Mastering Qualitative Research Skills: Facilitating Focus Groups

Session 1: March 11th, 2024

PRESENTER:
Sandra Del Sesto, M.Ed, ACPS

Thank you for joining us today.
We will begin promptly at **12 PM** Eastern.

While waiting for us to get started, please share in the chat if there are any T/TA topics you are interested in hearing more about from us in the future.

Technical Information

SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

This training was developed under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Prevention Technology Transfer Center task order. Reference # 1H79SP081018.

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Funding for this presentation was made possible by SAMHSA grant no. 1H79SP081018. The views expressed by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of HHS; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

LIVE

This webinar is now live.

It is being recorded.

Please remain muted.

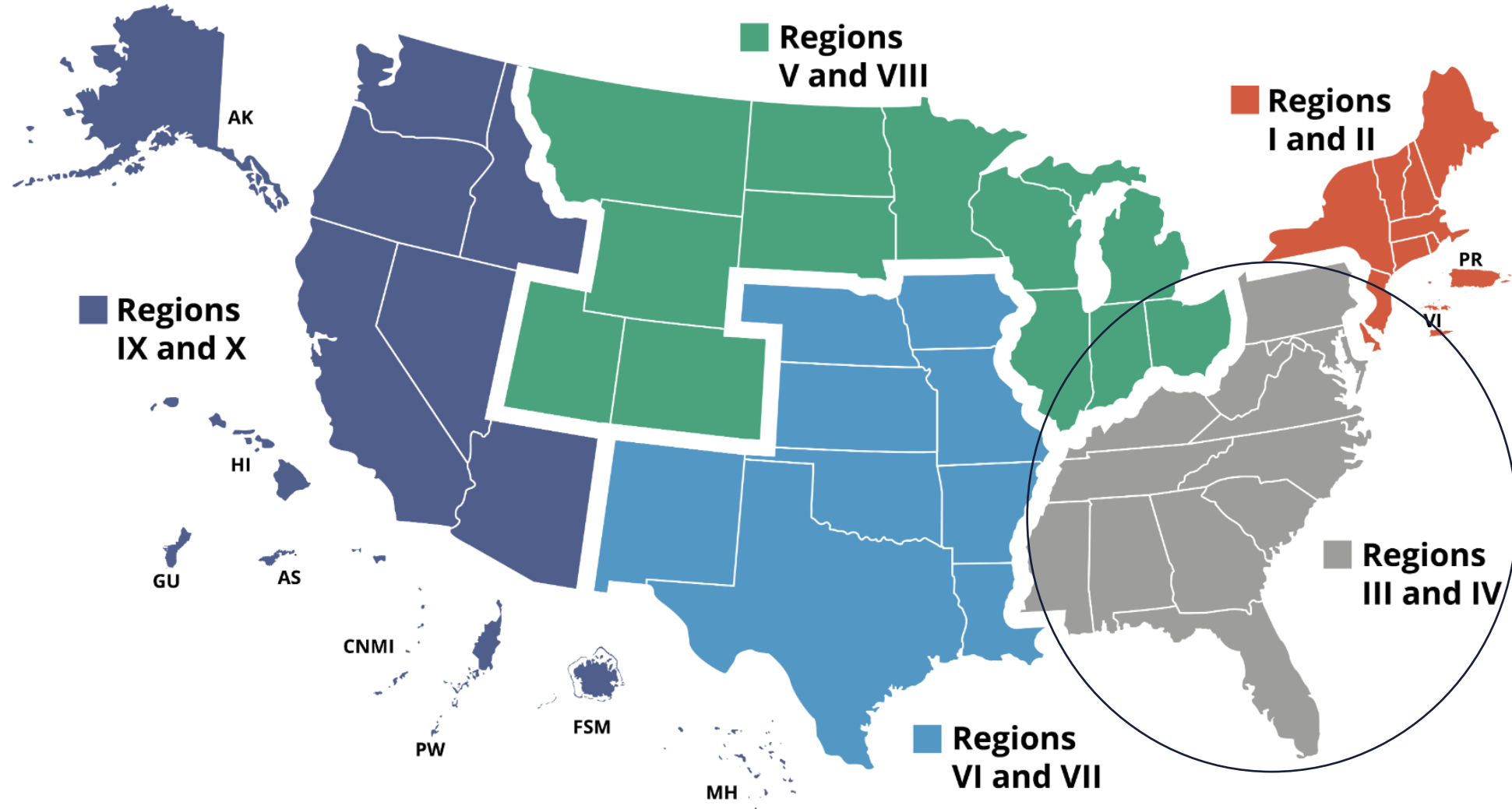Central East (HHS Region 3)
PTTC

Southeast (HHS Region 4)
PTTC

What is SPTAC?

SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Technical Assistance Center (SPTAC) is a national training and technical assistance system committed to helping SAMHSA prevention grantees move their prevention programs forward.

How We Are Organized

Who We Serve

States, tribal entities, territories and communities supported under SAMHSA's Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant Program and Grants to Support Community-based Prevention Programs, as follows:

- Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery (SUPTR) Block Grant

- State Strategic Prevention Framework–Partnership for Success (SPF-PFS)

- Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Grant Program (STOP ACT)

- Strategic Prevention Framework for Prescription Drugs (SPF Rx)

- Substance Abuse and HIV Prevention Navigator Program (formerly MAI)

- Prevent Prescription Drug/Opioid Overdose-Related Deaths (PDO)

- State First Responders–Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (FR-CARA)

- Improving Access to Overdose Treatment (OD Tx)

