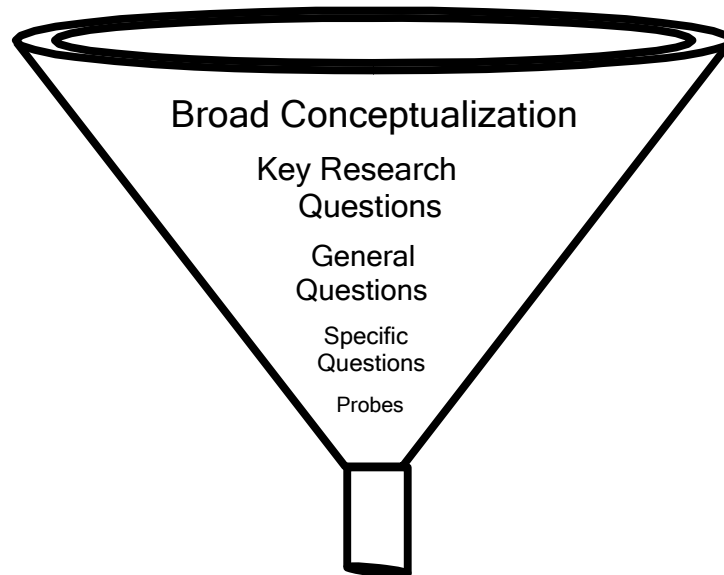


Fig. 8.5: The Protocol Funnel.

The focus group protocol follows the principles of qualitative interviewing. Which are:

- clarify the concepts to be explored
- use open-ended questions
- keep questions to a minimum number of topic areas
- end with closure-type questions
- pre-test and refine your interview.

The actual focus group session can be broken into four phases:

- Phase I: Preamble or Opening Statement
 - puts participants at ease
 - the moderator explains the purpose
 - moderator provides ground rules.
- Phase II: Introductions and Warm-up
 - participants relate experience and roles to the topic
 - the moderator stimulates group interaction and thinking about the topic.



- Phase III: Main Body of Group Discussion
 - deep responses are elicited
 - emergent data are connected to create a complex, integrated basis for analysis
 - broad participation is ensured.
- Phase IV: Closure
 - key themes are summarized and refined
 - theories, impressions and hunches are presented to group members for reaction
 - Participants are invited to provide a round of final comments and/or insights – “key lessons learned”.

When you plan your sequence of questions, plan to begin with ice-breaking questions. After that, move from the least threatening to the most threatening or sensitive questions. Move from the simplest to the most complex questions. Move from the least controversial/political to the most controversial/political questions. End with closure-type questions.

It is important to not rush through the introduction. The moderator should welcome all participants, introduce the members of the evaluation team present and their roles, discuss the purpose of this activity, and provide an overview the focus group process. All ground rules should be covered and an opportunity for participants to ask questions should be provided. The intent is to make sure people feel comfortable.

Sometimes the participants will answer a question on the script before it is even asked. The moderator needs to acknowledge that this question was answered previously and decide whether to ask it again, ask a follow-up question or skip it altogether.

At the end of the questions, summarize your understanding of the substantive issues that the session has covered, and ask for confirmation or correction. You might, for example, also ask:

- for “last thoughts” or anything else respondents would like you to take back to the research team
- if you missed anything important that anyone wanted to add.

Such closure questions help data emerge after participants’ cognitive processes are stimulated.

At the close of the session, thank the participants and distribute any incentive that they were promised.



Sample Questions (see Billson¹¹)

The following are example of questions that you might find useful in understanding the kinds of questions you can ask during a focus group.

Introductions:

Let us start by asking you to introduce yourselves. Please mention your title and where you work, as well as the nature of your direct experience in providing services for this program.

On Perceptions:

Critics of affirmative action allege that the appearance of “favoritism” toward minorities and women may actually undermine their confidence and self-respect. How would you describe the situation in your organization?

On Governance:

Recent surveys suggest that the current budgets decentralized to districts do not reach local schools or clinics. What is your assessment of these problems? What needs to be done?

On Reinventing Government:

Some governments have tried to improve efficiency through decentralization. How well has this strategy worked?

On Product Satisfaction:

You have been using the Bank’s Country Assessments for at least three years. What is your assessment of this report’s usefulness?

On Key Lessons:

What are the key lessons you would like us to take away from this discussion?

