Primary Data Collection Methods: A Review Sheet

Conducting a strong needs assessment is the foundation for developing a successful prevention plan. The Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) Data-Informed Decisions Working Group has designed this review sheet to support addressing data gaps through primary data collection. It provides several methods and select resources as a starting point for prevention team's planning. These methods can involve varied means of data collection, including oral narratives, written text, photographs, video, and others.

Method	Advantages	Challenges to Consider	Selected Resources
Surveys	• Can be highly accurate • Can be highly reliable and valid • Can be compared to other populations • Generate quantitative data • Easier to summarize and analyze findings • Can add more sensitive questions	• Accuracy constrained by size and diversity of the reachable sample • Can be high cost • Time consuming to create and use • Can have low response rates • Difficult to explore issues in depth • Cannot clarify questions • Cannot build rapport with respondents	• How to Create a Bad Survey Instrument • You Can't Fix by Analysis What You've Spoiled by Design: Developing Survey Instruments and Collecting Validity Evidence • Developing a Survey Instrument
Key Informant Interviews	• Can be low cost • Can have short turnaround time • Respondents define what is important • Can explore issues in depth • Can clarify responses through probes • Can be source of leads to other data • Have generally lower refusal rates • Can be opportunity to build partners	• Can be time consuming to schedule • Require skilled/trained interviewers • Have limited generalizability • Produce limited quantitative data • Might not provide sensitive data • Can be difficult to analyze findings • Have potential for interviewer bias	• Tips for Conducting Key Informant Interviews • Sample Key Informant and Focus Group Questions • Key Informant Interviews • Key Informant Interviews Overview
Focus Groups	• Can be low cost • Can have short turnaround time • Participants define what is important • Can explore issues in depth • Can clarify responses through probes	• Can be time consuming to assemble • Require skilled/trained facilitators • Have limited generalizability • Produce limited quantitative data • Offer less control over the process • Might not provide sensitive data • Can be difficult to analyze findings	• Conducting Focus Groups • Focus Groups • A Practical Guide to Focus Group Research • Guidelines for Conducting a Focus Group • Toolkit for Conducting Focus Groups

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Story Telling	• Can bring out rich, emotionally compelling information • Can provide information on lived experiences and viewpoints • Can provide context and history passed on across generations • Can be way of teaching values and traditions	• [Utilizing Traditional Storytelling to Promote Wellness](#) • [Native American Storytelling](#) • [Indigenous digital storytelling](#) • [Uses of storytelling approaches within Indigenous health research](#) • [Children, myth and storytelling: An Indigenous perspective](#) • [Kapati Time: Storytelling as a Data Collection Method](#)
Talking Circles	• Rooted in indigenous peoples' traditional practices • Can foster deep listening, reflective and responsive communication • Can foster respect for individual differences • Can facilitate group interconnection • Can be way of passing knowledge, culture, and traditions	• [Using Talking Circles in the Classroom](#) • [Engaging the community through talking circles](#) • [Integrating Modified Talking Circles to create culturally relevant frameworks](#)
Visual Expressions	• Includes weavings, paintings, pottery, photographs, and dances • Can provide historical records within tribal cultures • Can provide intergenerational and social cohesion within communities • Can support cultural maintenance	• [Evaluation of the K̲ts'iihtła ("We Light the Fire") Project](#) • [A Culturally Based Wellness and Creative Expression Model for Native American Communities](#) • [A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words: Engaging Youth in CBPR Using the Creative Arts](#) • [Indigenous and Traditional Visual Artistic Practices](#) • [Beyond Tradition: Culture, Symbolism, and Practicality in American Indian Art](#) • [Implementing Photovoice in Your Community](#)

Readers interested in learning more about data collection and the importance of data to strategic planning are encouraged to access SAMHSA's [A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework, including Appendix A](#). Additional information on these and other topics is also available through SAMHSA's [Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network](#). Please also view the webinar recording [Completing the Data Puzzle: Filling Assessment Data Gaps](#) and other resources on the [PTTC Data-Informed Decisions Workgroup website](#) for additional information.

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