Program Design and Evaluation:

A Training Series for Nonprofits Serving Boulder County

Data Collection Toolkit

August, 2009

OMNI

Acknowledgements:

This workbook utilizes information and resources collected and synthesized from the following sources:

University of Wisconsin, Extension Office
http://learningstore.uwex.edu/category.aspx?Category_ID=234&

Urban Institute
http://www.urbaninstitute.org/nonprofits

The Belmont Report:
http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.htm#xethical

USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation. "Conducting Focus Group Interviews." *Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Tips*. 1996 (10).

Colorado Regional Prevention Services
www.rpscolorado.org

OMNI Institute
www.omni.org

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ETHICS, CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENT

Principles of Research Ethics

1. Voluntary participation
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Voluntary Participation

- Individuals must agree to participate in the survey, focus group, or interview of their own free will. Written consent is preferred, but verbal consent that is recorded on tape is acceptable as well. Adults may agree to participate in a survey without having to sign a consent form or tape record their agreement to participate. However, the use of consent forms is recommended for focus groups and key informant interviews.
- It is essential that individuals understand that their participation is voluntary and that there are no consequences for refusing to take part in the study or to answer specific questions.
- The nature of the study must be explained, openly and honestly. It is helpful to make sure that there is adequate time to answer any questions that an individual may have <u>before</u> and <u>during</u> the survey, focus group, or interview.
- Should an individual look confused or withdrawn, it is a good idea to ask them if they have any questions before proceeding. If an individual does not want to continue his or her participation in the survey, focus group, or interview, his or her desire to withdraw should be respected.

Confidentiality

- Personal information that is revealed during a survey, focus group, or key informant interview must be kept confidential. This means that you can not share the information gained through these efforts with anyone except another person involved in the information gathering effort. This also means that you can not share any information that would allow another person know who participated in the study.
- Individuals must know how confidentiality will be protected. Only you will know their name and only other members of the information gathering effort will have access to their information. No information will be publicly reported that would identify them as a participant in the study.
- When these conditions of confidentiality can not be met, the individual must be made aware of the limitations. For instance, participants should know that while the information they reveal in the survey, focus group, or interview will be kept confidential, their participation may not be confidential as their names were brainstormed in a public meeting.

Professional Competence

- You must not misrepresent or misuse your position as an information gatherer. You should undertake only those tasks for which you have been trained. For example, if a client begins to open up to you during an interview, you must not act as a counselor if you have not been trained as such.
- Information gatherers should ask for help when needed to ensure quality interactions with individuals and the collection of quality information.

Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity

- Any information gathering effort must respect the rights, dignity and worth of all people.
- Information gatherers are respectful of the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own.
- Information gatherers must strive to maximize the possible benefits of assessment efforts while minimizing possible harms.
- Information gatherers have an obligation to ensure that participants are not unduly burdened by their participation in assessment efforts. Participants should be selected on the basis of their relevant knowledge and experience; they should not be selected simply due to their availability, compromised position, or manipulability.

Writing Informed Consent Documents

The ethical principle of respect for persons requires that subjects be given the opportunity to choose what shall and shall not happen to them. This includes all evaluation activities including surveys, focus groups, group interviews, and individual interviews.

Valid informed consent requires: (1) **Disclosure** of relevant information to prospective subjects about the research; (2) their **comprehension** of the information, and (3) their **voluntary agreement**, free of coercion, to participate.

1) Disclosure

It is important that a participant in a study understand the type of information gathering effort being conducted and the purpose of the effort before they agree to participate. The participant should be made aware of the expected length of their participation as well as any risks and benefits associated with their participation. Participants should also receive the information gatherers' contact information should they wish to ask questions or withdraw from the effort.

Before signing a consent form, participants should also be made aware of the confidentiality (or lack there of) of the process. Participants of research projects share valuable and sometimes sensitive information with the researcher, and they trust that the researcher will ensure that their identity is protected. Researchers, or persons conducting the data collection, must agree to keep personal information that is revealed to them confidential. Specific data or information that identifies individuals as participants in the study cannot be shared. To ensure confidentiality, codes can be used instead of participant names on all documentation, including written notes during or after a focus group or interviews.

2) Comprehension

Use headings to make informed consent documents clear and easily understandable. The following are suggested headings to include in a consent form:

- Introduction
- The purpose of this information gathering effort
- Procedures for this information gathering effort
- Potential risks and discomforts associated with the information gathering effort
- The benefits of participating in the information gathering effort, if any
- Other choices available besides taking part in the information gathering effort
- What will happen to the information that is collected
- Compensation, if any
- How to withdraw from the information gathering effort
- Explanation of confidentiality

3) Voluntary Agreement

Participants should understand that their participation is voluntary and that there are no consequences for refusing to answer specific questions. It should also be explained that participants may withdraw from the focus group at any time. Once a person has been made aware of the purpose of the information gathering effort as well as the associated risks and benefits, they must indicate their agreement to participate, or their agreement to allow their child to participate, in one of two ways:

- By signing the consent form
- By indicating verbally on tape that they (or their child) wish to participate in the study.

Key Information to Include in Consent Form:

- Purpose and importance of survey
- Survey sponsor (use letterhead)
- Why the respondent was selected to participate
- Benefits of completing survey (what's in it for them??)
- Assurance of anonymity and/or confidentiality
- How results will be used
- Instruction for returning survey
- When to respond
- Contact information (if respondent has any questions about the survey)

Key Points:

Upon being provided with all relevant information about a survey, *adults may choose* to complete the survey without signing a consent form.

Consent forms are recommended for adults who participate in focus groups and key informant interviews.

If your information gathering efforts require the participation of youth under the age of 18, you *must* obtain written or verbal *parental consent* and a consent form from the youth, also known as *assent*. Below are some suggestions on how to develop consent forms.

Sample #1 Informed Consent Form

THIS SAMPLE CONSENT FORM IS PROVIDED FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE. CHECK WITH THE APPROPRIATE PERSON(S) TO SEE IF PARENTAL CONSENT IS REQUIRED.

We would like you to participate in the evaluation of *[program name]*. Your participation is important to us and will help us assess the effectiveness of the program. As a respondent in *[program name]* we will ask you to *[complete a questionnaire, answer questions in an interview, be a part of a focus group]*.

We will keep all of your answers confidential. Your name will never be included in any reports and none of your answers will be linked to you in any way. The information that you provide will be combined with information from everyone else participating in the study.

*[**If** information/ data collection includes questions relevant to behaviors such as child abuse, drug abuse, or suicidal behaviors, the program should make clear its potential legal obligation to report this information – and that confidentiality may be broken in these cases. Make sure that you know what your legal reporting requirements are before you begin your evaluation.]*

You do not have to participate in the evaluation. Even if you agree to participate now, you may stop participating at any time or refuse to answer any questions. Refusing to be part of the evaluation will not affect your participation or the services you receive in *[program name]*.

If you have any questions about the study you may call *[name and telephone number of evaluator, program manager or program staff member]*.

☐ DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE

☐ DO AGREE TO PARTICIPATE

Signed: ____

Respondent or Parent/Guardian (if respondent is under 18)

Date: ____

Sample #2 Informed Consent Form

Understanding the Cultural Assets of Southeast Asian Women to Promote Breast Health

CONSENT FORM

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The Asian Pacific Development Center (APDC) is doing this project to try to lower the risks of breast cancer for Southeast Asian women. APDC is talking with many women like you to learn about the things that they feel affect their health. APDC has asked a company called OMNI Institute (OMNI) to help review information and report on what is learned.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION?

Your participation will help us develop programs and information that support Southeast Asian women in protecting themselves from breast cancer and make help more available. Through your help, this project will benefit Southeast Asian women and communities in Colorado. To thank you for your participation and your time, we would like to extend a grocery gift certificate in the amount of $15 to you.

WHAT AM I BEING ASKED TO DO?

Trained staff from APDC will ask to talk with you about things that affect Southeast Asian women and their health. You will be asked about things like:

- How easy is it for you to find a medical doctor you like?
- When do you feel it is important to see a doctor?
- How easy is it for you to find information about your health that you can use?
- What things put some women at greater risk of breast cancer, and what is a good way to talk about these things with other Southeast Asian women?

These questions will be asked by someone who can speak your language. Staff from APDC will talk with you somewhere you feel comfortable answering these questions. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

No. It is your choice to take part in a discussion with the APDC staff member or not. Your choice should be guided by your wish to share your thoughts and experience for this project. What you decide will not affect the services that you receive through APDC in any way. If you decide to take part, you can stop the interview at any time. You can choose not to answer questions that you don't want to answer. You also can ask questions at any time during the interview. This is very acceptable and welcomed.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE SHARED WITH OTHERS IN MY COMMUNITY?

No. Your name will not be used in the report. And, all those working on this project sign a written form saying they will not share information about you or any woman who takes part in the study. Other than the woman talking to you, no one needs to know if you took part in the study.

WHAT IF I DO NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT BREAST CANCER?

We understand that some things may not be easy to talk about, because they may be things that we do not usually discuss in public or with anyone other than members of our families. It is alright to say that you do not feel comfortable talking about a subject. You also can tell the person doing the interview that you do not wish to answer the question, and she will go on to the next topic.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE USED?

Your information will be combined with what we learn from other Southeast Asian women. It will be used to understand health issues and to benefit the Southeast Asian community. If you choose to take part, your name and personal information will be removed from all public documents.

You will be asked if it is alright to record your interview with a tape recorder. Tape recording allows us not to take notes during the conversation and to preserve your information as accurately as possible. Your name will not be written on the tape, and it will be destroyed when the project ends. If you do not want your interview to be recorded, what you say will be written down on paper and given to OMNI. Your name will not be written on these papers.

WHO DO I TALK TO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

If you have questions or wish to speak to someone, please let the person doing the interview know. She will make sure you can talk to the right person to help you. You also can call Jane Doe at the Asian Pacific Development Center (303-355-5555) or Judie Smith OMNI Institute (303-833-4444) directly.

Do you have any questions for me at this time? Was there any part of this that you would like me to go over again with you? Can I better explain any words or information about the study?

Please sign below if you agree to take part in this important project. Your signature means that you have read this consent form or that it has been read to you and you agree to take part in a discussion about health issues affecting Southeast Asian women.

______________________________________ __________________

Participant Signature Date

____

Participant Printed Name

METHODS FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION

- **Survey*:** Collecting standardized information through structured questionnaires to generate quantitative data. Surveys may be mailed (surface and electronic), completed on site or through interviews, either face-to-face or telephone.
- **Case Study:** In-depth examination of a particular case (program, group of participants, single individual, site/location). Case studies use multiple sources of information and methods to provide as complete a picture as possible.
- **Interviews*:** Information collected by talking with and listening to people, either face-to-face or over the telephone. Interviews can range on a continuum from those that are tightly structured (as in a survey) to conversational type of interviews.
- **Observation:** Collecting information through "seeing" and "listening." Observations may be structured or unstructured.
- **Focus Group assessment*:** Use of group processes to collect evaluation information such as nominal group technique, focus group, brainstorming, and community forums.
- **Expert or peer review:** Examination by a review committee, panel of experts or peers.
- **Portfolio reviews:** Collection of materials, including samples of work, which encompass the breadth and scope of the program activity being evaluated.
- **Testimonials:** Individual statements by people indicating personal responses and reactions.
- **Tests:** Use of established standards to assess knowledge, skill, performance such as in pen-and-pencil tests or skills tests.
- **Photographs, slides, videos:** Use of photography to capture visual images.
- **Diaries, journals:** Recording of events over time revealing the personal perspective of the writer/recorder.
- **Logs:** Recording of chronological entries which are usually brief and factual.
- **Document analysis:** Use of content analysis and other techniques to analyze and summarize printed material and existing information.
- **Creative expression:** Use of art forms to represent people's ideas and feeling as through stories, drama, dance, music, and art.

*Detailed information regarding conducting Surveys, Interviews, and Focus Groups is included in this Data Collection Toolkit. Cursory information regarding the other methods can be found on page 67 of this guide.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES OF METHODS

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Questionnaires, surveys	Need to quickly/easily get lots of information from people in non-threatening way	• Can be anonymous • Inexpensive • Easy to compare and analyze • Can get lots of data from lots of people • Many sample questionnaires already exist	• Might not get careful feedback • Wording can bias responses • Impersonal • Doesn't get full story • May need sampling help
Interviews	Want to fully understand someone's impressions or learn more from them	• Get full range and depth of information • Develops relationship with client • Can be flexible with client	• Can take a lot of time • Can be hard to analyze and compare • Costly • Interviewer can bias responses
Documentation Review	Want to get an impression of how program operates without interrupting program	• Comprehensive and historical information • Doesn't interrupt program • Information already exists • Few biases about information	• Can take a lot of time • Info may be incomplete • Need to be clear about what you are looking for • Data restricted to what is there
Observation	Gather accurate information about how a program actually operates, particularly about processes	• View operations of a program as they are occurring • Can adapt to events as they occur	• Can be difficult to interpret seen behaviors • Complex to categorize • Can influence behaviors of program participant • Costly
Focus Groups	Explore topic in-depth through group discussion	• Quickly and reliably get common impressions • Efficient way to get range and depth of information in short time • Conveys key information about programs	• Hard to analyze responses • Need good facilitator • Hard to schedule 6-8 people
Case studies	Fully understand client's experience in a program	• Depicts client's experience • Powerful means to portray to outsiders	• Usually time consuming • Represents depth rather than breadth

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

Surveys – An Overview

What is a survey?

A survey is a structured set of questions or statements given to a group of people in order to measure their attitudes, beliefs, values, experiences, or tendencies to act. Surveys are often used as a means of data collection as they provide a way to collect a large amount of information systematically.

Why are surveys useful?