¹¹ Janet Mancini Billson, *The power of focus groups: A training manual for social, policy, and market research – Focus on international development*. Slides 49 – 54.



Techniques for Moderating Focus Groups¹²

The facilitator or moderator of the focus group has a very important role. The facilitator will direct the meeting and manage the time. Facilitators will:

- be familiar with the script, rather than reading it, so the session appears conversational
- make sure everyone is heard, rather than allowing one or two persons to dominate the discussion, by:
 - asking “what do other people think?”
 - stating “We have heard from a few people; do others have the same views or different views?”
- manage time, closing off discussion, and moving to the next topic when appropriate
- set ground rules, such as:
 - there is no such thing as a wrong comment
 - no criticism of others is permitted.
- say as little as possible, letting conversation flow across the table with minimal direction
- keep personal views outside the room
- use active listening
- accept all views while managing differences of opinion:
 - “So, we have different perspectives.”
- probe for elaboration
 - “Tell me more.”

The moderator will ask many questions. The questions asked will be determined by the purpose of the focus group. The following are examples of typical focus group questions:

- What did you learn at the teachers college that is most helpful to you in teaching primary school students?
- What are your greatest challenges in teaching primary school students?
- What should the college teach so that graduates are prepared to meet the current challenges?

¹² Janet Mancini Billson, *The power of focus groups: A training manual for social, policy, and market research – Focus on international development*. Slides 73 – 88.



After the focus group session, the moderator writes impressions *immediately* after the focus group. The write-up should include all of the major issues and major points of the discussion. It can also capture anything unusual that happened during the focus group.

Ideally, a focus group will be audio taped or video taped. If so, the focus group tape can be transcribed verbatim. If this is not possible, the facilitator should listen to the tape afterwards while writing in-depth notes. Most people are surprised about how much they did not hear during the actual focus group.

Once the write-up is complete, the facilitator should compare the write-up with any partners in the facilitation.

Table 8.8 summarizes the process for conducting a focus group.

Table 8.8: Focus Group Process.

Step	Process
1.	Introduce the focus group meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give purpose of focus group • introduce the sponsor • describe how participants were selected • describe how the information will be used • state the ground rules • give overview of the process
2.	Have the participants introduce themselves.
3.	Present the first question, it should be easy, an ice-breaker.
4.	Ask the main questions.
5.	Ask the last questions. They should be summary questions (“Most important thing that was said here that we should take with us.”)
6.	Summarize your understanding and ask for confirmation.
7.	Ask if there are other comments or questions.
8.	Write-up impressions, major issues, and major points of discussion Include anything unusual that happened.

As a moderator, you must pay attention to *both the content and process of the group discussion*.

Paying attention to *content* involves:

- lines of argument
- specific responses to questions
- deeper meanings
- novel ideas.



Paying attention to *process* involves observing and understanding the process and possibly manipulating it. Moderators need to be aware of:

- nonverbal cues among group members
- conflicts
- coalition-building
- scape-goating
- participation levels, etc.

A strong moderator will strive for communication that is equitably distributed, energetic, and focused. The following are indicators of strong moderating skills:

- the amount of time given to each member is relatively equal
- side conversations are minimal
- no individual dominates the discussion.
- member participation ebbs and flows
- communication flows across the group, not always through the moderator
- the amount of direction the moderator gives diminishes over time
- no individual withdraws from the interaction.

As a moderator, you may also need to encourage participants to generate ideas, such as:

- ask participants to write down two or three ideas, and then ask them to share them with the group
- ask participants to work in groups of three or four to generate ideas, and then share them with the group.

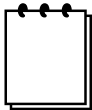


Techniques for Focus Groups Analyzing Data

Following the steps and protocols described, the following data will be ready for analysis:

- transcripts (verbatim) or notes taken by a 2nd note taker
- moderator notes that include a separate list of impressions and reactions. Care should be taken in recording agreement within a group: for example, never report that 30% of the group “said...”, because not all participants in a group respond to every question.
- evaluator notes.

The following case file outlines the steps in developing and implementing focus group sessions.



Data Collection Scenario

The director of job training program in the local community wants an evaluator to explore client perceptions of services and experiences. She wants to understand the different experiences and explore possible reasons for those differences, as seen from the clients' perspective. The evaluator suggests that a few focus groups might be helpful. The cross-dialogue might surface more discussion about differences in experiences. The facilitator can explore why the participants experienced the services differently. The focus groups could be used as part of the planning process so issues can be identified that can be used in developing the structured interview guide.