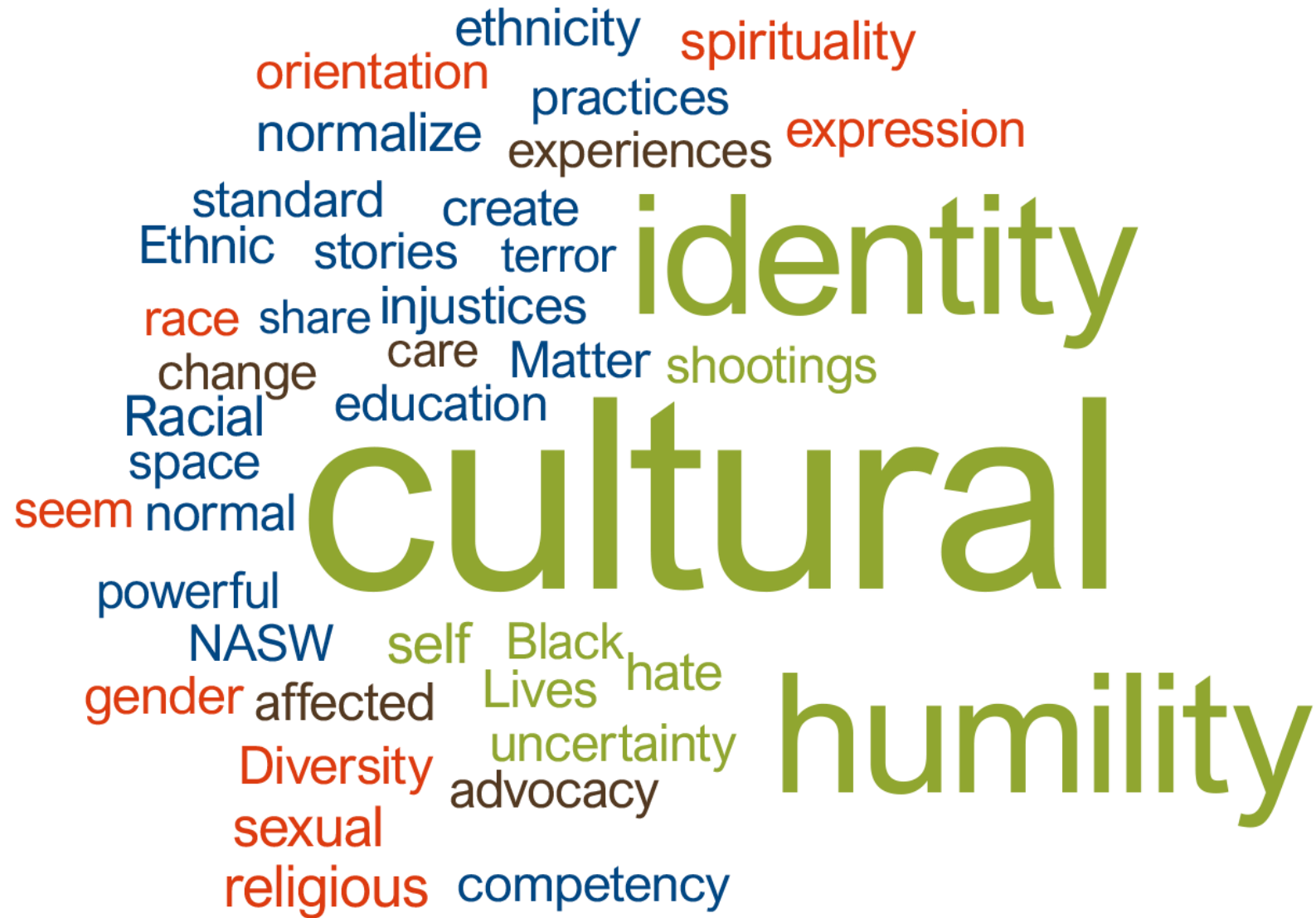# Central East Region

HHS REGION 3
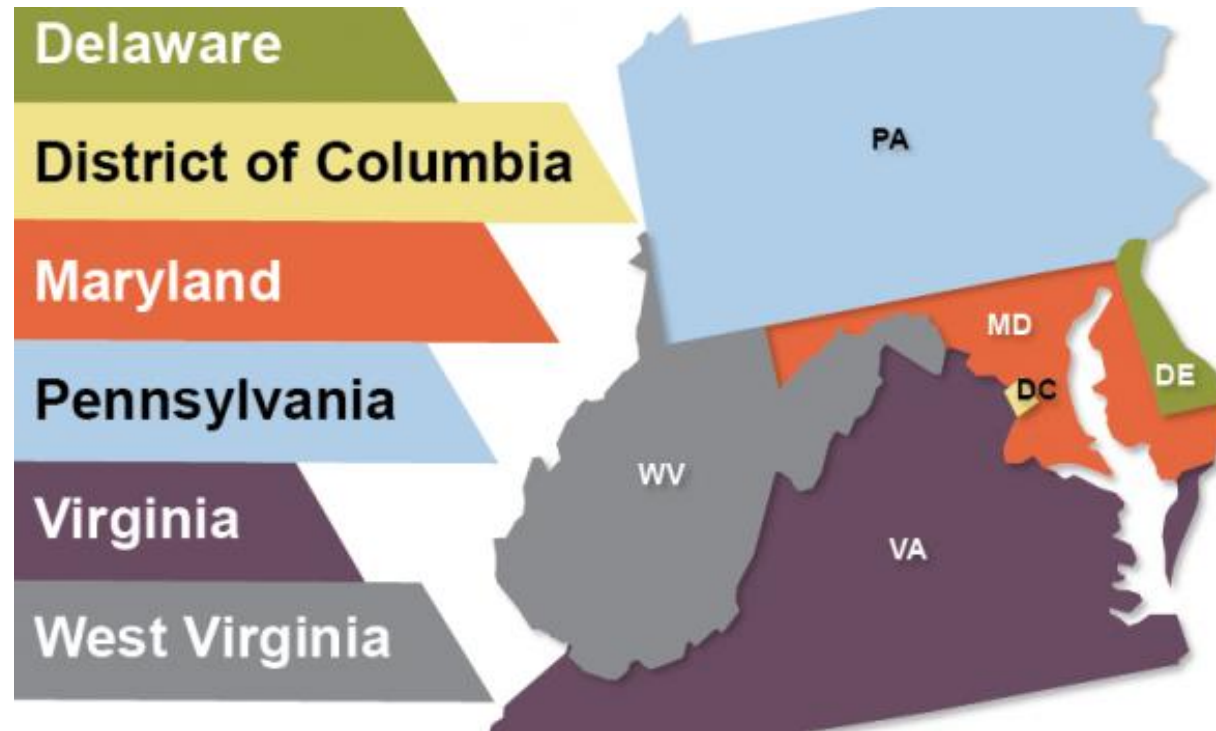
Southeast Region

HHS REGION 4

The use of affirming language inspires hope.