- *Surveys can be designed to fit any audience.* Survey content should be designed with the intent of collecting data from a particular group of people who will have valuable insight into the topic of interest. For example, as clients use your organization's services, they are prime candidates to provide feedback on their experiences with, and perceptions of, your organization.

- *Surveys seek information about outcomes.* Client experiences and satisfaction are important program outcomes that are often best tapped through surveys.

- *Surveys can be used to obtain information about many types of services.* Just as surveys can be designed for a target audience, they can be designed for specific program areas.

- *Surveys are systematic.* Survey results can be generalized as the information is collected in an organized fashion.

- *Surveys can be conducted regularly.* Many programs are interested in knowing how they are doing. Surveys can provide snapshots of an organization's performance in the area(s) of interest. This information can be used to improve services.

What are some limitations of surveys?

- *Survey development can be time-consuming and costly.* Developing good questions that will elicit the desired information without leading respondents can be difficult.

- *Surveys are time sensitive.* They should not require respondents to recall information from experiences that happened over a year ago as such information may not be reliable as the respondent's recollections may not accurately reflect the feelings they had at the moment.

- *Surveys may not capture complex answers or explanations.* Scales used by respondents to answer questions may not capture nuances.

- *Data collection efforts may be a burden on staff members.* Survey administration and collection may be costly and require the development of new skills by staff members.

What should an organization consider before developing a survey?

- Decide whether an appropriate survey to meet your evaluation needs has already been developed.

- Identify what kind of information you would like to gather. Organizations often have a difficult time distinguishing between *interesting* and *important* kinds of information, which often results in long surveys that may burden the respondent.

    - *Outcomes*: What changes occurred (knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior)? To what extent?
    - *Implementation & Satisfaction*: Satisfaction with experience? Reactions to content, materials, facilities, the experience in general? How were our services? Strengths & Weaknesses?

- Determine who to survey and how many surveys will need to be collected to obtain valid information. Language level and accessibility are just two issues that may limit who can complete a survey. If you cannot survey all the members of the target group, sampling techniques can be used.

- Decide whether you would like to create a paper survey, an online survey, or both. Each format has advantages and disadvantages. Consider what would be most convenient for survey respondents.

Steps to Survey Development

1. Decide what information you need
2. Determine who will take your survey
3. Develop an accurate, user-friendly questionnaire. Think about:
    a. Question wording
    b. Response choices
    c. Clear instructions
    d. Question order
    e. Cover/preface
4. Pilot Test
5. Revise, revise, revise

Developing Survey Response Choices

- **Open-ended (Qualitative)**: Questions that allow for the respondent to answer in any way they choose.

    - Recommendation: Use open-ended questions carefully as they are more difficult to analyze due to the wide range of responses you may receive.

    - The Urban Institute says:

        "Although most questions will likely be closed-ended, it can be quite useful to include a few open-ended questions, such as "Why do you feel that way?" or "Please explain." It is especially useful to ask for explanations of negative ratings to provide guidance for corrective actions. It is also good practice to end a client survey with a question like, "In what additional ways could we have helped you?" or, "Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the service you received?" or, "What can we do to improve our performance?"

        Open-ended questions give clients an opportunity to explain some of their closed-ended answers, and permit them to give feedback in a manner that reflects their own perspectives. In essence, open-ended questions allow clients to express themselves in their own words and feel they have been heard. Equally important, the organization can use such questions to ensure that important information is not missed, help interpret the patterns and findings from responses to closed-ended questions, and learn about concerns not covered in the questionnaire."

- **Close-ended (Quantitative)**

    - **Categorical (Choose One):** Responses that have no numerical or preferential values. They are for information-gathering purposes, not to assess change over time. For example, yes/no, male/female, race/ethnicity, age.
        - Recommendation: Be cautious of allowing for a "Not Applicable" response.

    - **Ordinal (Scale)**: Questions that ask respondents to indicate their response using a scale that ranges from one extreme to another, i.e. 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.
        - Recommendations:
            - Balanced: Ensure that response options are balanced, that is, there aren't more options for a respondent to answer in a positive manner than in a negative manner.
            - Meaningful: Make sense given the question.
            - Easy to understand & complete.

Rating Scales

We often ask participants to evaluate a session by selecting from among different choices, such as "excellent," "good," or "disappointing." When we order these options to express differences of opinion, we are using a "scale."

When developing a scale, think about the kind of information you need. Provide clear instructions and keep the order of choices (e.g., from low to high or negative to positive) the same throughout the form (except with semantic differentials). Also, consider your respondents' age, literacy level, and cultural background.

An odd number of options allows people to select a middle option and an even number forces respondents to take sides. An even number is appropriate when you wan to know what direction the people in the middle are leaning. Forcing people to choose a side may frustrate some respondents. As a general rule for creating scales, simpler is better. Ensure that the wording in the scale makes sense for the questions.

The wording of your scale depends on what you want to know, the level of differentiation you desire, and your respondents. For example:

_____ poor	_____ poor
_____ fair	_____ good
_____ average	_____ excellent
_____ good	
_____ excellent	

Whether you use three, four, or five categories in your scale depends on the amount of differentiation that you want or that is inherent in the question. Category scales with more than six options are hard to create and even harder to read and understand.

A common mistake when creating a rating scale is including "no opinion" or "uncertain" as a middle response. These options are not actually a part of the scale. A middle category in a scale between "agree" and "disagree" would be "neither agree nor disagree." Options such as: "no opinion," "neutral," "not applicable," and "don't know" are placed off the scale, in a separate space.

Make sure that the scale is balanced. When you give both positive and negative options, your scale should contain equal numbers of each. A poor set of responses would be: "decreased, stayed the same, increase a little, increased somewhat, increased a lot" (options include only one negative choice and three positive ones).

Finally, when using words in your scale, it is important that the words all refer to the same thing. For example:

What was your reaction to the session? (Please check your response.)

POOR	___ not worth my time	BETTER	___ not at all interested
	___ slighted interested		___ slightly interested
	___ moderately interested		___ moderately interested
	___ very interested		___ very interested

The choices in the left column include two concepts – "worth" and "interest level." The right column includes only "interest level," making better response options.

Sample Rating Scales

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree	Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree	Completely disagree Mostly disagree Slightly disagree Slightly agree Mostly agree Completely agree
Very rarely Rarely Occasionally Frequently Very frequently	Never Seldom About half the time Usually Always	Not at all Little Occasionally Often All the time
Not really Somewhat Quite a bit	Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always	Never Seldom Sometimes Often
Poor Fair Average Good Excellent	Very poor Not good All right Good Excellent	Extremely poor Below average Average Above average Excellent
Not at all Very little Somewhat To a great extent	Not at all true Slightly true True about half the time Mostly true Completely true	Probably not Maybe Quite likely Definitely
Not important Moderately important Very important	Unimportant Of little importance Important Very important	Unimportant Of little importance Moderately important Important Very important
Did not understand Understood a little Understood most of it Understood very well	No help at all Slightly helpful Fairly helpful Very helpful	Quite unsuccessful Somewhat unsuccessful Somewhat successful Quite successful

Very dissatisfied Somewhat dissatisfied Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied Somewhat satisfied Very satisfied	Not at all satisfied Slightly satisfied Somewhat satisfied Very much satisfied
Didn’t get what I wanted Got a little of what I wanted Got a lot of what I wanted Got everything I wanted	Very uncomfortable Uncomfortable Comfortable Very comfortable

Developing Survey Questions

Use simple wording.
Adapt wording to the vocabulary and reading skills of your respondents but don't talk down to them. Are any words confusing? Do any words have double meanings?

Avoid the use of abbreviations, jargon, or foreign phrases.
Will the respondents understand terms such as BHCHD, learning experiences, life skills, or focus groups?

Use clear wording.
Words such as regularly and occasionally mean different things to different people. Some other vague terms include: majority (more than half of what?); often (daily? twice weekly? weekly?); government (state? federal? local?); older people (how old?).

Include all necessary information.
In some cases, respondents may not know enough to adequately answer a question. For example: "Do you agree or disagree with the proposed plan to expand the role of 4-H volunteers in our community?" Respondents may not know what the plan is. Provide a statement about the plan.

Avoid questions that may be too precise.
People's lives are usually not so orderly that they can recall exact numbers (e.g., how many times they ate out last year). To help respondents formulate an answer, the response category might provide a range to select from, for example, 0-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-15 times, etc.

Phrase personal questions in less objectionable ways.
Being asked to indicate income level, or ethnic background may be objectionable to some respondents. One method is to ask respondents to select from among broad categories (e.g., income less than $10,000, $10,000-$20,000, etc.) rather than asking for precise information.

Avoid questions that are too demanding and time consuming.
Examples of such questions are, "Please rank the following 15 items in order of their importance to you" or "In 25 words or less, what is your philosophy of volunteerism?"

Avoid making assumptions (include "skip to next question" option).
Questions such as "How many children do you have?" make assumptions about the respondents -- that they have children. A better set of questions would start with the first question establishing the situation, followed by the question of interest. For example: "Do you have children?" followed by "If yes, how many children do you have?" or "If no children, skip to question 4".

Avoid double-barreled or biased questions.
Some questions may be too ambiguous; for example: "Do you favor legalization of marijuana for use in private homes but not in public places?" This gives no opportunity for people to respond in favor of both places, to oppose both places, or to oppose home but favor public use. As an example of double-barreled: "Did the poultry production seminar help you to identify ways to improve the sanitation and increase the nutrition of your cage bird operation?" It is better to ask about sanitation and nutrition separately.

Avoiding Common Problems in Question Wording

	Common Problem
	Vague questions
	No possibility to respond
	Ambiguous words or phrases
	Use of acronyms
	Specificity that exceeds potential to respond
	Leading questions
	Double-barreled questions
	Too many words, unnecessary words
	Vague quantifiers
	Incomplete questions (sentences)
	Unequal numbers of positive and negative options in scales
	Misplacement of undecided and neutral in scale
	Bias expressed
	Response options that are not mutually exclusive
	Inappropriate time frames
	Technical inaccuracy in questions
	Double negatives
	Mismatch between question and response

What's Wrong With These Questions & Response Choices?

Review these examples. Identify what is wrong with each question. Then, rephrase the question to improve it.

1. When you go out to eat, which type of food do you most prefer?
   American
   Italian
   Chinese
   Other
2. Did today's workshop provide you with information to review and if necessary improve your ability to evaluation your program?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO
3. Are you married or single?
4. How many times in the past month have you eaten dairy products? ________
5. Do you agree or disagree with the county's new policy on alcohol sales?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO
6. Isn't the new CFY center an asset to the community?
   ☐ YES ☐ NO
7. How did you first hear about the parenting education program?
   From a friend or relative
   From a neighbor
   From my spouse
   At work
   From television, radio, or newspaper
8. How may hours did you contribute to community service last year? _______
9. More Americans exercise regularly now than they did 10 years ago. Do you exercise regularly?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 A lot
10. How satisfied are you with the local hospital services?
    Delighted
    Mostly satisfied
    Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
    Mostly dissatisfied
    Terrible
11. To what extent do you agree with this statement: "Our community is a safe place to live"?
    Strongly agree
    Somewhat agree
    No opinion
    Strongly disagree
12. How often did you attend a community workshop, program, or course in the past year?
    Never
    Rarely
    Occasionally
    Regularly

What's Wrong With These Questions/Response Choices? (Answer Key)

These questions (and suggested revisions) are for illustration to facilitate discussion only.

<table>
<tr><td>Q1. When you go out to eat, which type of food do you most prefer?
A respondent that never goes out to eat cannot answer
Answer categories must be relevant for the respondent</td><td><u>A Revision</u>: When you go out to eat, which type of food do you most prefer? (check one)
☐ American
☐ Italian
☐ Chinese
☐ Other: ______________
☐ I do not go out to eat</td></tr>
<tr><td>Q2. Did today's workshop provide you with information to review and if necessary improve your ability to evaluation your program?
Double-barreled question: 2 questions in one
Misspelling – "evaluation" should be "evaluate"
The YES-NO format limits the answer</td><td><u>A Revision</u>: To what extent did today's workshop provide useful information to help you improve your ability to evaluate your program? (check one)
☐ Not at all
☐ Somewhat
☐ Quite a bit
☐ A great deal</td></tr>
<tr><td>Q3. Are you married or single?
A respondent who is neither married nor single cannot respond</td><td><u>A Revision</u>: What is your current material status?
☐ Single
☐ Married
☐ Separated
☐ Divorced
☐ Living with a significant other
☐ Widowed</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Q4. How many times in the past month have you eaten dairy products?
A respondent may not know what "dairy products" are/include
Difficult to accurately recall and report: requites too much precision
Time period is unspecified: what is the "past month": September; or Sept 16 to Oct 16?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Q5. Do you agree or disagree with the county's new policy on alcohol sales?
A respondent may not know what the new policy is; include a preface that describes the county policy
A respondent who neither agrees or disagrees but is neutral, cannot respond
A respondent who is undecided or has no opinion cannot respond. If an undecided option is included, separate it from the directional scale and place it in the last position</td><td><u>A Revision:</u> [Brief explanation of county's new policy on alcohol sales] To what extent do you agree or disagree with the county's new policy on alcohol sales?
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Undecided</td></tr>
<tr><td>Q6. Isn't the new CFY center an asset to the community?
A respondent may not know what CFY means; avoid acronyms or abbreviations
Avoid negative wording; avoid contractions
This is a leading question; avoid bias</td><td><u>A Revision:</u> Do you think the new Child Family Youth Center is an asset to the community?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Undecided
☐ Do not know what the Child Family Youth Center</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr>
<td>Q7. How did you first hear about the parenting education program?
• The answer categories are not mutually exclusive: there is a mix of locations and people (e.g., one could have heard at work from a friend)
• A respondent may not know which parenting education program is being referred to</td>
<td>A Revision: From which one of the following sources did you first hear about the NewStart Parenting Education Program?
☐ Television
☐ Radio
☐ Newspaper
☐ Poster
☐ Another person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8. How may hours did you contribute to community service last year?
• Misspelling: “may” should be “many”
• Requires too much precision that is difficult to recall, exceeding the potential for a ready, accurate answer
• A respondent may have different understanding/meaning of “community service”; provide enough definition so that terms can be interpreted similarly</td>
<td>A Revision: In 2005, about how many hours did you contribute to community service (such as helping the elderly, environmental improvement, serving children and families, animal care)?
☐ None
☐ Less than 10 hours
☐ 11-25 hours
☐ 26-50 hours
☐ 51-75 hours
☐ 76-100 hours
☐ More than 100 hours
Note: this level of recall is prone to inaccuracy; consider another way to obtain the desired data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9. More Americans exercise regularly now than they did 10 years ago. Do you exercise regularly?
• Leading question
• “regularly” is a vague quantifier; for some it may mean once a day whereas for others it may imply once per week
• “Do you exercise regularly” suggest a YES-NO response, not a scale; inconsistent question and answer construction</td>
<td>A Revision: About how often have you exercised during the month of June 2007?
☐ Not at all
☐ A few times
☐ About once a week
☐ Two to four times a week
☐ More than four times a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10. How satisfied are you with the local hospital services?
• State both sides of an attitude scale in the stem of the question
• Keep the wording in the scale consistent</td>
<td>A Revision: To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the local hospital services?
☐ Completely satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Completely dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Q11. To what extent do you agree with this statement: “Our community is a safe place to live”?
• State both sides of an attitude scale in the stem of the question
Ensure that responses are balanced, equal on both sides of neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">Q12. How often did you attend a community workshop, program, or course in the past year?
• Difficult to answer; avoid questions that require specificity beyond what can be readily remembered
• Unspecified time period
• Respondent may not associate all programs/courses with the community</td>
</tr>
</table>