The evaluator would select a small number of clients (current or recent ones) and invite them to the focus group. Transportation, childcare and a small incentive may increase participation. While the agency might be a familiar and accessible location, this needs to be weighed against the clients' comfort level: will they feel comfortable speaking truth to power if their truth is negative? Find a place where they will be comfortable.

The evaluator would develop the set of questions (with probes) that will be used in each of the focus groups. It might look something like this:

(continued on next page)



Welcome and introduction: Thank you for coming to this focus group. My name is Obo and I will be facilitating our discussion today. Lui will be taking notes.

The director of the job training center is seeking to understand how clients view the services they received. She wants to know your views about the services, what works well, and what needs improvements. Your views are very important and everything that is said here is confidential. Only the overall views will be reported; no one will be identified with any comments.

Have any of you ever participated in a focus group? A focus group is a way for a small group of people to share their views, to reveal differences in perspective and explore the reasons for those differences. There are no wrong answers. We expect people to have had different experiences and different opinions and we would like to hear from everyone. I will ask a series of questions and will encourage each of you to speak. While not everyone has to answer every question, I would like everyone to contribute to the discussion at some point in our time together. (If a tape-recorder is used: We will be tape recording this session since your views are valuable and there is no way anyone can take notes fast enough to capture everything that is said. These tapes are only for the use of evaluators, and will not be seen or heard by anyone else. The focus group will last for 1½ hours. There are some refreshments so please feel free to help yourself.

The ground rules:

- What is said in this room stays in this room. No one's comments or information will be shared with anyone outside this room. Everyone should feel safe in speaking his or her mind.
- Only one person should speak at a time. Everyone will get a chance to speak but the tape recorder cannot handle several speaking at once (if a tape recorder is being used).

Any questions before we get started?

First, let's do **introductions**. Please tell us your first name and how you heard about the job-training center.

Session: What are the most positive experiences you had with this center?

- Probe: most positive experience with the trainers?

What made those experiences so positive?

How did those positive experiences benefit you?

Some of you may have had less positive experiences as well. What are some of the less positive experiences you have had?

- Probe: negative experiences with trainers?

What made those experiences so negative?

How did those negative experiences affect you?

There appear to be differences in experiences. Why do you think that is?

If you could give a message to the director about the services we have been discussing:

- What should she not change?
- What should she change?

Wrap up: Of all that you heard today, what do you think is the most important thing that we discussed?

Other ideas or comments?

Summary: My understanding is that your experiences with the services of this center have been mostly positive, but that the waiting time for training is often too long. Am I correct?

Thank you so much for your willingness to share your views. Your views will assist the director in making the center more helpful and effective in providing services.



Toolkit 6: Diaries, Journals, and Self-reported Checklists

Another method of collecting data is to use a diary (also called a journal or a self-reported checklist).

Diaries or Journals

Diaries can be used in situations where you want to capture detailed information about events in people's daily lives. For example, you might want to know how people use their time during the day or to learn about a typical day in the lives of people in a community. You might want to ask people to keep a diary of their daily exercise or their diet. Diaries, ideally, are kept on a daily basis so that people can more accurately remember. It is a useful tool to supplement other data collection. It does require that people be literate and be willing to take the time to maintain the diary.

Typically, the participants will be given a booklet that provides a clear set of instructions as well as an example of a completed set of diary entries. Any unusual terms should be explained. The last page should ask whether this was a typical time or whether anything unusual occurred during the time period of the diary. The last page also provides an opportunity for them to share any other comments.



For example, a diary might be used as part of a measurement strategy in an evaluation comparing students' experiences and reactions in a traditional classroom (lecture style) with those in a non-traditional classroom (hands-on, active learning). By keeping a diary, they will capture their experiences in real-time, as opposed to be surveyed at the end of the school year. The data from the diaries could be used to supplement other data collection.

Examples of uses of diaries or journals



- travel
- social networks
- health, illness, and associated behavior
- diet and nutrition
- farm work
- study habits
- contraception use
- child rearing practices.

Table 8.9 summarizes the guidelines for using diaries or journals.