LANGUAGE MATTERS.

Words have power.

PEOPLE FIRST.

The PTTC Network uses affirming language to promote the application of evidence-based and culturally informed practices.

Presenter

Sandra Del Sesto

Learning Objectives

- Describe the purpose, key elements, and benefits of qualitative data

- Describe focus groups interviews and how to conduct them effectively

- Provide examples of good practice in focus groups

What Is Qualitative Data?

- Qualitative data is:
  - Information that cannot be counted, measured or easily expressed using numbers
  - Collected using **focus groups**, questionnaires**, interviews**, observation
  - Interpretation-based and descriptive
  - Helpful in making us understand **why, how, or what happened** behind certain behaviors versus how much, how many, or how often
  - Delivered in **narrative** form

Why Collect Qualitative Data

- Provides qualitative, descriptive information for decision-making.

- Can explain the motivation, behavior, and perspectives of the focus community.

- Identify examples of successes and shortcomings of existing activities or programs.

- Surface recommendations for future directions.

- Provides information to support interpretation of quantitative data collected through other methods.

- Identify potential community influencers and partners

Ethical Issues That Apply When Conducting Focus Groups

- Respect for persons and their ability to make decisions → informed consent

- Beneficence → maximizing benefits and minimizing any risks in participating

- Justice → equity in selection of participants

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects (1974)

Key Ethical Questions When Collecting Any Qualitative Data

- What is the **purpose** of the project?

- What **methods** will be used to gather data? Are they the right methods for the question(s) you are trying to answer?

- What **sample size** is needed to make good inferences from the data?

- What **population group** is the focus the project? Consider the principle of justice: Why are you collecting/using data from this group?

- What are the **potential risks and burdens** of the project to participants? Do the benefits outweigh any risks to them?

What Is a Focus Group?

- A systematic way to collect qualitative or descriptive data through small group discussion

Benefits of Focus Groups

Focus groups allow prevention practitioners to:

- Ask questions that might be hard for people to answer in writing.
- Clarify participants' responses through follow-up questions.
- Create a rich dialogue as participants build on one another's comments.
- Generate narrative information that is compelling and easy to understand.

Key Elements of a Focus Group

- Timeframe: 60-90 minutes

- Small group: 6-12 participants

- Shared group characteristics

- Representative of a cross-section of the sub-population in the focus community

- Consent

- Trained facilitator

- Predetermined questions on a specific topic

- Documentation

To Start, Clarify Your Purpose

1. Define your broad area of interest

2. Describe your specific area of interest in that area

3. Create the primary question you want to be addressed

Create a Research Question

- **The Issue:** Adult cannabis use has been legalized in your state. Surveys indicate that youth have misinformation about its effects. In order to develop an effective prevention intervention to address this, you need to know which sources of information the youth in your community trust the most.

- **The Research Question:** To what extent do local high school students trust their different sources of information about cannabis?

Then, Create a Set of Focus Group Questions

- Good questions are:
  - Open-ended
  - Short and clear
  - Neutral
  - Consistent across similar focus groups

Types of Questions

A. **Warm-up Questions***: introductions, group guidelines, purpose, logistics, incentives*

B. **Key Questions**: *feelings, beliefs, opinions, values, experiences, behaviors, and knowledge*

C. **Wrap-up Questions**: *summary/clarification of what was said, final thoughts, closure*

Include Probing Questions

- Explore key questions in greater depth.

- Clarify the meaning of responses to key questions.

- Elicit responses to key questions from quieter participants.

- Summarize what you hear and check for accuracy.

Your Planning Team

- Facilitator
- Recorder
- Project staff
- Evaluator
- Focus population
- Service providers

Record or Take Notes

Remove Barriers to Attendance

- Setting
- Time
- Transportation
- Childcare
- Space
- Virtual or in-person

BREAKING BARRIERS
2015 ATLANTIC REHAB AND EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Choose Your Focus Group Audience

- Identify who can assist you in recruiting focus group members.

- Ensure a cross-section of the population.

- Select the best time and place.

- Provide incentives if possible.

- Create a consent form: A short description of the purpose of the focus group, how the information will be used, and a confidentiality agreement for potential members/guardians to sign.
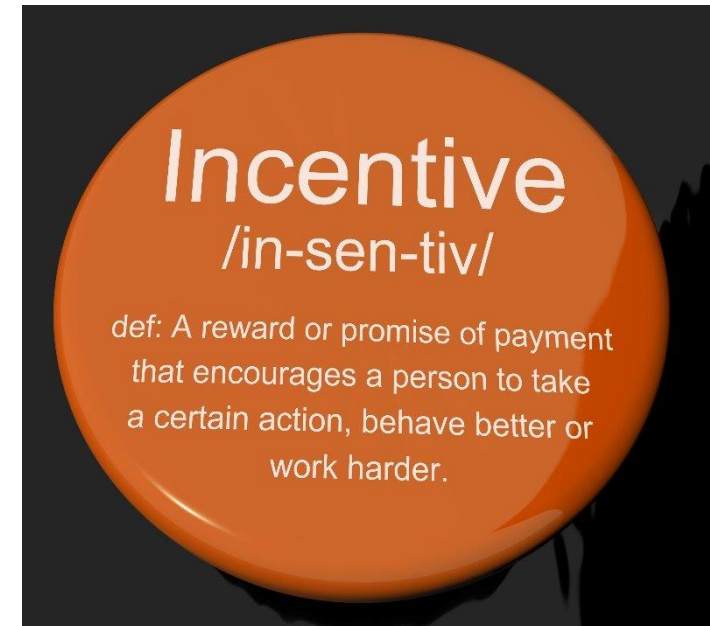
Consider in Your Recruiting...

- Recruit more people than you need.
- Monitor your refusal rates.
- Assemble your group carefully.
- Leave no sub-groups out.

Provide Incentives

- Stipends

- Gifts

- Gift cards

- Food/drink

- Community service credit

- Charitable contribution in their names

- Link to a fun and existing event

- A combination

Incentive
/in-sen-tiv/

def: A reward or promise of payment that encourages a person to take a certain action, behave better or work harder.