Summary: Tips for Survey Development

- Begin with an introductory statement. At the top of the survey, briefly describe the purpose, identify the person or group conducting the survey, request assistance, and provide general instructions. You should end with a note of thanks or appreciation.

- Include clear instructions. Additional instructions might be included. For some rating scales, the respondent is asked not to dwell on the choice, to just check the first response that comes to mind. In other cases, a well-considered response is requested.

- Ask simple questions that will elicit clear information. If your organization has decided to the survey will be designed and conducted in-house, it may be useful to ask the following questions when developing survey questions:

    - What kind of information do you want to obtain? Will the answer to your question be useful in gathering such information?

    - Is the question necessary, or just interesting? Consider eliminating interesting questions in the interest of keeping the survey as short as possible.

    - Is the question easy to understand? Will your clients be able to read and answer the question without any difficulty?

    - Will the client be willing to answer the question as asked?

    - Does the question ask only one thing? Avoid asking questions that ask more than one thing, i.e. How would you rate your interaction with the desk staff and doctor? Perhaps the desk staff were respectful but the doctor was not, or vice versa.

    - Is the question as short as possible?

    - Does the question lead the respondent to answer in a certain way? For example, "How positive was your experience at our organization today?" instead of "Please rate your experience today."

    - Do all questions have appropriate response options?

- Begin with factual, non-controversial questions before asking more sensitive questions.

- Ask questions in a logical, flowing order. Ask general questions on a topic before asking specific questions on that topic.

- Define all difficult terms and/or abbreviations. For example, if your organization is informally referred to as DCRP, explain what that abbreviation means before using it.

- Conduct a brief pilot study on your questions to identify difficult items and administration problems, as well as the time required to complete the survey.

Survey Example #1

*Today's Date (mo/day/yr):*____________

Child's Birth Date (mo/day/yr):__________

Child's Gender: O Male
O Female

Child's Race or Ethnicity:
O American Indian/Alaskan Native
O Asian
O Black/African American
O Hispanic or Latino
O Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
O White
O More than one race or ethnic background

1. As far as you know, is your child up-to-date with his or her shots? That is, has your child received all of the vaccines recommended for a child his or her age?

   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) I don't know/Not sure

2. How many times have you taken your child in for a routine, well-child (non-emergency) health check-up in the past year?

   a) 0 times
   b) 1-2 times
   c) 3-4 times
   d) 5-6 times
   e) 7 or more times
   f) I don't know

3. What kind of health insurance does your child have?

   a) Private Insurance
   b) Medicaid
   c) CHP+
   d) None
   e) I don't know

Questions About *LearningGames*

4. Have you used the *LearningGames* book with your child?

    a) Yes
    b) No
    c) I don't know

If you answered b (No) or c (Don't know) please skip to question 11.

5. About how often do you or others in your household play these *LearningGames* with your child?

    a) Daily
    b) 2-3 times a week
    c) Weekly
    d) Monthly
    e) Less than every month

6. Approximately, what percentage of the activities in *LearningGames* have you done with your child?

    a) 1 – 25%
    b) 26 – 50%
    c) 51 – 75%
    d) 76 – 100%

7. If you had to pick one game you and your child really enjoy playing from the *LearningGames* book, which game would that be?

    ____

8. Approximately how many books about **social and emotional development** have you used?

    a) *LearningGames* is the only book I have used
    b) 2 - 3 books or materials
    c) 4 - 5
    a) 6 - 7
    b) 8 or more

If you answered* (a) *please skip to question 10.

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is **much worse** and 5 is **much better**, please tell us how *LearningGames* compared to other books you have used to understand your child's **social and emotional development** (please circle the best response).

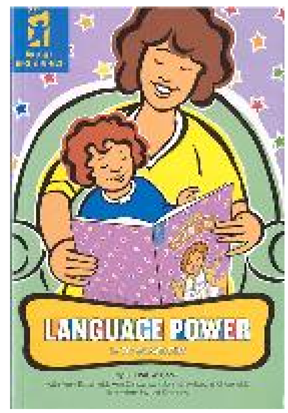
Much Worse ←——————————————————→ Much Better

1 2 3 4 5

Please tell us how true the following statement is for you:

	Very False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Very True	Don't Know
10. Using *LearningGames* helped me better understand how my child learns.	○	○	○	○	○

Questions About *Language Power*



11. Have you used the *Language Power* book?

    a) Yes
    b) No
    c) I don't know

If you answered b (No) or c (Don't know) please skip to question 17.

12. In a typical month, about how many times do you use *Language Power*?

    a) 1 – 2 times
    b) 3 – 5 times
    c) 6 – 9 times
    d) 10 or more times

13. What did you find most valuable in the *Language Power* book?

____

____

Please tell us how true the following statements are related to your use of the *Language Power* book.

	Very False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Very True	Don't Know
14. *Language Power* helped me understand why talking to my child is important for his/her development.	○	○	○	○	○
15. *Language Power* gave me useful tools to help me interact with my child.	○	○	○	○	○
16. I believe the tools in the *Language Power* book have aided my child's language development.	○	○	○	○	○
17. I believe it is important to use encouraging talk with my child.	○	○	○	○	○

Questions About <u>*My First Picture Book*</u>

18. Have you used *My First Picture Book* with your child?

   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) I don't know

If you answered b (No) or c (Don't know), please skip to question 23.

19. In a typical month, about how many times do you think you or others in your household use *My First Picture Book* with your child?

   a) Daily
   b) 2-3 times a week
   c) Weekly
   d) Monthly
   e) Less than every month

Please tell us how true the following questions are, related to your use of *My First Picture Book.*

	Very False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Very True	Don't Know
20. My child is able to point to the pictures in the book when I name the pictures out loud.	○	○	○	○	○
21. My child is able to say, or attempt to say, the names of the pictures in the book.	○	○	○	○	○
22. I feel an increased connection with my child after spending time using this book with him/her.	○	○	○	○	○

Please tell us how true the following statements are about your Moving On visit:

	Very False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Very True
23. The Moving On books and materials increased my confidence as a parent.	○	○	○	○
24. The Moving On visit made me feel supported as a parent.	○	○	○	○

25. Would you recommend the Moving On Program to another family member or friend?

a) Yes
b) No

Please tell us why or why not:

____

26. What did you feel was the most valuable part of the Moving On visit?

____

____

____

27. What, if anything, would you recommend to improve the Moving On visit?

____

____

Survey Example #2

CLIENT SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please help us improve our Center by answering some questions about the services you have received. We are interested in your honest opinions, whether they are positive or negative.

1. How would you rate the quality of service you have received?

1	2	3	4
Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent

2. Did you get the kind of service you wanted?

1	2	3	4
No, definitely	No, not really	Yes, generally	Yes, definitely

3. To what extent has our Center met your needs?

1	2	3	4
None of my needs have been met	Only a few of my needs have been met	Most of my needs have been met	Almost all of my needs have been met

4. If a friend were in need of similar help, would you recommend our Center to him or her?

1	2	3	4
No, definitely not	No, I don't think so	Yes, I think so	Yes, definitely

5. How satisfied are you with the amount of help you have received?

1	2	3	4
Quite dissatisfied	Mildly dissatisfied	Mostly satisfied	Very satisfied

6. Have the services you received helped you to deal more effectively with your concerns/problems?

1	2	3	4
No, they seemed to make things worse	No, they really didn't help	Yes, they helped	Yes, they helped a great deal

7. In an overall, general sense, how satisfied are you with the service you have received?

1	2	3	4
Quite dissatisfied	Indifferent or mildly dissatisfied	Mostly satisfied	Very satisfied

8. If you were to seek help again, would you come back to our Center?

1	2	3	4
No, definitely not	No, I don't think so	Yes, I think so	Yes, definitely

We also welcome your comments and suggestions:

____

____

____

____

____

____

Thank you very much.

Survey Example #3

1. Please rate this training in terms of its overall learning objectives, usefulness, relevance to your work, and required level of expertise relative to your professional development needs. Please circle the appropriate numbers.

   Rating Scale: 1 = Very Poor 2 = Poor 3 = Average 4 = Good 5 = Very Good

TRAINING OVERALL					
Usefulness	1	2	3	4	5
Relevance to my Work	1	2	3	4	5
Presented at the Appropriate Level of Expertise	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please review the following list of knowledge and skills statements. Give some thought to what you knew before this training and what you learned here today. Circle the number that best represents your knowledge and skills in each of these areas **before** then **after** this training.

BEFORE TRAINING					SELF-ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS RELATED TO:	AFTER TRAINING				
1	2	3	4	5	Developing an Evaluation Framework	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Identifying Research Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Selecting Data Collection Methods	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Assessing Organizational Capacity for Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	Data Management and Confidentiality	1	2	3	4	5

3. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “won’t use any information” and 5 being “will use a lot of information,” to what extent will you utilize the information presented at this training? (Please circle one number.)

   1 2 3 4 5

4. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “did not add anything to current knowledge” and 5 being “expanded my knowledge greatly,” to what extent did this training add to your current knowledge base? (Please circle one number.)

   1 2 3 4 5

5. Please rate this training in terms of trainer expertise, clarity, preparation, time management, and encouragement of active participation to your professional development needs. Provide any additional feedback about the trainer(s) in the Comments section. Please circle the appropriate numbers.

Rating Scale: 1 = Very Poor 2 = Poor 3 = Average 4 = Good 5 = Very Good

QUALITY OF THE TRAINERS					
Expertise	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity	1	2	3	4	5
Preparation	1	2	3	4	5
Time Management	1	2	3	4	5
Encouraged Active Participation	1	2	3	4	5

6. Please take a moment to reflect on your training experience and offer any feedback in the areas below:

   a) What will you do **differently** in your practice/service setting as a result of this training?

   b) What **changes** would you suggest to make the training more effective?

   c) Do you have any other **general comments** regarding this training?

Thank you very much.

Survey Sample Size

- **Full Participation –** Full participation implies that you attempt to survey everyone in your program, agency (i.e., all those who receive services). Often times, however, this level of data collection is impossible.

  If you are unable to collect information from all members of a population of interest (clients, homes in the neighborhood, etc.), you can use targeted sampling strategies to collect information from a smaller sample of this population. However, depending on the sampling strategy utilized, the information gathered from a sample of a population may not always be "generalize-able" to the larger population.

- **Convenience Sampling -** In convenience sampling, people are chosen to be part of the sample simply because they are readily available. This may mean that the first 150 people through the door are asked to participate in a survey, or that people are asked to voluntarily complete a survey. While this is the most commonly used sampling strategy, use of this technique is not recommended because the information gathered cannot be generalized to all members of the population. For example, the first 150 people through the door may be more motivated than the population as a whole, and survey respondents who voluntarily complete a survey may have more of a commitment to the organization administering the survey than those who do not complete it. Additionally, when convenience sampling is used, you are more likely to get people who feel a particular way about the survey topic area.

- **Systematic Sampling -** Another sampling strategy is systematic sampling. In systematic sampling, every n^{th} member of a population becomes part of the sample. For example, you can choose a random start place in your current list of clients, and then select every 7^{th} client to be a part of the sample until you have the desired sample size. Although this technique is preferred over convenience sampling, it is still not a truly random sample and may produce findings that are cannot be generalized to the entire population.

- **Random Sampling -** In order to gather information that is representative of the larger population, you must obtain a random sample of people to complete the survey. If you have a relatively small population, you can put all the names of the members of the population into a hat and draw names until you obtain your sample size. If your population is too large for this technique, the simplest way of obtaining a random sample is to assign all members of your population (clients, homes in the neighborhood, etc.) a number, and then use a random number table to select who will be invited to participate. The following websites may be helpful in ensuring the selection of a random sample:
  - How many people should be in your sample to obtain a truly representative sample? A Sample Size Calculator that will calculate the number of people you need to survey can be found at www.surveysystem.com. When using this site:
    - Set the *confidence level* at 95%. The confidence level tells you how "sure" you can be of your results. A 95% confidence level means that you can be 95% "sure" of the results of your study.
    - You can determine what you want the *confidence interval* to be. The confidence interval is the margin of error commonly reported by opinion polls. For example, if you use a confidence interval of 4 and 47% of your sample picks

an answer you can be "sure" that if you had asked the question of the entire relevant population between 43% (47-4) and 51% (47+4) would have picked the same answer.