Table 8.9: Guidelines for Using Diaries or Journals

Step	Guideline
1.	Recruit people face-to-face. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participation using highly motivated, personal interviewers. • Appeal to altruism, helpfulness. • Assure confidentiality. • Provide an incentive for completing.
2.	Provide a booklet to each participant. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover page should have clear instructions. • Include an example of a completed diary entry. • Include short memory-joggers • Explain any terms such as “event” or “session”. • On the last page, ask whether this was a typical or untypical time period, and for any comments or clarifications. • Include a calendar, indicating when an entry is due.
3.	Consider the time-period for collecting data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the period is too long, it may become burdensome for the participants. • If the period is too short, you may miss the behavior or event.



Self-reported Checklist

A related strategy is a **self-reported checklist**. This is a cross between a questionnaire and a diary. Participants are asked to keep track of a specific set of activities or events, listed so that the respondents can easily check them off. Checklists can be done on a daily or weekly basis, or every time a particular event or activity occurs.



For example, it is possible to have a checklist to capture whether specific process activities occur. Someone might have a checklist to capture whether the facilitator sets an agenda, follows the agenda, is organized at the meeting, whatever. It is easier to complete and analyze than the diary but it requires that the evaluator understand the situation very specifically to create the checklist.

Advantages and Challenges of Diaries and Self-reported Checklists

- Advantages:** Can capture in-depth, reliable, detailed data (“rich data”) that might otherwise be quickly forgotten.
- Good for collecting data on how people use their time.
 - Helps in collecting sensitive information.
 - Supplements interviews, provides richer data.
- Challenges:** Requires literacy.
- May change behavior because people know their behavior is being observed,
 - Requires commitment and self-discipline, accurate and honest recording of information by the participant.
 - The data recorded may be incomplete, or the participant waited to record information and did not remember correctly (“tomorrow diaries”).
 - Reading people’s handwriting may be a challenge although it may be possible for the evaluator to obtain clarification.
 - It may be a challenge to understand phrases in diaries.



Toolkit 7: Expert Judgment

Sometimes it makes sense to engage experts as the source of information or opinion. Consider the role of a book critic or a movie critic. They are considered experts in their field. People use the expert's judgements to make decisions or choices.

Expert judgment can be used to gather information. Experts can be interviewed separately or brought together as a panel. Interviews can be structured or unstructured. A group process has the advantage of dialogue and discussion that may explore differences in perspectives. The group process can take the form of a group interview where everyone has to answer a set of specific questions. It can be free flowing, taking the form of a focus group. It can also take the form of a panel in which the experts are asked to make a formal presentation about specific issues and then discuss the issues among themselves.

Some of the ways expert judgment has been used in evaluation are:¹³

- formal professional review systems
- informal professional review systems
- ad hoc panel reviews
- ad hoc individual reviews.

One form of a formal professional review is accreditation. Expert judgement has been used for accreditation for many years. In this process, an organization grants approval of institutions. A group of experts visits a school, university, or hospital and investigates the programs, facilities, and staff at the organization. They usually have a formal, published standards and instruments to ensure they ask and research in a consistent manner.¹⁴

Informal professional review systems also use expert judgment, but do *not* have the set of formal standards or instruments. In these situations, the group of experts determines the standards for judging.¹⁵

¹³ Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. New York: Pearson. pp 114-125.

¹⁴ Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. pp 114.

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. pp 118-119.



Ad hoc panel reviews are done on irregular schedules, that is, when circumstances demand the review. Usually these are done for a specific purpose and have no predetermined standards. A funding agency review panel is an example of an ad hoc panel review.

Ad hoc individual reviews are conducted by an individual, contracted for their expertise in an area to perform an individual review of a program or activity. Ad hoc individual reviews are often done to evaluate: textbooks, training programs, media products, job-placement tests, and program plans.¹⁶



A common example of expert judgement is the use of school inspectors. The school inspectors visit schools to evaluate the school, teachers, and administration at the school. They write a report and submit it to the government. The reports can be used in a variety of ways.

Whichever technique is used with experts, it is important that you have informed dialogue. You should have:

- clearly stated expectations
- clearly stated evaluation issues, including terms of reference
- agency officials meet with experts
- agency staff provide data
- experts engage in a series of meetings until consensus is achieved.

Selecting Experts

Selection of the experts should pass the reasonable person test: would a reasonable person think this group is credible? The group of experts should reflect a diverse set of views, experiences, and roles.