Sample Focus Group Guidelines

- There are not right or wrong answers.

- Take turns speaking.

- Listen and respond to one another

- Avoid side conversations.

- Be respectful of others' opinions and experiences.

- Ask as many questions as you need.

- Honor the groups' confidentiality.

Frequently Asked Questions: Prepare Your Responses

- How did you get my name?

- What is the purpose of this focus group?

- How do I know what is said is confidential?

- Will you use my name?

- How will you use my answers?

- Will I be paid for my participation?

- What will happen if I don't participate?

When Your Focus Groups Are Done...

1. Analyze your data.

2. Confirm your findings.

3. Compare and connect.

4. Prepare a succinct narrative.

5. Take action!

Contents of Your Report

- Goals/objectives of the focus groups
- Participants and eligibility criteria
- Focus group procedures
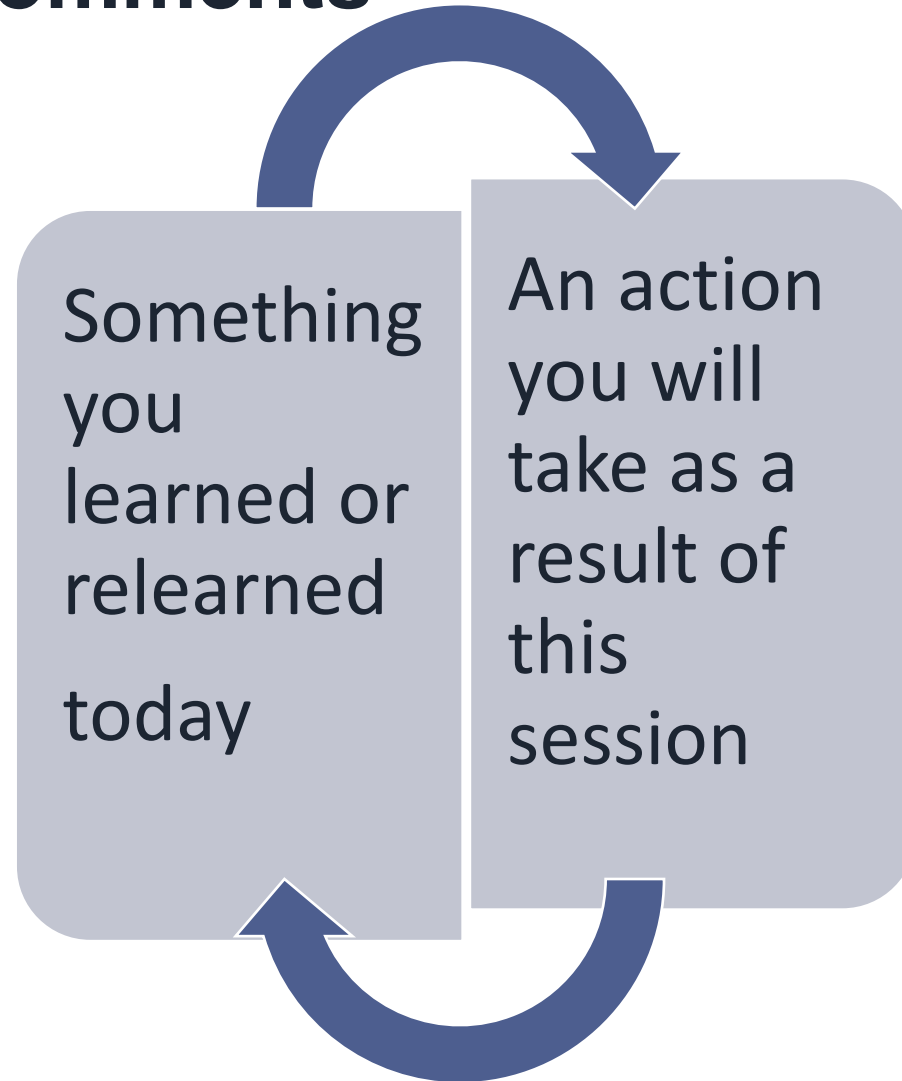- Data analysis procedures
- Findings/Conclusions

Learning Objectives

- Describe the purpose, key elements, and benefits of qualitative data

- Describe focus groups interviews and how to conduct them effectively

- Provide examples of good practice in focus groups

Questions and Comments

- Before we close...

Something you learned or relearned today

An action you will take as a result of this session

Contact

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Presenter

Dorothy Chaney

Chat Box Introductions

- Your Name

- Organization

- One expectation for this session

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the role of qualitative information in data collection

- Identify different types of one-on-one interviews

- Explore key considerations to build rapport

- Consider equity when conducting interviews

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Let's Get Started!

Seek First to Understand

Whether we are going to the doctor, working with a community group, or getting to know a client, we must first ask questions before we jump into action.

Strategic Prevention Framework

Types of Data

- Quantitative

- Qualitative

Quantitative Data

- ## Surveys
  - YRBS
  - Community Survey

- ## Archival Data
  - Hospital data
  - LE data

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Qualitative Data

- Focus Groups
- One on One Interviews
- 100 Cups of Coffee
- Listening Sessions

What Types of Data Have You Collected?

Qualitative Data Collection
Focus Group

- In-person discussions with a limited number of people

- Good for getting several perspectives on a topic

- Purpose is to promote discussion among participants

Qualitative Data Collection Listening Session

- A listening session involves gathering feedback from a group of people

- A listening session is used to gain some new ideas and collect detailed feedback on these topics, while a focus group is often used to gather quick feedback and explore different perspectives

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Qualitative Data Collection
100 Cups of Coffee

- A great way to involve your coalition in data collection

- A great capacity building tool for your community work

- Effective in learning about the community while building credibility

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Qualitative Data

- Focus Groups
- One on One Interviews
- 100 Cups of Coffee
- Listening Sessions

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Interviews:

A Conversation with a Purpose

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Qualitative Data Collection Interviews

- 1-on-1 Interviews

- Broad influence

- Great for sensitive issues – people more comfortable once trust is built

Why Should You Conduct Interviews?