    - Press "Calculate" to find out how large your sample size needs to be.

- After you find out how large your sample size should be by using the calculator mentioned above, you can use www.randomizer.org/form.htm to generate a random number table help you select a random sample based upon the number of people in your program and the number of people required for your sample.
    - For the question "How many sets of numbers do you want to generate?", enter 1.
    - For the question "How many numbers per set?", enter the required sample size obtained from the Sample Size calculator.
    - For "Number Range", enter 1 to the total number of people in your population (clients served, homes in the neighborhood, etc.)
    - For "Do you wish each number in a set to remain unique?", enter Yes.
    - For "Do you wish to sort your outputted numbers?", select Yes: Least to Greatest.
    - Lastly, for "How do you wish to view your outputted numbers?", enter Place Markers Off.

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Improving Survey Response Rates

- Send an advance postcard or letter informing the client or your organization's desire to collect more information about your services. Indicate when the survey will arrive or how to access it online, and why you would appreciate their response.

- Do not give up after the first try. A week after the survey has been mailed or the access information has been distributed, send out reminder post cards or e-mails or make reminder telephone calls. If you have not received a survey two weeks after it was mailed, send a second survey or resend the access information via e-mail.

- If mailing surveys, include stamped, self-addressed envelopes to facilitate the return of the surveys and minimize the burden to the respondent.

- Make the survey easy to complete. Completing the survey should be a convenient, positive experience. The questionnaire should have a simple, easy-to-follow format and clear instructions.

- Provide incentives, if possible. Incentives can be effective in attracting a potential respondent's attention, and make him or her more likely to complete the survey.

- Provide multiple options for the administration of the survey. Surveys can be completed on site, over the phone, online, or in person, depending on the resources of the organization and the preferences of the client.

1st Wave Recruitment Letter: Sample

October 5, 2007

Dear

As a rider with Special Transit, you have a valuable perspective on our services. Your opinions are important to us. By filling out the enclosed survey, you can let us know how we are doing and what we can do to serve you better. Your answers will remain completely confidential. The final results will be reported in group form only.

If you require assistance in filling in your responses, please feel free to have a friend or family member help you. If you need to complete this questionnaire over the phone or if you have any questions about this survey, call Happy Gilmore, Special Transit Customer Services Assistant, at 303-555-1212.

We have randomly selected only a fifth of our riders to receive this survey so it is important that we hear back from *you* to help ensure the reliability of the results. Please return your survey as soon as possible in the enclosed self-addressed, postage-paid envelope. If we have not received your survey within two weeks, we will send a second request for your help.

Thank you for your assistance with this important study.

Sincerely,

Lenna Kottke

Lenna Kottke
Executive Director
Special Transit

Estamos haciendo un estudio para determinar cuales son sus opiniones sobre nuestros servicios de la transportación. Si habla usted español, por favor, llame a Leticia al 303.555-1212 para completar el cuestionario por telefono.
Su opinión es muy importante para nosotros y quisieramos saber como le podemos ayudar a usar nuestros servicios. Gracias.

Reminder Recruitment Letter: Sample

November 7, 2007

«First_Name» «Last_Name»
«Mailing_Address1»
«Mailing_Address2»
«Mailing_City», «Mailing_State» «Mailing_Zip»

Dear «First_Name»,

A few weeks ago, we sent you the enclosed survey which asks for your opinion about Special Transit. Your feedback is very important to us so we are still hoping you will take the time to complete and return this survey. If you have already done so, we thank you and ask that you disregard this letter. **Please do not complete the survey a second time.**

As a rider of Special Transit, we believe that you have important things to say. We want to know how we are doing, how our program affects you, and what we can do to better serve you. All of your responses will remain *completely confidential*. The final results will be reported in group form only.

Please take a few moments now, or as soon as possible, to complete the survey. Once completed, return it to Special Transit in the postage-paid envelope provided. Since we mailed surveys to only a portion of our riders, **it is especially important to get responses from everyone who received a survey**. Your participation matters, for it will help us to serve you better!

If you have any questions about this survey, or to complete the survey by phone, please contact Happy Gilmore at (303) 555-1212.

Thank you again for your help with this important study.

Sincerely,

Lenna Kottke

Lenna Kottke
Executive Director

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Key Informant Interviews – An Overview

What is a Key Informant Interview?

Key informant interviews are structured conversations with people who have been selected to speak about a specific topic due to their deep knowledge and understanding of the topic. Information gathered during key informant interviews is often used to provide a context to further information gathering efforts.

Why are Key Informant Interviews useful?

- *By soliciting information from people who are extremely knowledgeable about a specific topic, Key Informant interviews can provide rich data on the topic of interest.* Information collected through Key Informant interviews can provide a broad background of knowledge on the topic of interest. Additionally, the information gathered can create a context within which to interpret data gathered through other data collection efforts.

- *People may be more honest in a one-on-one interview than in a larger group* (such as a focus group). When topics may be sensitive, key informant interviews allow for people to share their opinions and experiences honestly.

- *Time spent with one person allows for several questions to be asked and detailed answers to be given.* In contrast to focus groups, the interviewer may not have to guide the Key Informant's answers as more time can be spent with the individual.

What are some limitations of Key Informant Interviews?

- *Conducting Key Informant interviews may be time consuming.* Depending on how many people are identified as key informants, data collection efforts may not be as quick as surveys or focus groups.

- *Safety of the interviewer must be considered.* As key informant interviews are often conducted one-on-one, precautions must be taken to guarantee the interviewer's safety.

- *Key Informants may succumb to social desirability effects.* Key informants may answer in ways they think they interviewer wants them to answer, which can affect whether the information gathered is valid.

- *Information gathered through Key Informant interviews may not be generalizeable to the entire population.* As you are asking questions of people who are considered knowledgeable on the topic of interest, their opinions may not reflect those of others.

Tips for Interview Guide Development

In order to conduct structured discussions with interview participants, the use of an interview guide is recommended. In addition, use of an interview guide will ensure that similar information is being collected from different participants.

- To begin, identify what kind of information you would like to collect. Organizations often have a difficult time distinguishing between *interesting* and *important* kinds of information. As a one hour interview usually consists of 6-8 questions, it is imperative that organizations decide what information is the most important and create questions to elicit this information from participants.

- Develop 6-8 broad, open-ended questions that will encourage interview participants to share their knowledge and experience on the subject of interest.
  - Avoid asking yes/no questions.
  - Use caution when asking "Why" questions as they can make people feel defensive and cause them to take "politically correct" sides on a controversial issue.
  - "What and "How" questions are the most useful in facilitating a good discussion.

- For each question, identify *probes* that may help stimulate a conversation among interviewees, or hone in on a specific element of the question. Examples of probes include:
  - Can you say more about that?
  - Can you be more specific?
  - Can you give me an example of that?
  - Do others have similar or different experiences to share?

- When asking primary questions or probes, avoid phrasing questions in a way that my influence a participants' response. Through the development of interview guides, organizations will have the opportunity to identify questions that may prohibit participants from sharing their honest thoughts and opinions.

- Interview guides can be revised after conducting one or more interview. However, it is best to keep questions that elicit the same type of information, so that all interviews can be looked at in the analysis. It is always useful for interviewers to "debrief" after a few interviews to discuss what went well and what could be improved upon. If it becomes apparent that a question isn't eliciting the desired information, it can be modified or removed entirely. New questions that weren't initially thought of but that emerge through interviews can be added to the guide as well.

Tips for Recruiting Interview Participants

Selection and recruitment of interview participants is an important part of the interview process. As you identify the kind of information you would like to collect, you must also clearly identify the population and interview participants who can represent that population. Deciding the number of interviews to conduct is an important step in the overall interview process.

- Once you have identified the desired outcomes and the information to be obtained, then you can design the interview guide and set the number of interviews. The interview participants may be homogenous or heterogeneous depending on the type of information you want to gather. For instance, you might want responses related to particular types of individuals (e.g. men, women, African Americans, Latinos, gay, lesbian, children, young adults, business leaders, nonprofit leaders, etc…). In this case, your group composition would primarily target one of these populations with perhaps heterogeneity within that population. In another case, having a mixed group of individuals may be preferable (e.g. older and younger, men and women, etc…).

- The number of interviews will also depend on your target population. If your target population is a "community" then you will want to conduct multiple interviews with various target groups. If your target is a program with 20 participants, interviews with six individuals may be representative.

- Individuals must be representative of the target population as well as be willing and able to provide the information you are seeking.

- Recruitment of individuals can take place via a random or convenience sampling. Either way the sample needs to be comprised of people who can provide information on the topic of the interview. You may also want to recruit a few extra participants in case there are no shows.

- When the individual is contacted (mail, phone, or in person) to be invited to participate in the interview, you should provide a general explanation of the interview. If there will be incentives (e.g. money) or a meal provided this should also be noted. Provide written confirmations, if possible, and reminders closer to the date of the interview.

- Select days, times, and locations that are convenient for your target population, and remove any barriers that may prohibit participation (e.g. provide transportation or childcare).

- Provide incentives, if possible. Incentives can be effective in attracting a potential respondent's attention, and make him or her more likely to participate.

Tips for Conducting Key Informant Interviews

Before the Interview

- **Create an interview guide**.
- Know how to use the tape recorder and test it before each interview.
- Make sure that you have a new tape for each interview.
- Label the tape (you may use both sides of tape for labeling if needed):
  - respondent's initials or first name
  - date of interview
  - your name
- Be familiar with interviewer tips.
- Review interview questions, so that you know them well and do not have to read them word for word.
- Confirm interview one day in advance

The Interview

- Be on time for the interview. Conduct the interview in person.
- Conduct the interview in a quiet and semi-private place. It is important to keep outside noise to a minimum to protect the quality of the tape. It also is important to protect confidentiality.
- Provide a brief background on the study (why you are conducting interviews).
- Read the sheet that says "Consent Form" to the interview respondent. This will tell them about the study and their rights.
- Ask the respondent if they will agree to participate.

  - Have the individual sign their name.

  - If the individual is uncomfortable signing their name, ask if he or she would be willing to say that they agree to participate on the tape. If the individual agrees, tape yourself reading the signature piece and ask the individual to state that they agree to participate and understand their rights.

❖ Ask the respondent if he or she is willing to be tape-recorded. Explain that no one will hear the tape except another researcher and that confidentiality will be protected. Explain that you'd like to tape record the interview so that you don't have to take notes.

❖ Make sure that questions from the participant are answered before starting the interview. Encourage asking questions at any time during the interview.

❖ Turn the tape recorder on.

❖ Ask the questions in the Interview Guide. You do not have to take notes on these questions unless the Key Informant does not wish to be recorded. Be sure to cover all the questions in the interview guide that the respondent is willing to answer. If the respondent answers a question in one word or with a single sentence, ask the question in a new way and "probe" to help them expand on their thoughts.

❖ In some cases, as you go through the interview guide, you may notice that the respondent has already addressed a question in a previous answer. It is still important to ask the question, as they may not have shared everything around that topic. One way of handling this situation is to paraphrase what they have already said about the topic and then ask the question in the interview guide.

❖ Check the tape recorder occasionally to make sure that the tape is recording and remember to turn the tape over once the first side has finished recording.

After the Interview

❖ Thank the respondent for their participation.

❖ Check the quality of the tape. If there is a problem, write down everything you remember them telling you about each of the questions.

Key Informant Interview Considerations

Create an Open Environment

- Feel free to make small chat with the person you are going to interview (Key Informant). It is important to establish rapport, but be respectful of the Key Informant's time.
- Remind the Key Informant of the purpose of the interview, and make sure that any questions they have are addressed either before or during the interview.
- Do not assume answers.
- Do not pass judgments.
- Attempt to establish rapport throughout the interview. (See page 20)
- Listen to what the participant has to say about the topic of interest. (See page 22)
- Use probing questions to elicit more information. (See page 24)

Interviewing People You Know

- It can be difficult to convince someone we know that we will suddenly be objective and unbiased about his or her thoughts, beliefs and feelings.
- With people you know, it is more difficult to maintain the professional competence of a researcher, because they know you from different settings.
- It can be difficult to stick to the topic, because there are other things to talk about.
- Confidentiality concerns - Someone you know may be more reluctant to speak openly. He or she may feel that confidentiality would be difficult for you to maintain. You also may experience this difficulty, wanting to share information with family and friends.

Tape Recording vs. Note Taking

- When possible, it is preferable to record an interview so that the Key Informant's comments, in their own words, can be transcribed and reviewed.
- If a person does not want to have their interviewer recorded, or feels uncomfortable, notes can be taken during the interview by the interviewer or his/her colleague.

Note Taking Methods

- Before the interviews, prepare a template of the interview questions and a key of abbreviations so that you can accurately capture the Key Informant's comments in a short amount of time.

- If possible, have two interviewers conduct the interview: one interviewer can ask questions and the other can take notes without interrupting the interview.

- Don't try to write everything down. As the note taker, try to capture what the Key Informant is saying with short quotes and summaries of their comments.

- Use parentheses to note any special emotions, facial expressions, or interpretations

- At the end of the interview, review the notes with the Key Informant to see if their thoughts and comments were accurately recorded.