It is important that you establish criteria for selecting experts based upon one or more of the following criteria:

- recognized expert
- areas of expertise
- diverse perspectives
- diverse political views
- diverse technical expertise.

¹⁶ Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. pp 120.



Once you have selected the experts, you need to state the rationale for the selection of each expert.

Examples of experts



- managers and administrators
- front-line staff
- current and former clients
- managers from other programs
- policy experts
- donors
- researchers in the field.

While an expert panel is not considered a strong evaluation approach, it may be the best approach given time and resource constraints. Expert panels are better used at the design and early to mid-implementation stages than for impact evaluations. It could be used as part of the process for selecting studies for an evaluation synthesis. It is especially useful in rapid assessments.

Advantages and Challenges of Expert Judgment Data Collection

Advantages: Fast, relatively inexpensive.

Challenges: Weak for impact evaluation. May be based mostly on perceptions. The worth of the data collected will be proportional to how credible group expertise is perceived to be.



Toolkit 8: Delphi Technique

The Delphi technique enables experts who live in different locations to engage in a dialogue. Experts are asked specific questions; their answers are returned to a central source for the evaluator to summarize and feed back to the experts. No one knows who said what, so that conflict is avoided. The experts can then comment on the summary and are free to challenge particular points of view or to add new perspectives by providing additional information.

According to Randall Dunham¹⁷, the purpose of the Delphi technique is to elicit information and judgments from participants to facilitate problem-solving, planning, and decision-making.

The Delphi technique does this without the participants physically meeting. They share information by mail, FAX, or email.

The Delphi technique requires a coordinator, who:

- organizes requests for information
- organizes information received
- is responsible for communication with the participants.

The coordinator's job can take substantial time. Recent experience suggests that coordination of the Delphi technique using email with 20 participants and the processing of three questionnaires could utilize 30-40 hours of the coordinator's time.



The Delphi technique was used for a health study in Kenya. The study, *Economic evaluation schistosomiasis: Using the Delphi technique to assess effectiveness*, used the Delphi technique to establish priorities base on considerations of both costs and benefits of all of the interventions that might be of some benefit to eradicate the disease schistosomiasis. Kenya could not afford to implement all of the interventions, so they gather expert subjective judgements on the effectiveness of then schistosomiasis interventions.¹⁸

¹⁷ Randall B. Dunham, Organizational Behavior, University of Wisconsin School of Business, The Delphi Technique. Online at: <http://instruction.bus.wisc.edu/obdemo/readings/delphi.htm> .

¹⁸ J.M. Kirigia, (1997). *Economic evaluation schistosomiasis: Using the Delphi technique to assess effectiveness*. Abstract available online at: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=9107365&dopt=Abstract



The Delphi technique process includes the following steps¹⁹:

1. **Identify the issue and solicit ideas.** For example:
“What action could be taken to provide faster response to patient inquiries between visits?”
Prepare and send the first questionnaire, which asks each participant to engage in individual brainstorming to generate as many ideas as possible for dealing with the issue.
2. **Response to first questionnaire.** Each participant lists the ideas generated by Questionnaire #1 in a brief, concise manner. These ideas need not be fully developed. In fact, it is preferable to have each idea expressed in one brief sentence or phrase, with no attempt at evaluating or justifying these ideas. The participant then returns the list anonymously to the coordinator.
3. **Create and send Questionnaire #2.** The coordinator prepares and sends a second questionnaire to participants that contains all of the ideas sent in response to the first questionnaire and provides space for participants to refine each idea, to comment on each idea’s strengths and weaknesses for addressing the issue, and to identify new ideas.
4. **Response to second questionnaire.** Participants anonymously record their responses to Questionnaire #2 and return them to the coordinator.
5. **Create and send Questionnaire #3.** The coordinator creates and sends a third questionnaire that summarizes the input from the previous step and asks for additional clarifications, strengths, weaknesses, and new ideas.
6. **Continuation of the process.** If desired, the coordinator performs iterations of the preceding process until it becomes clear that no new ideas are emerging and that all strengths, weakness, and opinions have been identified.

¹⁹ Randall B. Dunham, Organizational Behavior, University of Wisconsin School of Business, The Delphi Technique. Online at:
<http://instruction.bus.wisc.edu/obdemo/readings/delphi.htm> .