Interviews will provide an effective way to have an accurate and thorough communication of ideas between you and the person with whom you are speaking

You may find that in interviews – people share things that they may not otherwise share

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When Are Interviews NOT the Best Option?

Interviews will not be effective if you cannot establish trust

You may not find interviews helpful when a person has a personal agenda

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Benefits of One-on-One Interviews

- Provides flexibility to probe into issues deeper by allowing for follow up questions

- You can observe nonverbal behaviors

- You have control over the environment

- You can record spontaneous responses

- You know exactly who is responding

- You can make sure to ask any additional questions that may arise from the conversation

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Building Rapport

Rapport Defined...

"A relationship that is built on mutual interest, support, and understanding."

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Elements of Rapport

- Mutual Attentiveness
- Positivity
- Coordination

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8535677/

Building Rapport:
Mutual Attentiveness & Positivity

- Mutual attentiveness and positivity are important ways of creating a positive personal image, which motivates the other person to continue the interaction

- Mutual attentiveness and positivity help to keep respondents motivated to continue with the interview

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Building Rapport: Coordination

- Coordination creates an environment that makes the interaction feel balanced or "in sync"

- Coordination facilitates smooth question and answer sequences throughout the interview

Tips For Conducting Interviews

Tips – Interviews

- Start with an overview of why you are conducting the interview

- "I am going to ask you # questions and will write down your responses. Take as much time as you need to think about your answer. I will write your responses. I will then read back your responses to ensure accuracy. After that – we can have a conversation about the topic."

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Tips – Methods for Community Interviews

- Coordinate how to record the responses if more than one person is conducting interviews

- If you are using zoom or another online platform, you may want to record the session, so you have a transcript

- Once you have completed the interviews, you can compile the responses – identifying key themes for each question

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Equity Considerations – One-on-One Interviews

Health Disparities

Equity Considerations

- Transportation

- Literacy

- Technology

- Location

- English as a second language

- History

Thank you!

Dorothy J. Chaney

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Mastering Qualitative Research Skills: Formulating Questions

Session 3: March 13th, 2024

PRESENTER:
Kristin Kidd, MA, CPS, PTTC Region 4

Thank you for joining us today.
We will begin promptly at **12 PM** Eastern.

While waiting for us to get started, please share in the chat if there are any T/TA topics you are interested in hearing more about from us in the future.

Presenter

Kristin Kidd

Learning Objectives

- Review the art and science of question formulation

- Explain strategies to craft questions that go beyond the surface to extract meaningful information

- Identify engagement opportunities to formulate equitable, trauma-informed questions to better identify root problems or causes

Slido

Which qualitative data collection methods have you done?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

The 5 Why's

They brought in a pigeon expert.

He determined that the birds were there to eat the spiders.

Slido

What stood out to you in that video?

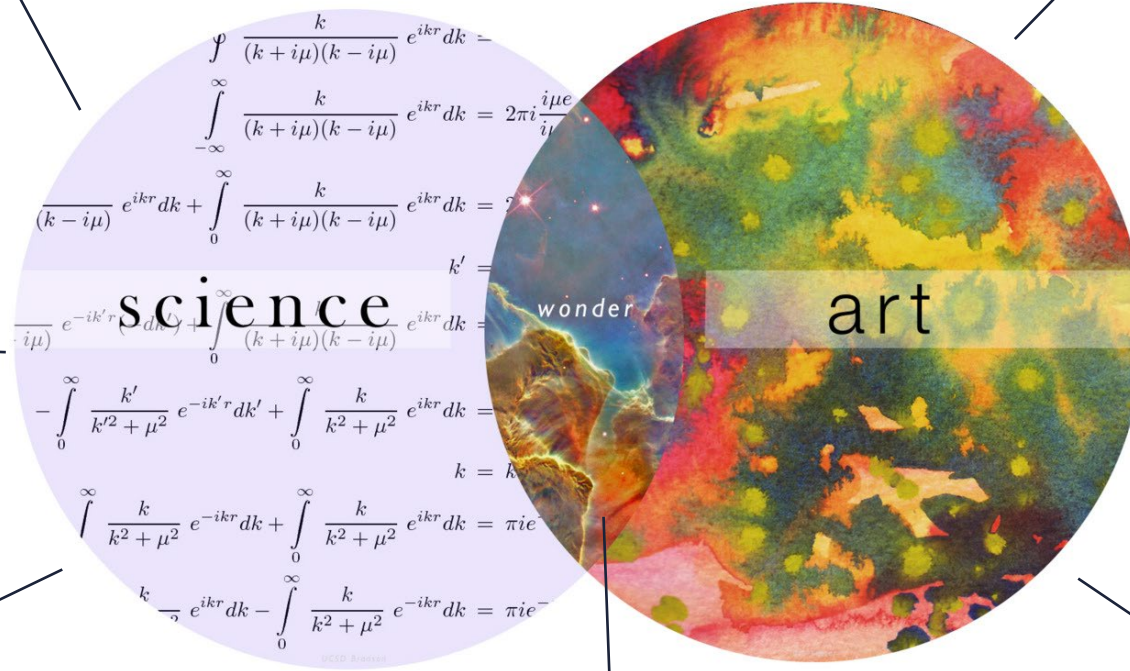ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

Survey Questions v. Interview Questions

- Yield **quantitative** data

- Capture data from a **large sample** (online, by mail, in person)

- Anonymous

- Doesn't allow follow-up
  - Hard to get detail or explanation

- Often uncompleted

- Provide qualitative data

- Limited sample size, gathering data from one person at a time (in person or virtual)

- Useful to have a skilled interviewer to build rapport

- Higher response rate

- Probing can uncover perspectives not considered or addressed

Science of qualitative approach to research

Art of improvisation (prompts or probes)

Interview questions based on the research question

Art of interpersonal communication

Use of open-ended & non-leading questions

science

wonder

art

Ethics & Equitable engagement

Art of building rapport

- Review the literature on your issue

- Examine biases and motivations (Parkeh et al., 2020)

- Brainstorm questions
  - Include diverse collaborators (Andrews, 2020)
  - Include community w/lived experience to inform data collection, ethical concerns (Hawn Nelson et al., 2020)

- Pare them down

- PILOT test

Central research/central focus question

How do students perceive the role of social media in substance use (drinking, vaping)

How are they connecting to social media/internet?

