

# Data Collection Techniques

Grant Application and  
Project Implementation Guidance

Resource

# Introduction

As part of the monitoring plan, you should describe how you will be collecting the data. There are many data collection techniques and options available and the ones you choose depend on the capacity of your organization's team members and partners. Think through what is feasible when it comes to the particular project and the activities and measurement indicators you proposed. Often, these data collection processes are being implemented at an informal level by project team members. Some common data collection processes include after-action reviews, questionnaires, interviews and focus groups.



# Direct observation



## What it is

Direct observation typically involves an individual - who is separate from the participants in an activity - documenting what they register as being significant. Consider what types of activities are outlined in the proposal, what types of individuals will participate, what the purpose of the activity will be, and if team members from your organizations, partners, or trainers will be attending.

## When to use

This is a good choice of method where people would be unlikely to directly tell you or mention in a survey the information you are really interested in. For example, it is good to measure skills and knowledge, because it is better to observe people completing a task to see whether they have the skill, as opposed to asking them directly whether they consider themselves to be able to do it. However, an observation is always subjective. Two people may observe the same person completing a task and one person may observe that they did it well, while the other person could be disappointed with the skills used.

## Example

Who will attend a training? Is there an individual from your organization or your partner organization that could be responsible for documenting their observation (the last option would be the trainer themselves, but it will be more difficult to get comprehensive observation from someone who is so involved in the training)? What kind of information would you be interested in learning from the training? Are you curious about the areas that are of most interest to participants? Or the level of engagement that participants demonstrate during different sessions?



## Top tip

Plan direct observation questions and guidance that team members and/or partners can take while attending project events and interventions that can guide them to document useful information.

# Pre- and post-intervention surveys



## What it is

Surveys can measure the baseline level of knowledge and skills, how this changed over the course of the intervention (output), and then the change in behavior over time (outcome). Post-intervention surveys can be administered immediately after and then every three months for the life of the project and beyond if possible.

## When to use

If one of your key project objectives is the increase of skills and knowledge, draft pre- and post-intervention written surveys for participants.

## Example

Questionnaires could include the question “I am able to do x” – with options to choose from between “agree” and “disagree”.



## Top tip

Keep the questions the same in the pre- and post-training survey so you can see the change during the training more concretely.

# Direct observation



## What it is

Interview questions for participant follow-up that can be administered by project team members. This could be considered as providing qualitative information to bolster the quantitative data collected through the surveys (although, qualitative data can also be collected through surveys, if preferred).

## When to use

Sometimes it is hard to get participants to fill out surveys, they may just ignore them or not fill them out with enough detail and honesty. While surveys provide better “hard” evidence, conversations can be valuable in obtaining the same (or more!) information. You will find that you get a lot more content out of those conversations, and some may mention aspects they would have never written in a survey.



## Top tip

Practical tip: Some organizations find it easier to gather comprehensive responses through a conversation as opposed to a form survey that is filled out, but if you decide to conduct interviews instead of written surveys ensure that they are being uniformly administered.

# Reporting templates



If the project includes partners and trainers, draft a reporting template and set expectations in the beginning that the reports will be required for payment (for example). The reports should include guidance and requests for information that will inform MEL for the project and should integrate survey results and analysis.



## Top tip

If these descriptions leave you with more questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to your point of contact at the Foundation.



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