7. **Resolution.** Resolution may occur in one of two ways.
- If dominant, highly evaluated ideas emerge via consensus, the exercise is declared finished. The end product is a list of ideas with their concomitant strengths and weaknesses.
 - The coordinator conducts a formal assessment of the group's opinions of the merits of the ideas. There are a number of ways to conduct a formal evaluation. In one method, the coordinator prepares a questionnaire that lists all the ideas and asks participants to rate each one on a scale. For example, a 7-point scale could be used that ranges from 0 (no potential for dealing with the issue) through 7 (very high potential for dealing with the issue). If this approach is used, participants send the rating forms to the coordinator, who compiles the results and rank-orders the ideas based on the evaluations.
 - A second approach for evaluating the ideas is that which is used in the **nominal group technique** for "voting." With this approach, the coordinator asks each member to identify the top five ideas and assign five points to the most promising idea, 4 points to the next most promising, and 3, 2, and 1 points to the third, fourth, and fifth-best ideas. These votes are returned to the coordinator, who tallies the results and prepares a report. The report notes the rank order of the ideas based on the total number of points received and indicates the number of people who voted for each idea.



Advantages and Challenges of the Delphi Technique for Data Collection²⁰

- Advantages:**
- allows participants to remain anonymous
 - inexpensive
 - free of social pressure, personality influence, and individual dominance
 - conducive to independent thinking and gradual formulation
 - allows sharing of information and reasoning among participants
- Challenges:**
- judgments of those of a selected group of people and may not be representative
 - tendency to eliminate extreme positions and force a middle-of-the-road consensus
 - more time-consuming than the group process method
 - requires skill in written communication
 - requires adequate time and participant commitment

²⁰ Michigan State University Extension, Issue Identification Information : III00006, 10.01/94. *Delphi Technique*. Available online at: <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/modii/iii00006.html>



Toolkit 9: Citizen Report Cards

Citizen report cards were developed in Bangalore India by a group of private citizens to address problems with public services. The success of the initial effort led to the further development of this data collection technique.

Citizen report cards (CRC)²¹, sometimes called citizen score cards are a tool to:

- collect citizen feedback on public services from actual users of a service
- assess the performance of individual service providers and/or compare performance across providers
- generate a database of feedback on services that can then be placed in the public domain.

One way to look at citizen report cards is a mix in the data collection techniques of focus groups and report cards.²²

Figure 8.6 shows a fictitious example of a citizen report card reporting satisfaction with services.

Agency	# of Users	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied
Power	1024	43	15
Water	775	41	19
Telephone	203	87	12
Police	98	45	36

Fig. 8.6: Example of a Citizen Report Card Reporting Satisfaction with Services

²¹ Asian Development Bank and Asian Development Bank Institute *Improving Local Governance and Service Delivery: Citizen Report Card Learning Tool Kit*. available online at: <http://www.citizenreportcard.com/index.html#>

²² *Citizen Report Cards – A presentation on Methodology*. Participant and Civic Engagement Group, Social Development Department, The World Bank.

Available online at:

http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/94360/Tanz_0603/Ta_0603/CitizenReportCardPresentation.pdf



The following is a list of the kind of feedback that many citizen reports collect: ²³

- availability of service
- access to the service
- reliability of the service
- quality of the service
- satisfaction with service
- responsiveness of service provider
- hidden costs
- corruption and support systems
- willingness to pay
- quality of life

The following is a list of the stages involved in the development of a citizen report card²⁴:

Stage 1: Assessment of Local Conditions

Stage 2: Pre-survey Groundwork

Stage 3: Conducting the Survey

Stage 4: Post Survey Analysis

Stage 5: Dissemination of Findings

Stage 6: Improving Services

²³ *Citizen Report Cards – A presentation on Methodology*. Participant and Civic Engagement Group, Social Development Department, The World Bank.

Available online at:

http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/94360/Tanz_0603/Ta_0603/CitizenReportCardPresentation.pdf

²⁴ Asian Development Bank and Asian Development Bank Institute *Improving Local Governance and Service Delivery: Citizen Report Card Learning Tool Kit*.

available online at: <http://www.citizenreportcard.com/index.html#>



There are many ways to use citizen report cards, these are some of them: ²⁵

- urban service studies – seven Indian cities, Kampala report card by Uganda Management Institute
- provincial and national studies on service delivery – Indiana and the Philippines, part of the NSDS in Uganda
- Sector studies – public hospitals, Bangalore
- program evaluation – rural food security, Tamil, Nadu, Indian, rural water and sanitation, Maharashtra India
- governance reform projects – Bangladesh, the Philippines, Peru, Sri Lanka, Ukraine and Vietnam.