Sample Key Informant Interview Guide

Date of Interview ________________ **Time of Interview** ________________

Consent form was signed: **YES** **NO**

Label on Tape Says ________________________________

Your Name (Interviewer) ____________________________

PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is your occupation? ____________________________________
(Examples: Farmer, Supervisor, Teacher, etc.)

How are you involved in your community?

____
____
____
____
____
____
____

(Examples: church, directing youth activities, serving on a board, member of an organization, etc.)

What is the highest grade level you completed? (Check all that apply)

______ 8th grade
______ 9th grade
______ 10th grade
______ 11th grade
______ 12th grade (graduated from high school)
______ GED
______ Some college
______ Has a 2-year AA degree
______ Has a 4-year BS, BA degree
______ Some graduate school
______ Has an master's degree
______ Has an advanced degree (PhD, JD, MD, etc.)

Do you identify as Hispanic, Latino/a, Chicano/a, Mexican-American? ____ Yes ____ No

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **How often do you smoke tobacco?**

______ Once in awhile

______ Everyday

Probe: Where do you smoke?

Probe: Are you <u>more</u> likely to smoke in certain situations or places?

Probe: Are you <u>less</u> likely to smoke in certain situations or places?

______ Stopped using

Probe: Why? How?

______ No history of using or smoking

2. **How often are you exposed to second hand smoke?**

______ Daily

______ Several times/week

______ Several times/month

______ Several times/year

______ 4-6 times/year

______ Never

3. **Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:**

Smoking is allowed in the building where I work, when I am working	Yes	No
I have a child or family member under the age of 18 that smokes or uses tobacco	Yes	No
I have friends or adult family members that smoke or use tobacco	Yes	No
I have friends or family members that smoke in the house or car when I am with them	Yes	No
I take care of someone who may have a tobacco-related illness	Yes	No
I feel that I know about the health effects of using or smoking tobacco	Yes	No
I don't think that tobacco use or smoking is a problem in the San Luis Valley.	Yes	No
I am concerned about the amount of tobacco that is used or smoked by Valley residents.	Yes	No

4. **Is secondhand smoke a concern for you? Your family? Other Valley residents? The people you work with?**

Probe: Do you mind if people smoke around you? Why or why not?

Probe: Do you feel it is OK for someone to smoke in another person's presence without first asking?

5. **The city of Alamosa recently passed a law banning smoking in all restaurants. How do you feel about this?**

   Probe: Are you bothered by cigarette smoke in restaurants?

   Probe: Do you think that restaurants are following this law?

   Probe: How do you think other Valley residents feel about smoking not being allowed in restaurants?

   Probe: How do you think restaurant owners feel about smoking not being allowed in their restaurants?

6. **Can you think of any places in [county] where people often smoke?**

   Probe: Where was the last place you can remember breathing in smoke from someone else's cigarette?

   Probe: [*If key informant is a smoker*] Where do you feel most comfortable smoking? Least comfortable?

   Probe: [*If key informant is not a smoker*] Where could you go that you know there would be no one smoking? Where could you go that you know you would find someone smoking?

7. **What resources are available for smokers in the San Luis Valley? Resources can include information or services that help people quit smoking.**

   Probe: Who, or where, would you go to if you wanted information on smoking or tobacco?

   Probe: Do you know of anyone who helps people quit smoking, or talks to youth about not smoking?

   Probe: Do you know of any programs that deal with tobacco, or smoking?

8. **Do you have any questions for me?**

   Probe: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about how you and your family feel about secondhand smoke?

   Probe: Is there anything you forgot to tell me, or would like to add?

9. **The SLVMHC is forming a group of concerned citizens to address secondhand smoke in Valley workplaces. Would you be interested in participating?**

   Probe: Do you know anyone else who might like to join this group?

   Probe: Can you think of any reasons business owners would not want to talk about their smoking policies?

Check ONE: ______ 1 Side of Tape Only ______ 2 Sides of Tape Used

Consent was given verbally on Tape YES NO

Notes

What important information did you learn from this interview participant?

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Groups—An Overview

"*A focus group is a data collection procedure in the form of a carefully planned group discussion among about ten people plus a moderator and observer, in order to obtain diverse ideas and perceptions on a topic of interest in a relaxed, permissive environment that fosters the expression of different points of view, with no pressure for consensus*" (Focus Groups: Background and "How To" Guidelines, 1995).

Focus groups normally have between seven and ten participants. Groups with fewer than seven participants may not provide enough information. Groups larger than ten may be hard to manage and record.

Why are focus groups useful?

- *Group dialogue tends to generate a lot of good (rich) information,* as participants tend to get each other talking about different ways of experiencing or thinking about something.

- *Focus groups provide information from people who can provide unique insights.* Focus groups provide information directly from individuals who are most involved in an issue or hold expert knowledge about a topic of which little is known among researchers.

- *Focus groups provide a representation of diverse opinions and ideas.*

- *Focus groups provide a relatively low cost and efficient way to generate a great deal of information.*

What are some limitations of focus groups?

- *Focus groups are susceptible to facilitator bias*, which can affect whether information about what participants feel and think is shared (validity of findings).

- *Discussions can be sidetracked or dominated by a few vocal individuals.*

- *The information gathered through focus groups often has limited generalizability to a whole population.*

Tips for Focus Group Guide Development

In order to conduct a structured discussion with focus group participants, the use of a focus group guide is recommended. If your organization will be holding more than one focus group, use of a focus group guide will ensure that similar information is being collected from different focus group participants.

- To begin, identify what kind of information you would like to collect. Organizations often have a difficult time distinguishing between *interesting* and *important* kinds of information. As a 1 ½ hour focus group usually consists of 5-6 questions, it is imperative that organizations decide what is important information and create questions to elicit this information from participants.

- Develop 5-6 questions broad, open-ended questions that will encourage focus group participants to share their knowledge and experience on the subject of interest.
  - Avoid asking yes/no questions.
  - Use caution when asking "Why" questions as they can make people feel defensive and cause them to take "politically correct" sides on a controversial issue.
  - "What and "How" questions are the most useful in facilitating a good discussion.

- For each question, identify *probes* that may help stimulate a conversation among focus group participants, or hone in on a specific element of the question. Examples of probes include:
  - Can you say more about that?
  - Can you be more specific?
  - Can you give me an example of that?
  - Do others have similar or different experiences to share?

- When asking primary questions or probes, avoid phrasing questions in a way that my influence a participants' response. Through the development of focus group guides, organizations will have the opportunity to identify questions that may prohibit participants from sharing their honest thoughts and opinions.

- Focus group guides can be revised after conducting one or more focus groups. It is always useful for facilitators to "debrief" after focus groups to discuss what went well and what could be improved upon. If it becomes apparent that a question isn't eliciting the desired information, it can be modified or removed entirely. New questions that weren't initially thought of but that emerge through focus groups can be added to the guide as well.

Tips for Recruiting Focus Group Participants

Selection and recruitment of focus group participants is an important part of the focus group process. As you identify the kind of information you would like to collect, you must also clearly identify the population and focus group participants who can represent that population. Deciding the composition and number of focus groups to conduct is an important step in the overall focus group process.

- Once you have identified the desired outcomes and the information to be obtained, then you can design the group composition and set the number of focus groups. A focus group may be homogenous or heterogeneous depending on how you want participants to interact to reach your desired outcome. For instance, you might want responses related to particular types of individuals (e.g. men, women, African Americans, Latinos, gay, lesbian, children, young adults, business leaders, nonprofit leaders, etc…). In this case, your group composition would primarily target one of these populations with perhaps heterogeneity within that population. In another case, having a mixed group of individuals may be preferable (e.g. older and younger, men and women, etc…).

- The group composition and number of focus groups will also depend on your target population. If your target population is a "community" then you will want to conduct multiple focus groups with various target groups. If your target is a program with 20 participants, one focus group of six individuals may be representative.

- Individuals must be representative of the target population as well as be willing and able to provide the information you are seeking.

- Recruitment of individuals can take place via a random or convenience sampling. Either way the sample needs to be comprised of people who can provide information on the topic of the focus group. You may also want to recruit a few extra participants in case there are no shows.

- When the individual is contacted (mail, phone, or in person) to be invited to participate in the focus group, you should provide a general explanation of the focus group. If there will be incentives (e.g. money) or a meal provided this should also be noted. Provide written confirmations, if possible, and reminders closer to the date of the focus group.

- Provide incentives, if possible. Incentives can be effective in attracting a potential respondent's attention, and make him or her more likely to participate. For a focus group, incentives can be monetary or it is often common to provide food.

- Select days, times, and locations that are convenient for your target population, and remove any barriers that may prohibit participation (e.g. provide transportation or childcare).

Tips for Conducting Focus Groups

❖ **Obtain written consent**

Make sure participants understand their rights, and ensure them that their personal names and identifying information will not be revealed in any public way. If participants are unable or unwilling to give written consent, they may give verbal consent by stating their name and agreement to participate on a tape recording.

❖ **Establish rapport**

Often participants do not know what to expect from focus group discussions. It is helpful for the facilitator to outline the purpose and order of the discussion at the beginning of the session and set the group at ease. Participants should be told that the discussion is informal; everyone is expected to participate; and differing views are welcome.

❖ **Follow the Focus Group Guide**

The focus group guide previously developed by your organization should provide a set of questions for the facilitator to explore, probe, and ask regarding different topics. Initiating each topic with a carefully crafted question will help participants share their experiences but in a focused and meaningful manner. It is helpful to follow the focus group guide as much as possible when facilitating a focus group, to increase the credibility of the research results. Using a guide also increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection more efficient. If participants give incomplete or irrelevant answers, the facilitator can ask their own questions to help obtain fuller, clearer responses. A few suggested techniques are:

- *Repeat the question* – repetition gives more time to think.
- *Pause for the answer* – a thoughtful nod or expectant look can convey that you want a fuller answer.
- *Repeat the reply* – hearing it again sometimes stimulates conversation
- *Ask when, what, where, which, and how questions* – they provoke more detailed information
- *Use neutral comments* – "Anything else?"

❖ **Other Tips for Guiding the Discussion**

In focus groups, it is not uncommon for a few individuals to dominate the discussion. Sometimes in mixed gender groups, one gender may tend to speak more than the other. To balance participation, and ensure that every participant has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion, you might consider the following strategies:

- Address questions to individuals who are reluctant to talk
- Give nonverbal cues (look in another direction or stop taking notes when an individual talks for an extended period)
- Intervene, politely summarize the point, then refocus the discussion

- **Minimize Pressure to Conform to a Dominant View Point**
  When an idea is being accepted without any general discussion or disagreement, more than likely group pressure to conform to a single viewpoint has occurred. To minimize this, the facilitator should probe for alternative views. For example, the facilitator can raise another issue, or say, "We have had an interesting discussion, but let's explore other ideas or points of view. Has anyone had a different experience that they wish to share?"

- **Define key terms**
  Review the focus group guide ahead of time and identify words that you think participants may have a difficult time understanding without a little explanation. When it is time to ask the focus group question with the difficult or confusing term, explain to participants what you mean by the term. Also, pay attention to when there is little being said in response to a question. You may want to ask participants if they would like more information about the question. If more explanation is needed, ask participants what they would like more information about. Keep your explanation as neutral as possible.

- **Record the discussion**
  Ideally, focus group discussions will be recorded using both tape recording equipment and hand-written notes. Hand-written notes should be extensive and accurately reflect the content of the discussion, as well as any observations you have about what went well and did not go well about the discussion. After recording the focus group, write down all the major thoughts and comments you think are important for someone who was not there to know about what was said. If you can't tape record a discussion for any reason or the tape does not record well, please take extra time to write down as much as you remember about participants' discussion of each question.

Adapted from: USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation. "Conducting Focus Group Interviews." *Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Tips*. 1996 (10).

Effective Focus Group Facilitation

What are the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator?
What qualities does the facilitator need to possess to conduct a quality interview or focus group?

Roles and Responsibilities of the Facilitator

- Keep participants focused, engaged, attentive and interested
- Monitor time and use limited time effectively
- Use prompts and probes to stimulate discussion
- Use the interview and focus group guides effectively to ensure all topics are covered
- Politely and diplomatically enforce ground rules:
    - Make sure everyone participates and at a level that is comfortable
    - Limit side conversations
    - Encourage one person to speak at a time
- When participants aren't talking, ask them whether they need the question restated or explained
- Don't let arguments between participants develop
- Bring the following materials for the focus group:
    - Recording equipment: a tape recorder, extension cord, extra tapes, and extra batteries
    - Focus group packet of consent forms, participant information forms and focus group documentation sheet
    - If desired, flip charts with extra paper and different colors of magic markers (more than 1 so that it does not run out of ink)
- If unable to tape-record, record major ideas on flip chart paper and write down your thoughts and observations about group dynamics write after the focus group.

Effective Facilitators

- Have good listening skills
- Have good observation skills
- Have good speaking skills
- Can foster open and honest dialogue among diverse groups and individuals
- Can remain impartial (i.e., do not give her/his opinions about topics, because this can influence what people say)
- Can encourage participation when someone is reluctant to speak up
- Can manage participants who dominate the conversation
- Are sensitive to gender and cultural issues
- Are sensitive to differences in power among and within groups

Sample Focus Group Guide

Exploring Access to Services

[Facilitator will have 10 minutes for more formal introductions, explaining the purpose of the focus group, and for obtaining informed consent.]

[Framing: Organizations and agencies in XXXX County have sponsored this and other community discussions to learn how to better support Latino families in being healthy and successful. In our discussion this evening, we are going to explore:

1. How well agencies and organizations in XXXX County are meeting the needs of the Latino community,
2. What types of help people most want and need, and
3. Barriers to receiving the types of help that Latino families, particularly those that have recently come to this country, value the most.