What content are they consuming on social media?

What role, if any, do they believe social media plays in youth use alcohol or vaping?

Semi-structured Interview guide

Interview Guide

Icebreaker Questions
- Tell me about yourself.
- How would others describe you?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?

Notes: (page 1 of 2)

General Interview Questions
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Tell me about any other jobs you've held. What were some of the duties/responsibilities?
- What did you like the most/least about your last job?
- What past work experience has best prepared you for this job?

Customer Service
- Tell me about a time you handled an angry customer.
- Tell me about a time you went above and beyond to help a customer.
- What does customer service mean to you? Why is it important?

Attention to Detail
- Tell me about a time when you caught an error that others had missed.
- Tell me about a time when you did not pay as close attention to something as you should have.
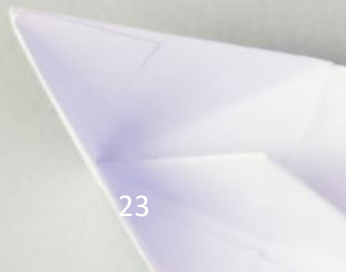
Introduction

- Why are you interviewing them?
- Who is involved in the process?
- Why are you asking? (establish your credibility)
- Why is their cooperation important to collect the info you need?
- What will happen with the collected information?
- How will this benefit the community/agency/town/etc.?

Tips to formulating your Q's

- Use clear, down-to-earth, language

- Ask questions you want to know the answers to

- Avoid yes - no questions

Tips to formulating your Q's

- Ask concrete questions that don't lead the response
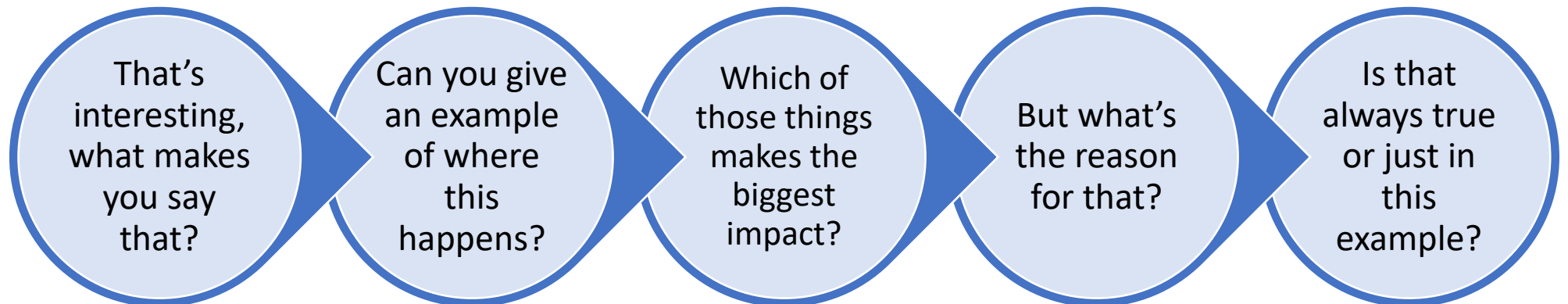
- Plan your follow-up or probing questions

Questions should…

- Follow a logical flow

- Have a few easy to answer warm-up questions (1-2)

- Key questions (5-10) provide the data you are looking to collect

- Save difficult questions for the end

- The last question provides some closure and leaves them feeling heard

Probing questions

- Some may be developed beforehand....some are impromptu

- Encourages them to reflect more deeply on what they are saying

- Helps them think more about the cause or root of a problem or issue you are investigating

- The more detail, the better!

That's interesting, what makes you say that? → Can you give an example of where this happens? → Which of those things makes the biggest impact? → But what's the reason for that? → Is that always true or just in this example?

To close the interview

"Is there anything else you would like to share that is important to you as a (student, parent, etc.) as it relates *to youth substance use in our community*?"

Use **culturally relevant** terminology in surveys and data collection tools (*Baker et al., 2016; Cerna et al., 2021*)

Involve people with lived experience **from the beginning** of the research process, including when formulating research questions (Skelton-Wilson, et al., 2021)

Equitable Considerations

https://www.urban.org/research/publication/community-engaged-surveys-research-design-analysis-and-dissemination

https://store.samhsa.gov/product/community-engagement-essential-component-effective-and-equitable-substance-use-prevention

Pilot the questions

Ultimate goal –
Collect a bounty
of *monumental*
information
from unique
perspectives

What are you taking away from this session?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

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Presenter

Josh Esrick

Learning Objectives

- Describe the importance of environmental scans and asset maps

- Explain the key elements of environmental scans and asset maps

- Recognize how to incorporate scanning and mapping findings into strategic planning

The Importance of Scans and Maps

What are Enviromental Scans?

- There actually isn't a single agreed upon definition!

- Can be a process for identifying:
  - Causes of health issues
  - Capacities for addressing issues
  - Barriers to addressing issues
  - Strategies for addressing issues
  - Other dimensions of an issue

- Basically, it's about learning more about an issue to better inform your strategic planning and decision making

Environmental Scans vs. Needs Assessment

Generally, environmental scans (at least in public health!) are **broader** than needs assessments

Focused on the **big picture**, rather than the details

Provide **context**, and identify **areas to investigate further**, rather than identifying specific needs

Rely on **secondary data** rather than primary data

Other Takes on Environmental Scans

CADCA — Narrowly defined as being a tool to learn specifics about the causes of substance misuse

CMS — Broadly defined as a process for comprehensively learning about the entire relevant environment around an issue

Businesses — Generally defined as processes for learning about events and how they might impact operations

How Should You Define Them?

- In whatever way makes sense to you and is relevant to your organization's needs

- Just be consistent in your definition and clear to others

- Think through what you want to accomplish and how it differs from a comprehensive needs assessment or epidemiological surveillance tools

Why Care About Environmental Scans?