Advantages and Challenges of the Citizen Report Cards for Data Collection

Advantages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mixes focus groups and questionnaires provides summative feedback on performance structured for simple communication helps reduce bias in data collection reveals errors in measurement increases response rates
Challenges:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the political situation and local conditions must be conducive to this strategy there are limits to comparing across services requires a large sample for heterogeneous population and lesser used services a lack of predictability in how different players respond

²⁵ *Citizen Report Cards – A presentation on Methodology*. Participant and Civic Engagement Group, Social Development Department, The World Bank.

Available online at:

http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/94360/Tanz_0603/Ta_0603/CitizenReportCardPresentation.pdf



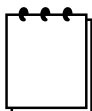
Final Statement on Toolkits

You do not need to choose only one data collection technique. You can use multiple techniques to help you collect data on the project, program, or policy.

It is also important to keep in mind that whichever technique you use to collect data, use the correct tool to meet the needs of your evaluation.

**Do not let the tool drive your work.
Choose the appropriate tool and use it to meet the
needs of the evaluation.**

Case 8-1 shows an example of an evaluation that used multiple data collection methods.



Case 8-1: Methodology for ORET/MILIEV Programme in China

“The Development and Environment Related Export Related Transactions (ORET/MILIEV) Program is a program to finance certain types of projects through a combination of a development cooperation grants and commercial loans. The program is designed to help generat employment, boost trade and industry, and improve environmental quality in developing countries.²⁶”

This evaluation in China identified the following principal components of the methodology for the evaluation as:

- desk study
- stakeholder workshops
- questionnaire survey
- subsequent analysis.

The evaluation covered the key issues listed in the TOR with the for evaluation criteria – efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, and impact. Table 6.1 summarizes the evaluation portfolio by sector.²⁷

Table 6.1: Overview of evaluation portfolio by sector.

Sector	Evaluation Portfolio				Total # of cases
	Field Study	Desk Study	Completed Questionnaires		
			End user	Supplier	
Agriculture and water conservation	4	11	9	10	11
Energy and transportation	5	10	10	6	10
Environment and waste treatment	5	10	9	6	10
Factory equipment	2	6	4	2	6
Farm produce processing and equipment	7	21	13	15	21
Medical equipment	3	7	5	4	7
Water treatment/supply	6	15	15	13	15
Others	3	4	3	4	4
Total	35	84	68	60	84

²⁶ Chinese National Centre for Science and Technology Evaluation (NCSTE) (China) and Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) (the Netherlands) (2006). *Country-led Joint Evaluation of the ORET/MILIEV Programme in China*. Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers. p.1`5.

²⁷ Ibid p. 29



Summary



In this module, you learned about data collection. You learned that there is no one single best way to collect data. You will need to make decisions based upon:

- what you need to know
- where the data reside
- resources and time available
- complexity of the data to be collected
- frequency of data collection.

From the list below, check off those items that you can complete, and review those that you cannot.

- describe data collection strategy
- list the general rules for data collection
- describe key issues about measures, including:
 - validity
 - reliability
 - precision
- describe common approaches to data collection and when to use these approaches, including:
 - available data
 - observation
 - survey
 - interview
 - questionnaire
 - focus groups
 - diaries, journals, and self-reported checklist
 - expert judgment
 - Delphi technique



Ev

Hints for Development Evaluators

Check your new Toolkit for collecting data that will answer your evaluation questions. Consider each technique for each question.

- observation
- available data
- self-administered questionnaires
- in-person interviews
- focus groups
- diaries, journals, and self-report checklists
- expert judgment
- Delphi technique.

Mgr

Hints for Development Evaluation Managers

- Assist your evaluator in answering the following questions about the intervention or policy that he or she will be evaluating:
 - What do we need to know?
 - Where will we find this data?
 - How much time and what resources will we have available for this evaluation?
 - How complex are the data that we will be collecting?
 - What is the frequency of the data collection strategy?
- Help the evaluator choose a strategy that will use the answers to these questions as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- Check the data collection methods to make sure they are: valid, credible, reliable, and precise.



Quiz Yourself

Answer the following multiple-choice questions to help test your knowledge of data collection.