1. When you think about the families and individuals you know, ***what types of help*** are they ***most likely*** to get from their family and friends? [Note taker, please make a list using a flip chart]

Probe 1: Who usually takes care of the children when parents must work?

Probe 2: Who do the people you know go to when someone in their family is sick?

- What does this help look like? [If these are not mentioned, please **probe** about whether the following are provided within the community:
    - Traditional remedies or practices that restore health
    - Respite for family members]

Probe 3: What other kinds of help do Latinos most often get from their family and friends? [After participants have had a chance to respond, probe about the following if these are not mentioned:

- Help with transportation?
- Help meeting basic needs for food, clothing and shelter?]

2. What help do Latinos tend to get ***outside*** of their community? [Note taker, please make a list using a flip chart]

Probe specifically about the following if these are not mentioned:

- Access to technology (like computers)?
- Classes/opportunities for education and learning?
- [Also probe about child care, transportation, health care, help meeting basic needs for food, clothing and shelter if, in response to the previous questions. participants indicate they do **<u>not</u>** receive help with these from their family and friends.]

3. What factors influence where Latinos go to get these kinds of help?

Probe: What factors make it ***more likely*** that a family will seek help from an agency or organization?

4. What kinds of help do you believe that families who have just come to this county ***could benefit from the most*** or ***are most in need of***?

[**Facilitator**, after participants have had a chance to respond, please **probe** specifically about the following if these are not mentioned]

How about:

- Help in obtaining legal immigration status?
- Help obtaining insurance?
- Help obtaining a driver's license, voter registration?
- Help finding ESL classes?
- Training in the use of technology, such as computers?
- Education related to substance use?

5. What are the ***best*** ways to provide these kinds of help to new immigrants?

6. How do members of the Latino community learn about the ***best*** places to go to receive the help they need?

Probe: Who do Latinos turn to when they don't know where to go for help?

7. Overall, how easy or hard is it for families that have just come to this country to get the help and assistance they need?

Probe: What are some factors that you believe influence this? [after participants have had a chance to respond, please probe about:

- Being treated with respect,
- Language access,
- Health insurance,
- Availability of quality care, products or services.]

Building Rapport with Interview & Focus Group Participants

Building rapport is important to the focus group and interview process, because it can dramatically influence whether or not the participants answer and how they answer the questions they are asked.

In the Beginning of the Interview and Focus Group

The purpose of the interview is to get an idea of the participant's perspectives and to understand where they are coming from on the topic of interest.

Listening

In the first few minutes of the focus group or interview, be accepting and curious, and show the participants that you are a person who is prepared and willing to listen to them with interest. At the same time, it is important to make sure that participants are talking about the question asked. Listen first, but re-ask the question if participants go too far off topic.

You Are There To Learn From Them

Also, let the participants know that you are there to learn from them. This interest in them as "experts" will be key to setting the tone for the focus group.

Presenting Yourself

Your Role

It is important to present yourself as someone there to do research rather than as a friend. There is an element of formality in doing so; however, taking their contribution seriously does not have to be at odds with building rapport. This formality communicates to the participants that their participation is important.

Balance Rapport and Professionalism

Part of your role is to achieve a balance between building rapport with the participants and professionalism. Your role during the focus group or interview is not to be a good conversationalist or a friend who provides feedback, but to be a professional. You will want to achieve a balance between being formal and casual during your focus groups. If you are too formal, the respondents may feel intimidated by you and not be as willing to reveal information. By being too casual, the respondents may not see you as someone who is prepared to take what they have to say seriously.

Keeping Them Talking

Probing

As a general rule, you want to interrupt the focus group participants as little as possible. If you feel that you need to follow-up with something they said by using probes, make a mental note of it and ask them about it when they have finished their thought.

Finishing Their Thoughts

Again, you want to show the participants that you are there to listen to what they have to say. Interrupting them may influence how they answer and whether they answer other questions you ask. If a focus group participant strays off course, encourage them to finish their thought. After they have finished their thought, it is appropriate to bring them back to the question you asked to make sure that they have answered it completely.

Concluding the Interview and Focus Group

Thanking Them for Their Participation

Remember to thank the participants for their time and participation. Let them know that the information they have shared is valuable for this project.

Future Contact

Related to rapport, it is important to end the focus group on a positive note and to get the participants to agree to be contacted again in the future if necessary. You may need to contact them to clarify something they said. If you promise to do something for them such as find out more information, make sure you keep those promises.

Listening to Interview and Focus Group Participants

The guidelines to conducting interviews and focus groups are closely connected to building rapport. These guidelines include communicating to the participants that you are listening to them as well as these strategies: neutrality, silence, and guidance.

Communicate That You Are Listening

Show Them That You Are Listening

You will want to focus your efforts on listening to the participants so that you will be able to probe at appropriate points during the focus group. You want to pay attention to the participants, which is a way to show them that you are listening to what they are saying. This includes noticing body posture and facial gestures and any changes in their nonverbal language.

Listening and Elaboration

If the participant feels that you are not listening to them with great care, they may not elaborate or provide much detail with their answers.

The Importance of Neutrality During Interviews and Focus Groups

Staying Neutral

While paying attention to the participants you also want to remain as neutral as possible, even if you have a strong opinion about something. Use phrases such as "Thank you. That is helpful."

Gathering Honest Information

You want to gather information during the focus group that is as honest as possible. If a participant senses that you have an opinion, they may want to change their responses to ones that seem desirable to you rather than what they truly believe or feel about a topic.

Silence

Silence is Acceptable

Conducting an interview or a focus group is different than typical conversations we have with people. Something to keep in mind is that silence is acceptable. It is important not to get impatient during your focus groups even though you may tend to want to fill the pauses in conversation.

Silence Encourages Elaboration

Allowing silence at times encourages elaboration by the respondents, because it gives them a chance to think about what they want to say. More often than not, participants will fill the silence with more information.

Guidance

Not Rushing the Interview or Focus Group Participants

You want to achieve a balance between collecting necessary information and gathering important data that have not been anticipated. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell the difference until you ask clarifying questions or probes. Again, you want to make sure that you interrupt the interview participants or focus group participants as little as possible and not rush them with their answers while keeping them on course with the interview guide.

Asking Clarifying Questions

Guidance includes giving the interview and focus group participants clues as to how specific you would like their answers to be and asking them for clarification, details, and examples. Make small steps in your questioning, not big leaps. This way you will get more detail and elaboration from them and will keep you from making assumptions about what they have shared.

Monitoring Time

As a part of guidance you also want to achieve a balance between following the interview or focus group guide, monitoring time, and asking the respondents for more detail through probing. By arriving and leaving on time you are presenting yourself as a professional, being considerate of their time, and building rapport.

Individuals tend to want to talk about their experiences and may go on and on about them. As the facilitator, your job is to politely move the interview or focus group forward when what the respondent is sharing is less useful given your research questions. At times, you may want to acknowledge that your time together is waning, and there are some other aspects of their experience that you want to be sure you have time to learn about and explore, and, for this reason, you are going to move on.

If you do run out of time before you have covered all the questions in the interview or focus group guide, be sure to use your remaining time asking and exploring only the most important questions remaining. The more familiar you are with the interview or focus group guide, the easier it will be for you to prioritize particular questions and to recognize when participants already have provided relevant information (indeed, adequately answered) questions you have not yet asked. This will ensure that your questions do not feel redundant to the participant and that the interview, overall, flows smoothly and efficiently.

Probes

Probes are an important part of conducting interviews and focus groups and have two main purposes: to help clarify what a participant has said and to help get more detailed information on topics of interest. Probes allow the participants to provide more than just a one-sentence answer to the questions you ask.

Examples of Probes

Some examples of probes used to help clarify what a respondent has said include:

> "Please tell me (more) about that…"
> "Could you explain what you mean by…"
> "Can you tell me something else about…"
> "Can you tell me more about that experience…"

Using Probes for Clarification

Seeing Things from Their Perspective

Using probes for clarification helps you to gather good information while avoiding the assumption that you understand the meaning of a phrase or the perspective of the participants. Probes such as the ones above help you see things from the perspective of the person being questioned while building rapport.

Probes Help Avoid Making Assumptions

Probes also help you make small steps in your questioning, not big leaps, avoiding the mistake of making assumptions about what the interview respondent has shared or rushing them in their answers.

Probes and Building Rapport

The use of appropriate probes is also connected to building rapport with the interview and focus group participants.

The Participants are the Experts

Using probes to clarify what the interview or focus group participants have said reinforces the fact that you are there to learn from them as "experts." Good probes let the participants know that you are listening to their answers and that you would like to know more detail about where they are coming from about the topic.

Good Probing is not Leading

It is important to avoid asking questions that are leading, meaning that they reflect your opinions or assumptions about a topic.

Avoid Asking Leading Questions

An example of a leading question is "Don't you think…" This presents to the interview or focus group participants that you have an opinion, not that you are there to learn from them as an unbiased listener. This type of questioning may lead the participants to answer questions according to what you expect to hear, rather than how they really feel.

The participants may also want you to look at them in a favorable way, matching your opinions rather than sharing what they truly believe or have experienced. So it is very important to stay as neutral as possible during the focus group.

Examples of Leading Questions

> Too leading: "Would you agree that…"
>
> Instead, you could say: "What do you think about…"
>
> Too leading: "Do you think that…?"
>
> Instead, you could say: "What are your beliefs about…?"
>
> Too leading: "When will you…?"
> This assumes that the person you are interviewing has the intention of doing something, but that may not be true.
>
> Instead, you could say: Another way to approach this question would be to say, "Do you plan on…?"
>
> Too leading: "How important do you believe it is…?"
> Participants may or may not think the issue is important, so start by simply asking if they think the issue is important, and probe based on their answer to that question.

Example of Probing in Action

"What did you like best about the program?"

Youth: "Everything was great."
Probe 1: "What was one thing that stood out?"
Youth: "I got to try different things."
Probe 2: "What things did you try?"
Youth: "I got to try playing the piano."
Probe 3: "What did you like about playing the piano?"
Youth: "It made me feel like I could do this … I've always wanted to try the piano but haven't had the chance and I thought I wouldn't be able to do it. I thought it would be too hard for me but I could do it … I want to try again."

Difficult Situations

Difficult situations may arise during your interview or focus group. The following are some examples of common situations that can occur and what you can do in these situations.

❖ **What happens if an interview respondent skips ahead, providing information relevant to, or even completely answering, a question that I haven't gotten to yet?**

At times the interview respondent may skip topics or move ahead of where you are in the interview guide. You will want to use probes to get detailed information from them on the topic at-hand, and then gently return the person to the topic of interest, falling back on the interview guide. You do not want to interrupt them; rather, let them finish their response/thought and remain an interested listener. If they have already answered a question on the interview guide you will still want to ask the question when you get to it because the person may have more to say. You will want to make sure that all of the topics in the interview guide are discussed as completely as possible during the interview.

❖ **What do I do if I ask a question and the interview respondent says that they do not feel comfortable answering it?**

An interview respondent may not feel comfortable answering a question from the interview guide. This may be related to confidentiality and informed consent, or it may be related to embarrassment due to the sensitive nature of the questions. At the beginning of the interview you want to make it clear that they may decline to answer a question(s) or choose to stop the interview at any time. In addition, if they feel embarrassed about the subject matter, you may want to acknowledge again that the subject matter is sensitive, but their experience and/or opinions are very valuable. If the respondent still does not want to answer the question, you will want to say "thank you" and that you acknowledge and appreciate their honesty. Then, ask them if it would be okay to move on to the next question in the interviewing guide.

❖ **What do I do if the person I am interviewing wants to discontinue the interview?**

There are several reasons why an interview respondent may want to discontinue the interview, and again, this is related to informed consent.

- If the person wishes to discontinue the interview altogether, do it promptly and ask if they have any questions or feedback to share with you.
- A situation that may also happen is that the person may only want to answer a few more questions. You will want to make sure the most important questions in the interview guide are asked before the interview ends.

- A person may also want to reschedule because of time constraints. You may do so by ending the interview, thanking them for their time, and rescheduling the rest of the interview for a time that is more convenient for them.

❖ **What do I do if no one responds to a question?**

In this kind of situation, it is helpful to try to understand why people aren't responding.

- ***Did you ask a question that was difficult for the participants to understand?***

If you think this might be the case, you might try asking the question in a different way. The more familiar you are with the research objectives of a particular focus group, the more successful you will be in rephrasing or rewording a question in an appropriate way that ensures that salient issues are explored and the research integrity of the group discussion is maintained.

- ***Do you think you might have asked a politically sensitive question (i.e., something that people are afraid to answer honestly because it might make other people angry)?***

If you think this might be the problem, you might move to a different question or topic that is less sensitive, and try coming back to the topic later, or use probes, during a different line of questioning, that might get at aspects of the sensitive topic but less directly.

Here, again, it might be helpful simply to rephrase the question or ask a slightly different question. Either approach may make it possible to pose a less controversial question to the group

- ***Are people tired of talking about the topic and/or do they have no more to say about a topic?***

In this case, it may be important to simply state, "Is there anything else that you would like to share? [pause] If not, we can move on to our next question." This communicates to participants that this is their opportunity to contribute any additional thoughts and allows you to move on to the next topic more naturally and politely. If you, as the facilitator, think you haven't gotten all of the information you want on that topic, rather than trying to force things, just be aware that there may be an opportunity to elicit salient information in probing that occurs with respect to other questions. In other words, there may be important linkages and connections to explore throughout the focus group that emerge through subsequent discussion.

- ***Are people feeling uncomfortable about talking?***

This typically occurs at the beginning of a focus group and is less likely to occur when focus groups start with an icebreaker or the facilitator is able to set a comfortable tone and put people at ease in the beginning. If, however, this continues to be an issue during the focus group, you may need to back up and do a little work to make people feel more comfortable. Talk about easier topics, things that you think participants may be more familiar with or comfortable talking about, or, perhaps, things that you know are particularly interesting to them. This may help the participants begin to feel more comfortable talking in a group setting.