- Data and evidence are vital prevention efforts, but resources to collect them are often limited

- Environmental scans (assuming the general public health definition) can be used to guide your efforts
  - Help focus your needs assessment
  - Guide efforts to develop partnerships
  - Determine what interventions to learn more about
  - Support implementation and evaluation efforts

Asset Maps

What is Asset Mapping?

- A strengths-based approach to community development focused on identifying and leveraging **existing resources** within a community

    - What a community has instead of what it needs

- "A systematic process of cataloging key services, benefits, and resources within the community … to identify community assets and strengths" (RHIhub)

- Commonly visualized through diagrams or GIS/spatial mapping

What Types of Information Can Asset Maps Provide?

Strengths	Resources	Knowledge
Physical structures	People (residents and power brokers)	Local cultures/traditions
Public services	Institutions	Local economy
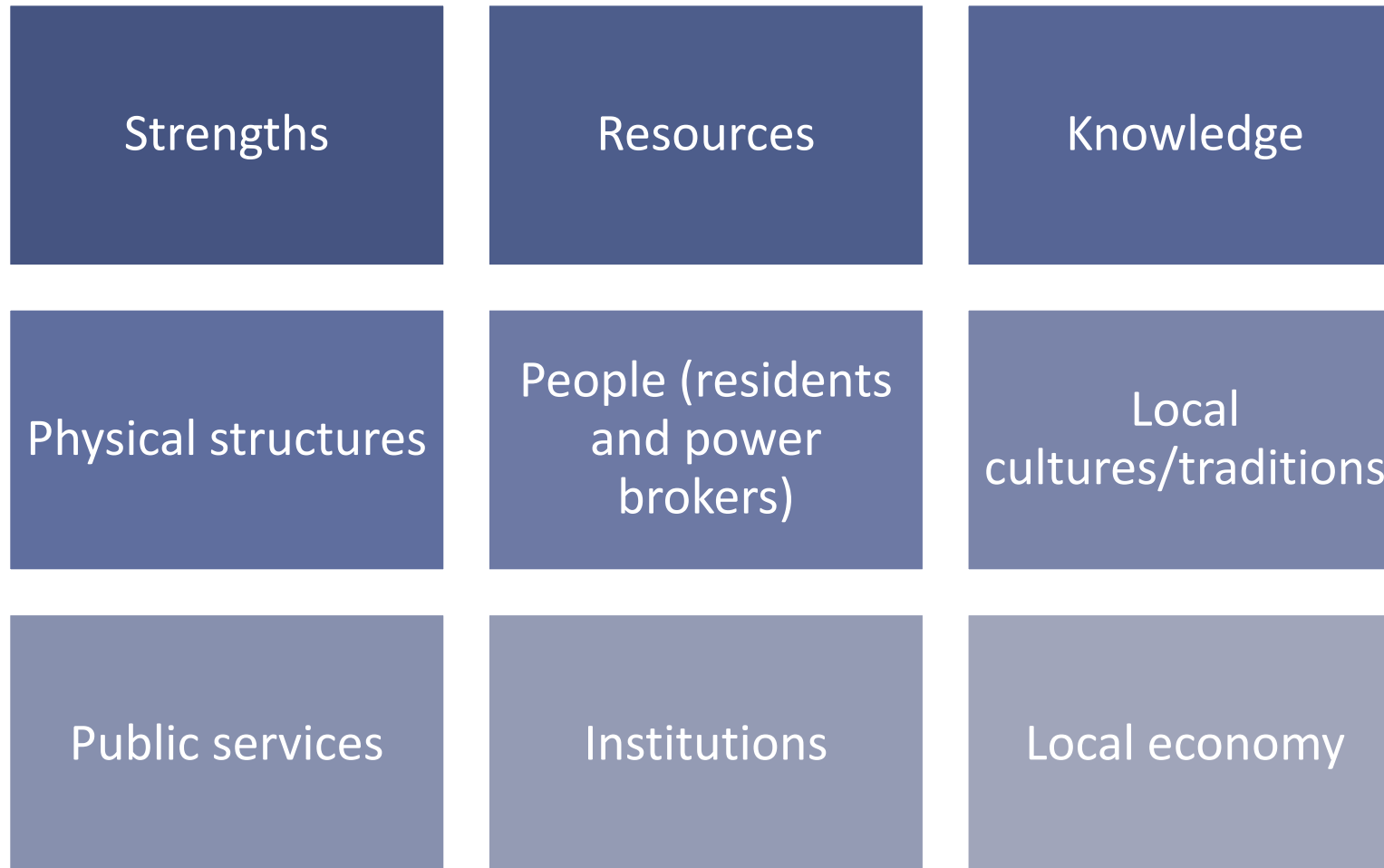
Why Care About Asset Maps?

- They are a key part of the strategic planning process

- They can help you gain a deeper understanding of the community
  - Resources, culture, relationships, power, structures

- They are helpful for obtaining "buy-in" from community members

- They can help identify key stakeholders/opportunities for partnership

- They can help you make important decisions about priorities for prevention program planning

When to Use Asset Maps?