You will find the answers to the questions on the last page of this module.

1. List the **general rules for collecting original data**.
2. Which of the following is the definition of **validity**?
 - a. a term used to describe how trustworthy or believable the data collection is
 - b. a term used to describe if a measurement actually measures what it is supposed to measure
 - c. a term used to describe the stability of the measurement
 - d. a term used to describe how the language used in the data collection matches the measure
3. Which of the following is the definition of **precision**?
 - a. a term used to describe how trustworthy or believable the data collection is
 - b. a term used to describe if a measurement actually measures what it is supposed to measure
 - c. a term used to describe the stability of the measurement
 - d. a term used to describe how the language used in the data collection matches the measure
4. Which of the following is the definition of **reliability**?
 - a. a term used to describe how trustworthy or believable the data collection is
 - b. a term used to describe if a measurement actually measures what it is supposed to measure
 - c. a term used to describe the stability of the measurement
 - d. a term used to describe how the language used in the data collection matches the measure
5. If you want to collect information about **peoples' perceptions, opinions, and ideas** which of the following data collection techniques would be a good choice?
 - a. open-ended survey
 - b. observation
 - c. available data
 - d. self-report checklist



6. If you want to collect information about **peoples' actual behavior** which of the following data collection techniques would be a good choice?
 - a. open ended survey
 - b. observation
 - c. focus group
 - d. self-report checklist
7. If you want to collect information about **events and perceptions about individual's daily lives**, which of the following data collection techniques would be a good choice?
 - a. diary or journal
 - b. observation
 - c. available data
 - d. self-report checklist
8. If you want to collect information by engaging people in dialogue to **reveal a range of views and perspectives** which of the following data collection techniques would be a good choice?
 - a. survey
 - b. observation
 - c. focus group
 - d. self-report checklist



Reflection

Think about previous evaluations and/or new ones.

- With which data collection method do you feel the most comfortable? Why?
- How did (or how will) you know that the data you collected was: credible, valid, reliable, and/or precise?
- What do you need to practice so that you can effectively conduct in-person interviews?
- What do you need to do to be able to learn the characteristics of effectively facilitating a focus group?



Application Exercise 8-1



Data Collection from Files

You want to look at the qualifications and experience of those admitted to a horticultural advisory training workshop. The data are on their admission files.

Develop a short form of five questions that can be used by a team of three research assistants to collect data from those admission files.

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

- 4.

- 5.



Application Exercise: 8.2

Mapping



Consider the area around where you are living or staying: what are the assets in this geographic area? Draw a map of the area. Interview key informants, observe people, traffic, types of business, etc.



Application Exercise 8-3

Data Collection: Interview



Instructions:

You have been asked to develop a short interview to evaluate participant reactions to the quality of a workshop based on this module, or a training workshop or conference you have recently attended.

Develop five open-ended questions that address the content, level, and delivery of the workshop. If possible, find a partner who attended the same workshop or conference, and interview each other.

Next, write a readable, in-depth write-up of the interview you conducted, and have your partner critique it for accuracy, readability, and coverage.

This is confidential; do not include names or any other identifying information.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



Application Exercise 8-4

Data Collection: Focus Groups



Data Collection: Focus Groups

You have been asked to design a focus group to evaluate the impact of a series of workshops and a financial assistance package to help women start and run their own small businesses. Assume a geographic location with which you are familiar. Develop a set of five questions that would be appropriate to ask women who completed the program six months ago. Focus not only on the intended effects, but be sure to probe how else it has impact the lives of them, their friends, and family.

1.

2.

3.

4.

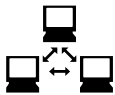
5.



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or

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/php-ppsp/toolkit_fr.html
(French)

The Measurement Group: Evaluation/Research Tools. Online:

<http://www.themeasurementgroup.com/evalbttm.htm>

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World Bank, Community Driven Development

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Answers to Quiz Yourself



1.
 - Use available data if they already exist. (It is faster, less expensive, and easier)
 - If using available data, be sure to find out how they:
 - collected the data
 - defined the variables
 - ensured accuracy of the data
 - If you must collect original data:
 - establish procedures and follow them
 - maintain accurate records of definitions and coding
 - pre-test, pre-test, pre-test, pre-test
 - verify accuracy of coding, data input
2. b
3. d
4. c
5. a
6. b
7. a
8. c

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