

ACTIVITY: HOW, WHAT, WHY? CHOOSING METHODS

Overview

You now have developed several evaluation questions and have examined a variety of methods that you might use in gathering data. The next step is to decide which data collection method is appropriate to use in each situation.

First, consider your evaluation questions. Your choice of tools and methods should be driven by the types of questions you want answered. Evaluation questions fall into four categories:

- ★ WHY questions are best addressed through face-to-face methods, such as interviews and focus groups.
- ★ HOW questions help you understand how something happened or the process of implementing a program. These also work best in interviews or focus groups.
- ★ HOW MANY questions are best addressed through surveys, activity logs, intake data, and other ways of capturing quantitative or numeric data.
- ★ WHAT questions help you document what program staff have done and what participants have experienced. All methods can be used to answer WHAT questions.

Try the following simple activity with the group to solidify what they have learned about selecting data collection methods.

Objective

To learn an appropriate process for choosing data collection methods

Materials Needed

Flip chart
Markers
Tape
Index cards or half sheets of paper

Time Required

Approximately 55 minutes

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIAL
Step 1 Introduction	10 min.	Post on a flip chart and present to the group the information above about the types of evaluation questions and possible methods to be used for data collection.	Flip chart Markers
Step 2 Matching questions and methods	20 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Post on flip charts or on the walls around the room signs listing all possible data collection methods. Be sure to add an “Other” sign, as well. ★ Ask each person to write up to 5 evaluation questions on index cards or half sheets—one question per card. Then have participants post their questions under whichever method they think is most appropriate. 	Markers Tape Index cards or half sheets
Step 3 Review the data	10 min.	Have everyone walk around and read what has been posted.	
Step 4 Reflection and discussion	15 min.	<p>Process the activity, asking questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Which methods seem to be used the most? The least? ★ Were any questions hard to assign to a method? ★ What lessons from this activity can be useful in planning our evaluation? 	