If no one responds to a question, and you aren't sure exactly what the problem is, it's okay sometimes to just wait it out. Be quiet for a moment and allow people time to think. Often, someone will speak up, either to answer the question or to ask a question that allows you to have a better understanding of the silence.

❖ **What do I do if someone is dominating the conversation?**

Focus groups, ideally, allow researchers to collect the opinions and ideas of a variety of people. If someone is doing a lot of the talking, however, this may prevent others from contributing their thoughts, and limits the usefulness of the focus group. It is important to notice when this is happening and do what you can to try to make sure that other people have the opportunity to say things, even if they seem reluctant at first or insist that what is being said by others reflects what they would have said. It is important to have people say things in their own words as much as possible. If someone is dominating the conversation, you might want to respectfully acknowledge their contribution, and thank them, saying something like, "I really appreciate your comments." Then make direct eye contact with other people and ask something like, "I'm very interested in hearing how other people are feeling about this issue" or "It's very interesting to get a variety of perspectives, and I would like to hear from other people as well."

❖ **What happens if a participant skips ahead, providing information relevant to, or even completely answering, a question that I haven't gotten to yet?**

At times a focus group participant may skip topics or move ahead of where you are in the focus group guide. You will want to use probes to get detailed information from them on the topic at-hand, and then gently return the person to the topic of interest, falling back on the focus group guide. You do not want to interrupt them; rather, let them finish their response/thought and remain an interested listener. If they have already answered a question on the focus group guide you will still want to ask the question when you get to it because other people may have more to say. You will want to make sure that all of the topics in the focus group guide are discussed as completely as possible during the focus group.

❖ **What do I do if I ask a question and a participant says that they do not feel comfortable answering it?**

A participant may not feel comfortable answering a question from the focus group guide. This may be related to confidentiality and informed consent, or it may be related to embarrassment due to the sensitive nature of the questions. At the beginning of the focus group you want to make it clear that anyone may decline to answer a question(s) or choose to stop participating in the focus group at any time.

❖ **What do I do if people are having side conversations (i.e., conversations among themselves)?**

If people are having conversations among themselves, it can disrupt the focus group by making the other participants feel uncomfortable, making it hard for people to hear what others are saying, and making it hard for the facilitator to focus on what is being said. One of the best ways to handle this situation is to address it before the focus group begins, when you tell the participants about focus group ground rules. Stress that it is *very* important not to have side conversations because it interferes with individual's full participation in the group discussion and also poses challenges for recording the discussion. If side conversations do occur during a focus group, do not stop the conversation abruptly. You might respectfully remind people of the ground rules and ask that people finish their conversations and rejoin the larger group discussion taking place. This kind of disruption may also signal that it is time to take a break, and you may want to suggest no more than a five minute break (so that people can use the restroom – make sure people know where to go – or to stretch). It will be important to make sure people know at one time the focus group will continue and be proactive about bringing people back together so that the focus group can re-convene.

❖ What do I do if someone in the group wants to discontinue their participation in the focus group?

There are several reasons why a focus group participant may want to discontinue their participation, and again, this is related to informed consent.

If the person wishes to discontinue the focus group altogether, do it promptly. If you have the opportunity, follow up with the person outside of the focus group and ask if they have any questions or feedback to share with you.

Other Ways to Collect Evaluation Data

Creative expression, Personal stories or testimonials, Video taping or photography, Expert review, Diaries and journals, Logs, Case study

Creative Expression

Various forms of creative expression can be used in evaluation as a means for individuals and groups to represent their ideas and/or feelings. They can generate rich data containing many subtleties that may not be uncovered in other ways. These methods do pose interpretation challenges, but getting a group to work through interpretation can provide yet more useful insights. Creative expression forms include: drawing, stories, drama, role-playing, music, found objects, and collages. When considering creative expression, be careful to choose an art form that feels comfortable to participants. Creative expression is not always appropriate or culturally sensitive. Check references for help about how to structure and implement the following:

1. **Drawings.** Asking participants to draw may provide deeper insights into their perspective on processes and outcomes than verbal discussion alone can. Individuals could be asked to draw pictures, charts, maps, timelines, abstract shapes, social interaction networks, or diagrams or make collages. Discussing and interpreting the pictures provides another way to collect meaningful data. The key to any drawing exercise is the process of discussing the ideas expressed and learning from them.
2. **Drama.** Like drawings, drama may be used in many ways. People can act out before and after stories, provide different perspectives on the same issue though different characters, or depict a critical incident or outcome. Drama can be used to recall and describe what happened during the program, what resulted, who benefited, and why. It also becomes a convincing communication strategy for sharing program results with funders and stakeholders.
3. **Role-playing.** Role-playing is a creative way to help people see an issue or problem from someone else's perspective. It is also a way to clarify potential and actual outcomes for different participants or in different situations. Assigning individuals to play different roles than they hold themselves may help everyone learn.

Personal Stories/Testimonials

Personal stories may be either written or oral. They can be a fun and relaxed way to reveal the impressions people have of certain events, processes, and outcomes. For example, you might ask participants to write a story about their personal experience in the program, what they gained by participating, or how the program has helped them. Rather than individual questions on a questionnaire, the participant is asked to "write a story." A set of questions may be used to help stimulate the thinking and story writing, but the focus in the "story," not answers to questions. Or, rather than soliciting stories or testimonials, collect people's stories and testimonials about your program as you hear them. Record the date, place, and context of the story/testimonial to provide document of the narrative.

Video Taping or Photography

Using a video recorder or camera is another way to collect data. Before and after photos can provide powerful data. Taking photos over a course of a program's life can provide longitudinal data for assessing process and outcomes. Someone may be selected as the "documentarian," or participants themselves may be given a camera or asked to photograph program processes, program life, or outcomes. Reviewing, discussing, and interpreting the resulting video or photos as a group broadens and deepens understanding.

Expert Review

There may be people who hold special knowledge about your program and its activities. Inviting these "experts" to review the performance of your program can provide useful answers to many evaluation questions. Such experts could be key stakeholders, people involved in similar programs or from a similar community, or educators from a local school or university.

Adequate preparation for an expert review is paramount. As you plan for an expert review, consider:

- *Who* is the best qualified to evaluate this program? Who will be seen as credible? How many will be included?
- *When* will the "experts" conduct the review? How long will the review take? What dates are most appropriate?
- *What* will the "experts" be expected to look at? What questions might they answer?

Diaries and Journals

Diaries and journals are records of events and processes that occur over time. Not only do they record events and processes, they are also useful for recording problems that arise along with peoples' feelings and thoughts about what transpired.

Diaries and journals provide a personal perspective on a program and/or its results and sometimes can show how results came about. Diaries and journals can be kept by participants, volunteers, program staff, or others involved in the program. The written record reveals the personal perspective of the person doing the writing. The writer controls what data is recorded and shared.

Each individual may keep a diary or journal. Or, you may start a "program diary" to monitor activities, outcomes, and people's perspectives over time. In the case of one collaborative working together, the collaborative rotated the diary monthly – each month a different member wrote the entry. Annually, the entries were analyzed and used to facilitate discussion on the collaborative's performance. Among other things, dairy material may be useful for:

- Recording and examining involvement, reactions, likes and dislikes, and tracking program activities and reactions to them
- Identifying major turning points or problem areas
- Identifying changes and accomplishments

Logs

Logs also are records of events and/or processes. They include chronological entries, but they are briefer and more factual than diaries and journals and usually do not include reactions and thoughts. Logs record times, dates, and brief narrative comments related to programs. Keeping logs and then using the information to supplement your evaluation is easy and practical. Some examples of logs include: telephone logs, attendance logs, activity logs, resource logs, and media logs, which record dates, length and content of media work.

Case Study

An evaluation method that provides comprehensive information about a single case is called a *case study*. You may want to use this method to obtain a complete picture of your program; one facet of the program; or the experience of one person, family, business, or community that is participating. A case study can help determine what happened and why by extending over a period of time and focusing on in-depth data collection and analysis.

> "A case study is a method for learning about a complex instance based on a comprehensive understanding of that instance obtained by extensive description and analysis of that instance taken as a whole and in its context." United States General Accounting Office (1990)

Case studies use multiple information sources and multiple methods. A case study involves keeping and building a complete file about the "case." For example, in a case study of a community collaborative to assess what it has achieved, how, and why; a case study might include the following: an on-going log of the collaboartive's work and collection and analysis of media releases, minutes, committee reports, community members, and/or other stakeholders to assess outcomes. Finally, you would be able to supplement all these types of evaluative information with your own personal observation. The result is an in-depth description of the collaborative and its performance. Data collection and analysis often occur simultaneously so that as you learn more about the case, you can refine and add to the data collection.

Survey Administration

General Guidelines for all surveys

Before Survey Administration

- Identify or create the appropriate instrument.
- Determine and how often the survey should be administered.
- Identify your sample. It is important to obtain a sample that can provide information that will be representative of your clients' or constituents as a whole.
- Determine mechanisms to maintain participant confidentiality.
- Determine consent process and develop or adapt consent forms.
- Develop a protocol for survey materials to be disseminated and collected.
- If you plan on using a survey administrator, share the protocol instructions with him or her.
- If you plan on using a survey administrator, develop instructions for him or her to read to survey respondents.

During/After Survey Administration

- Keep track of the number of surveys distributed, and the number received.
- Make sure that surveys are administered on the dates scheduled.
- Collect completed surveys.
- Maintain confidentiality by storing the surveys in a secure place.

Survey Administration Protocol

The Survey Administration Protocol is designed to provide you with step-by-step information on how to plan and implement survey administration. It is intended for anyone who is responsible for planning and administering surveys. We hope that the protocol will increase the quality of your outcome data while addressing the unique needs that you have regarding evaluation activities. *This protocol is specifically geared towards, pre-post survey administration.*

Included in the Survey Administration Protocol are a number of important materials to facilitate the collection of high quality data while ensuring the confidentiality of individual responses.

Consent

- ✓ **Most evaluation efforts are considered to be a part of regular program activities, just as any programmatic procedure**. However, parents and guardians can choose to disallow their youth to participate in the survey. This is called "passive" consent. On the other hand "active" consent is when parents and guardians need to sign to allow their youth to participate in the survey.

- ✓ The consent form should be sent home with youth who are under 18 years of age or mailed directly to their parents or guardians at least a few days prior to the survey administration date. Consent forms should also be made available at your organization. It is strongly recommended that in the future the consent forms would be placed in an initial registration packet for individuals, if possible. *Remember with passive consent: Parents/guardians only need to sign and return the consent form if they do not want their son or daughter to participate in the evaluation.* Otherwise, consent is assumed.

- ✓ Participation is highly encouraged; however, the individual does have the opportunity to decline at the time of the survey administration. Individuals may also choose to stop at any time during the survey. Refusal to participate cannot affect the services an individual receives from your organization.

Confidentiality

- ✓ One of the ethical requirements for all survey efforts conducted is to ensure that individual's responses to survey items remain entirely confidential. Some survey items are of a sensitive nature and it is especially critical that program staff, school administrators, faculty, community members, as well as other respondents, do not have access to individual survey responses, whether accidental or intentional. Individuals must be assured that they can answer survey questions honestly without their responses or identities being revealed.

Guidelines for confidential survey administration include the following:

- ✓ The program coordinator should meet with program staff and survey administrator prior to the survey administration to address confidentiality issues and review procedures.

- ✓ Program staff and survey administrator need to be made aware that it is their ethical, as well as legal, responsibility to avoid exposure to individual's responses.

- ✓ Make sure respondents understand that they are not to put their names on any surveys they are asked to complete.

- ✓ Although participation is strongly encouraged, respondents need to be made aware that they are not required to complete surveys and that they can skip questions they are uncomfortable answering.

Steps for Administering the Survey

Program staff and survey administrators play a critical role in the evaluation process. Program staff members will *set the tone* for participants regarding the value and importance of the survey effort, and can do this by ensuring proper survey conditions and conveying a supportive perspective about the survey. Program staffs are also in the position to ensure that the data collection process is carried out in a way that will promote good data quality and protect participants' confidentiality. The following procedures and tips are designed to ensure a successful survey effort.

Survey Administration Checklist

- ✓ **Check the Instrument(s):** Carefully check the quality of the original copy of the survey(s) before photocopying. Look for marks, missing pages, unclear print, etc. Obtain a new original copy if any of these problems exist.
- ✓ **Know Who Gets What:** If you have two versions (e.g. English version and Spanish version, etc.) make sure you have both copies ready.
- ✓ **Identify the Sample:** Identify the individuals who will participate. Be sure your sample is representative of the population that is receiving the service.

Survey Materials

- ✓ **Gather and prepare the materials for the survey administrators**
  - Instructions for survey administrator to read to respondents
  - Complete, clean copies of the surveys
  - Envelope to hold surveys (optional)
  - Label surveys with unique identifiers and/or client id's (optional) [see instructions on how to create these below]

- ✓ **Distribute all Materials**

  Distribute the survey materials to survey administrators in advance of the survey administration time. Some people like to do this a few days before the survey date; others prefer to disseminate the materials the morning of the survey.

Train the Survey Administrators

One staff person should be assigned the role of survey administrator for each time individuals complete the survey. This person should be thoroughly briefed on the purpose of the evaluation and the procedures of the administration (outlined below) prior to the actual survey administration time.

- ✓ **Meet with Program Staff** - Meet with the program staff to:
  1. Discuss with staff the importance of data collection.
  2. Confirm the sample (identify the respondents that will participate).
  3. Schedule dates for administration of the surveys. If you are doing a pre-post test survey, the pre test surveys should be given within the first week of programming. The post test surveys should be given within the last week of programming. If the program schedule

does not allow for the first or last weeks of pre/post test survey administration, schedule a date as close to the start of the program for pre test surveys and as close to the end of the program for post test surveys.

