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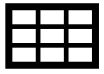
Overview of Common Data Collection Methods

Method	Description	Cost	Type of Data Typically Produced	Other Considerations
Document Review	Review of existing documents or records, such as project records and reports, policies or standard operating procedures, written correspondence, photos, videos, etc.	Typically **low**; depends on number of documents reviewed.	Qualitative	• May be difficult to access files or records • Records or policies may be out of date • May not include the exact information you are looking for
 **Review of Existing Datasets**	Review of existing datasets, such as project records and reports, shared data from other teams or organizations, etc.	Typically **low**; depends on number of datasets reviewed and how clean the data is.	Quantitative	• May be difficult to access data • Data may be out of date • May not include the exact data you are looking for • If indicators or recordkeeping practices have changed, trend analysis can be difficult • To assess the data's quality, you need to understand how records were compiled and how missing data was addressed
Individual In-depth Interviews	One-on-one conversations with individuals who may have specific knowledge about a topic of interest. Typically use an open-ended *(semi-structured)* format, allowing interviewer to ask follow-up questions to pursue topics in depth.	Typically **moderate**; depends on number and duration of interviews conducted, interpretation needs, incentives provided, etc. Significant staff time may be needed for analysis.	Qualitative	• Interviewers must be careful not to introduce bias • Useful during exploratory stage before designing a structured survey • Findings are about individual experiences or opinions. While common themes may emerge, findings may not be generalizable.

Method	Description	Cost	Type of Data Typically Produced	Other Considerations
Focus Group Discussions	Structured interviews with small groups (6-12 individuals), typically using both standardized and follow-up questions, to collect information about people's awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and practices.	Typically **moderate**; depends on number and duration of discussions, interpretation needs, incentives provided, need for travel, etc. Significant staff time may be needed for analysis.	Qualitative	• Good for gathering feedback on a service or product • Can provide information on group dynamics • Requires a facilitator who must be careful not to bias the conversation • Discussion can be sidetracked or dominated by a few individuals • Can be difficult to analyze
Surveys	Systematic collection of information from a defined population. May be *self-administered* (respondents complete a paper-and-pencil or electronic questionnaire) or *enumerated* (administered by trained staff (*enumerator*) via in-person or phone interviews).	Can be **low, moderate,** or **high**; depends on sample size, mode of administration (in person vs. phone vs. online), need for translation or interpretation, use of enumerators, use of incentives, etc.	Quantitative	• Survey design can take time and often requires testing/piloting • Design requires knowledge of the subject area and survey questionnaire development • Accuracy depends on sample size and who responds • Sample limited to willing and reachable respondents • May have low response rates • Further considerations depend on whether survey is self-administered or enumerated, as well as language and access issues
Observation	Method of watching or looking at an event, process, interaction, or place to gather information. May be structured or unstructured. Observer may use a form, checklist, or other tool to guide what they are looking for. Observer documents what they see and analyzes the notes.	Typically **moderate**; depends on type and number of observations conducted, training required for staff, need for travel, etc.	Qualitative	• Allows an action, process, or place to be studied in real time • May reveal problems or patterns that other people are unaware of or unable to describe • Susceptible to observer bias • Those being observed can behave differently because of the presence of the observer • Important to allow sufficient time for observations • Can be difficult to analyze

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