4. Confirm who will administer the surveys.
5. Review steps involved in survey administration including:
   - Preparing or reviewing if already prepared, the client ID tracking sheet/master list.
   - Writing in the proper client ID on the surveys prior to administration.
   - Handing the correct survey to the individual, based on that individual's client ID.
   - Reviewing the instructions the survey administrator will read to the respondents (see Sample Survey Instructions included in this protocol).
   - Maintaining confidentiality of the respondents
6. Review how the survey materials will be disseminated and collected by the survey administrator.
7. Discuss any special concerns or needs with regard to the survey administration.

✓ **Track the Survey Information**- Keep track of who is being surveyed and dates of survey administration by using a spreadsheet or by using a tool such as the Survey Tracking Form (included in protocol).

Survey Administration

✓ **Order of Surveys**
Your organization may be required to administer more than one survey. If given at the same time, make sure you are giving it in the same order as previous cohorts.

✓ **Follow Through-** Make sure the surveys are administered on the dates scheduled.

✓ **Collect the Completed Surveys**

- Collect all completed surveys using a system or process that you put into place with the survey administrator.
- Ensure unique client ID's are in place

✓ **Maintain Confidentiality**- Remember to keep your client ID log/master sheet in a safe place.

Labeling Surveys with Unique Tracking Client IDs

✓ The survey administrators should ensure that each individual's survey has his or her unique tracking client ID labeled clearly on the survey's cover page. This is the only way to ensure that surveys can be matched.

Unique Identifiers

✓ **Cohort Name – for pre/post survey administration**

- Each group of respondents who take the survey must be assigned a unique Cohort Name, which is used to identify that group for pre and post testing.

- Ideas for naming conventions could be an abbreviated name of the class or group including the start date of the session.
- The purpose of the Cohort Name is to allow the pre/post administration of various classes and groups of respondents who participate in the survey administration.
- In order for the Cohort Name to be useful, it must be written **exactly the same** on the Survey Cover Sheet as it is on the Survey Tracking Sheet for all surveys.

✓ **Client ID**

- Even more critical than the Cohort Name is the client ID. This is the ID that is assigned by the survey administrator to each individual respondent.
- The Client ID provides the link for each respondent's survey. **Without this, it is nearly impossible to match a respondent's survey**, thereby weakening the ability to analyze data for shifts in survey scores over the program period.

Instructions for Creating a Unique Identifier

Below is one method of creating a Unique Identifier:

I. Create a Spreadsheet/Table in MS Excel, MS Word or using other database program:

1. Make a table with three columns. One for the Respondent Name, Cohort name, and one for the Unique Client ID#. Fill in table with the appropriate information. See example below:

Respondent Name	Cohort Name	Client ID#
John Smith	Fall 2006	F01
Jane Doe	Fall 2006	F02
Mary Brown	Fall 2006	F03
Johnny Hanson	Spring 2006	SP01
Jamison Jay	Spring 2006	SP02
Stephanie Stills	Spring 2006	SP03

2. Store this table in a safe and organized place in your office. You may want to consider keeping this with the Survey Tracking Form.

3. Refer back to this table when preparing for post-test administration or another survey.

Survey Conditions and Time Needed

✓ The survey should be conducted in a quiet room with minimal distractions or disruptions. There should be enough space to allow individuals some level of privacy when completing the survey.

✓ Survey completion will depend on the survey given. Allow for an appropriate amount of time. The survey administration process should not begin until all individuals are in the room and ready to begin. If an individual finishes early, send them out of the room to another activity, or provide them with quiet work until the survey time is completed.

Consent

- ✓ Consent notices should go out to parents or guardians a few days prior to the survey date. If any parents signed the form saying that they do not want their youth to participate, arrange an alternate activity for the youth during the survey time period.

Read the Survey Instructions to the Participating Individuals

- ✓ Provided separately is a set of instructions that should be read to individuals prior to beginning the survey. Though highly recommended, some survey administrators may feel uncomfortable reading the instructions verbatim. However, it is <u>extremely important that all key points are covered</u> as communicated in the instructions to individuals prior to the survey. Do not skip any points! A summary of the key points are as follows:

    - Individuals should be informed of the purpose of the survey and how the data will be used.

    - Explain the steps that will be taken to protect individuals' confidentiality. This is very important!

    - Refusal to participate in the survey cannot affect the services individuals receive from the organization.

    - The survey is not a test, that is, there are no right or wrong answers. Individuals can skip a question if they do not want to answer it.

    - It is okay for individuals to ask what a word or sentence means while taking the survey. The survey administrator will provide clarification.

    - Individuals should only have one answer per question.

    - Individuals should leave blank any questions that they feel do not apply to them or to which there are no correct or close response categories.

Distribute the Surveys to Individual

- ✓ The administration instructions will ask you to give each individual a copy of the survey. Survey copies that you make should have high print quality and no missing or duplicate pages. Errors such as these compromise data quality and should be avoided.

How to Handle Refusals

- ✓ If an individual refuses to participate, or a parent denies consent for a youth's participation, you may document this on the *Survey Tracking Form*. Any individual who does not take the survey should be directed to an activity in another room or provided quiet work to complete in the survey room.

How to Assist Groups with Very Low Reading Levels

- ✓ It is anticipated that the majority of individuals will be able to read and comprehend most survey questions on their own. However, if there are individuals who have low reading levels, the administrator may read the survey out loud to them and have them follow along and mark their responses. Should this be the case, avoid standing over or next to the individual while he or she is completing the survey; this infringes upon the confidentiality of his or her responses.

How to Handle Questions Regarding Survey Items

- ✓ Individuals may have questions regarding the meaning of some survey items or specific words used. At this time, a set of definitions is not available for survey items, though most items can be clearly understood. If individuals do have questions about the meaning of items, survey administrators should provide clarification as best as they can, given their understanding of the meaning.

Collect and Package Completed Surveys

- ✓ Once each participant completes the survey, provide him or her with an individual envelope or provide one large envelope or box for the participants to place their completed surveys. If you provide the group with one large envelope or box ensure that all participants places their survey in the large envelope or box before sealing
- ✓ After placing the Survey Summary Form in the package (see example), the survey administrator should seal the package until needed for analysis.

Sample: Survey Administration Protocol

The Boys and Girls Club of Safe County

Survey Administration Protocol

The survey administration is one of the most important parts of any evaluation effort, and BGCSC staff and survey administrators play a critical role in the evaluation process. BGCSC staff members will *set the tone* for participants regarding the value and importance of the survey effort, and can do this by ensuring proper survey conditions and conveying a supportive perspective about the survey. Staff members are also in the position to ensure that the data collection process is carried out in a way that will promote good data quality and protect youth participants' confidentiality. The following procedures and tips are designed to ensure a successful survey effort.

Survey Administration Packet

BGCSC should prepare a survey administration packet, which will include the materials necessary for administering the survey on the dates scheduled. This packet should include surveys, survey instructions, a survey summary form to be completed by the administrator, an envelope in which to place the completed surveys, and a sticker to place across the seal of the envelope.

Survey Administrator Role

One staff person should be assigned the role of survey administrator for each time youth complete the survey. This individual should be thoroughly briefed on the purpose of the evaluation and the procedures of the administration (outlined below) prior to the actual survey administration time.

Survey Conditions and Time Needed

The survey should be conducted in a quiet room with minimal distractions or disruptions. There should be enough space to allow youth some level of privacy when completing the survey.

OMNI estimates that survey completion will take 20-30 minutes. As this is a pilot survey implementation, both OMNI and BGCSC will have a better idea of time needed after this round of surveying. The survey administration process should not begin until all youth are in the room and ready to begin. If youth finish early, send them out of the room to another activity, or provide them with quiet work until the survey time is up.

Consent

Consent notices should go out to parents or guardians a few days prior to the survey date. If any parents signed the form saying that they do not want their youth to participate, arrange an alternate activity for the youth during the survey time period.

Read the Survey Instructions to the Participating Youth

Provided separately is a set of instructions that should be read to club members prior to beginning the survey. Though highly recommended, some survey administrators may feel uncomfortable reading the instructions verbatim. However, it is extremely important that all key points are covered as communicated in the instructions to youth prior to the survey. Do not skip any points! A summary of the key points are as follows:

- Youth should be informed of the purpose of the survey and how the data will be used.
- Explain the steps that will be taken to protect youths' confidentiality. This is very important! (Read further, or refer to the *Survey Instructions*.)
- Refusal to participate in the survey cannot affect the services youth receive from BGCSC.
- The survey is expected to take up to 20-30 minutes to complete.
- The survey is not a test, that is, there are no right or wrong answers. Youth can skip a question if they do not want to answer it.
- It is okay for youth to ask what a word or sentence means while taking the survey. The survey administrator will provide clarification.
- Youth should only have one answer per question.
- Youth should leave blank any questions that they feel do not apply to them or to which there are no correct or close response categories.

Distribute the Surveys to Youth

The administration instructions will ask you to give each youth a copy of the survey that was provided to your site. Survey copies that you make should have high print quality and no missing or duplicate pages. Errors such as these compromise data quality and should be avoided.

How to Handle Refusals

Any youth who does not take the survey should be directed to an activity in another room or provided quiet work to complete in the survey room.

How to Assist Groups with Very Low Reading Levels

Four versions of the survey will be provided to BGCSC. One version has been developed for 6-9 year olds, and the other is intended for those 10 and older. Each will be provided in both Spanish and English. It is anticipated that the majority of youth will be able to read and comprehend most survey questions on their own. However, if there are youth who have reading levels below these ages, the administrator may read the survey out loud to them and have them follow along and mark their responses. Should this be the case, avoid standing over or next to the youth while he or she is completing the survey; this infringes upon the confidentiality of his or her responses.

How to Handle Questions Regarding Survey Items

Youth may have questions regarding the meaning of some survey items or specific words used. At this time, a set of definitions is not available for survey items, though most items can be clearly understood. If youth do have questions about the meaning of items, survey administrators should provide clarification as best as they can, given their understanding of the meaning.

Collect and Package Completed Surveys

Once each youth completes the survey, place the surveys in a large envelope. Return the Package of Completed Surveys to the person responsible for compilation of data.

SAMPLE SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

(To be Read by the Survey Administrator)

[PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE RECORDED EACH RESPONDENT'S NAME ALONG WITH THE UNIQUE ID ON A TRACKING SHEET PRIOR TO SURVEY ADMINISTRATION.]

[PASS OUT A SURVEY TO EACH RESPONDENT. ASK RESPONDENTS TO PAY ATTENTION TO THESE INSTRUCTIONS AND NOT TO BEGIN THE SURVEY UNTIL YOU HAVE ASKED THEM TO DO SO.]

[PLEASE READ TO THE GROUP:]

Today, we will be completing the [survey name] Survey. ***DO NOT*** *write your name anywhere on the survey. This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. It's important to understand that your answers are completely confidential-- that is, no one at [name of organization] nor anyone else will ever know your individual answers.*
Please answer every question as honestly as you can so the information that comes from this survey is correct and useful. Try to complete all items in the survey as best as you can, but if you come to a question in the survey that you do not want to answer, you can leave it blank and move to the next question. If you don't find an answer that fits exactly, use the one that comes closest. All of the questions should be answered by filling in one of the answer spaces. If you have a question about an item, please raise your hand. If you feel that a question does not apply to you, leave it blank.

Your answers are very important and only YOU can describe your experiences and opinions rather than rely on others to describe these things for you. You may choose not to complete the survey.

[Are there any questions?]

[Please begin completing the survey now.]

SURVEY SUMMARY FORM

Survey Administrators Must Complete This Form

Date:____

Group Name: ____

Name of Survey Administrator: ____

Name of Organization: ____

Total number of surveys: __________________________________

Type of survey (i.e. pre/post, satisfaction, end of program, etc.): ____________________

Interview and Focus Group Administration

General Guidelines for all focus groups and interviews

Before Interview/Focus Group

- ❖ Create an interview/focus group guide.
- ❖ Recruit your participants. It is important to have people who can provide the information you are looking for as a whole.
- ❖ Determine consent process and develop or adapt consent forms.
- ❖ Bring copies of consent forms.
- ❖ Make sure you have a tape recorder that has been tested and extra tapes, cords, etc.
- ❖ Label the tape with: respondent's initials/focus group name, date, your name
- ❖ Review interview or focus group questions, so that you know them well and do not have to read them word for word.
- ❖ Confirm interview one day in advance

During Interview/Focus Group

❖ Be on time for the interview/focus group.

❖ Conduct the interview/focus group in a quiet and semi-private place. It is important to keep outside noise to a minimum to protect the quality of the tape. It also is important to protect confidentiality.

❖ Provide a brief background on the study (why you are conducting interviews/focus group) and review the consent form with participants for them to sign.

❖ Ask the respondent if he or she is willing to be tape-recorded. Explain that no one will hear the tape except another researcher and that confidentiality will be protected. Explain that you'd like to tape record the interview so that you don't have to take notes.

❖ Make sure that questions from the participant are answered before starting the interview/focus group. Encourage asking questions at any time during the interview.

❖ Turn the tape recorder on.

❖ Ask the questions in the Interview/Focus Group Guide. You do not have to take notes on these questions unless a participant does not wish to be recorded.

❖ Check the tape recorder occasionally to make sure that the tape is recording and remember to turn the tape over once the first side has finished recording.

After Focus Group/Interview

❖ Thank the respondent for their participation.

❖ Check the quality of the tape. If there is a problem, write down everything you remember them telling you about each of the questions.

❖ Keep any notes you took and the tape in a secured location until it is needed for analysis.