Conducting local needs assessments

Building capacity for prevention

Allocating resources within a community

Planning new programs or interventions

Building on or expanding existing programs or interventions

Engaging and mobilizing residents to be active decision/change makers
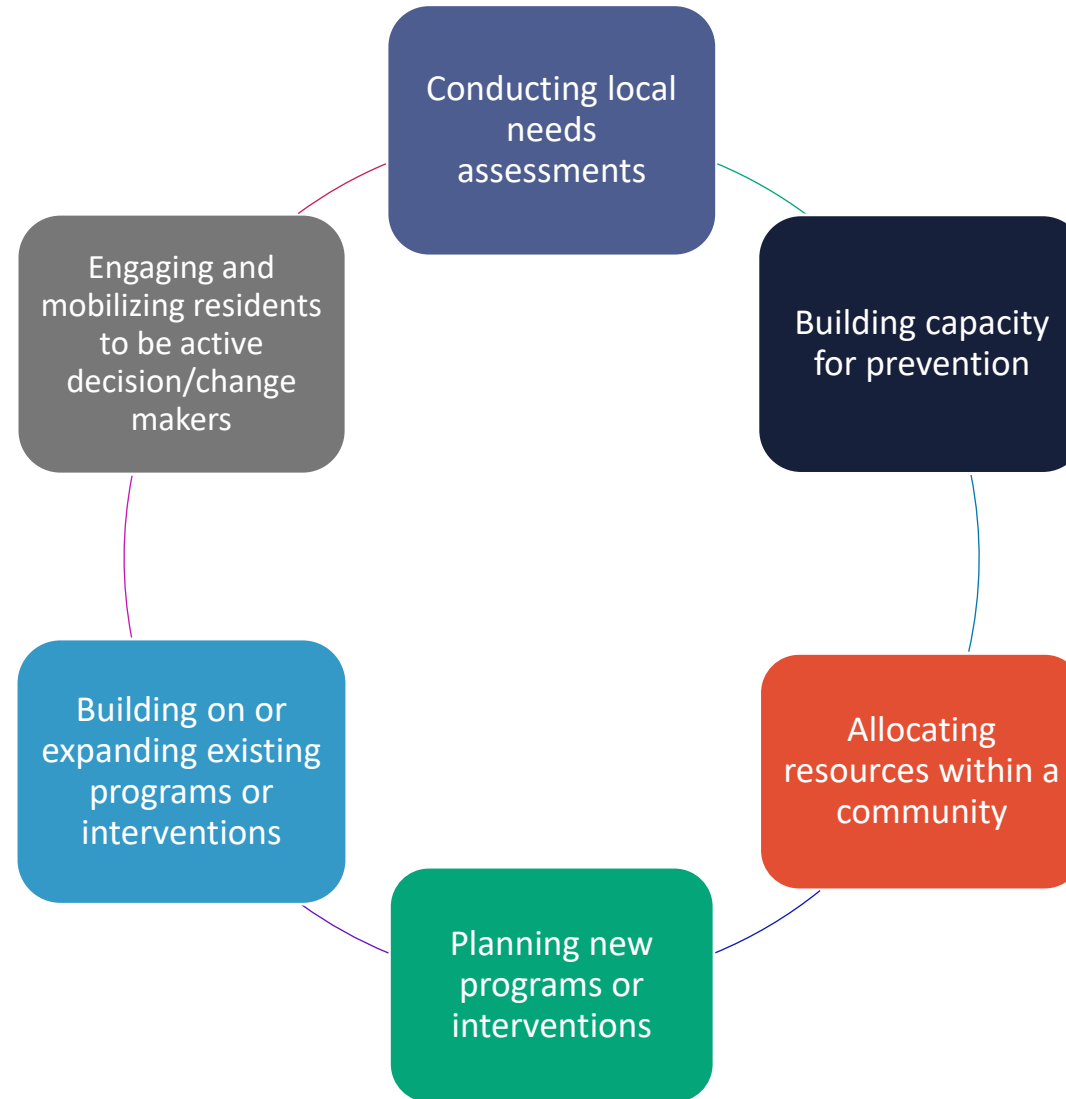
Key Elements of Environmental Scans and Asset Maps
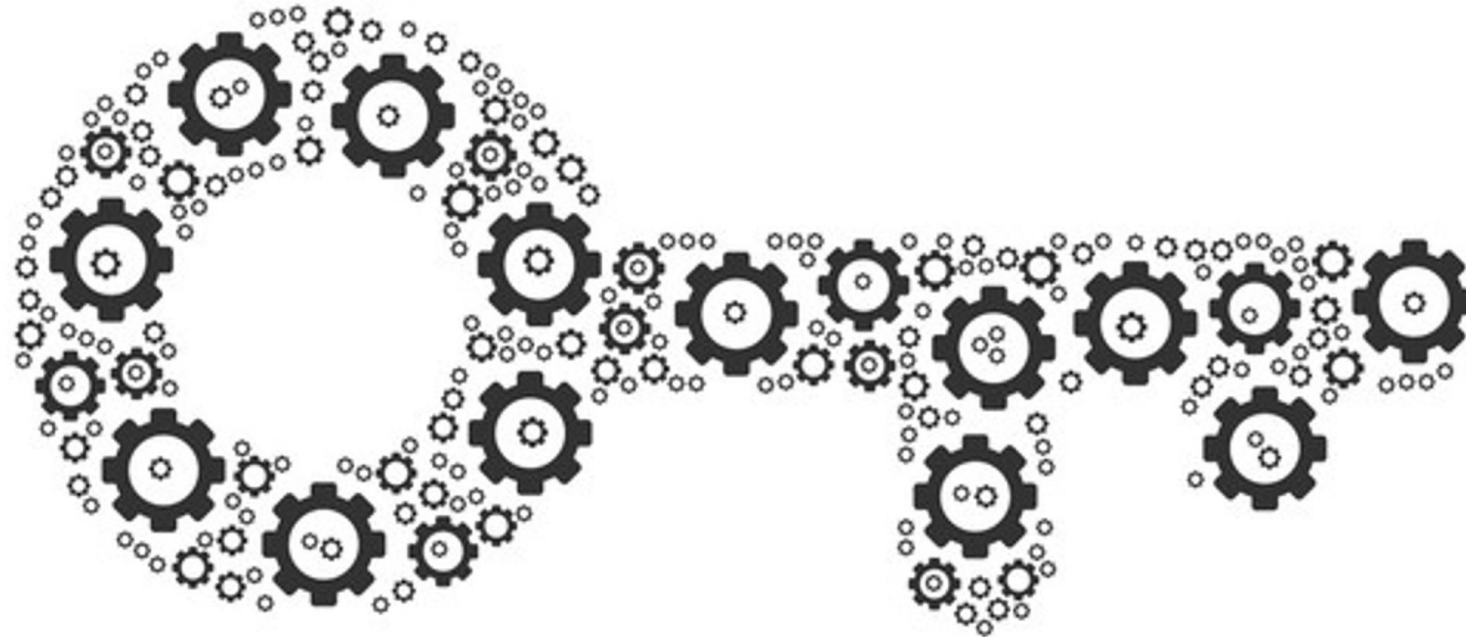
Environmental Scans Elements

- The exact elements will change depending on what definition we use; let's go through a few examples
  - PESTLE analysis
  - SWOT analysis
  - CADCA's "4 P's"
  - GIS (Geographic Information Systems) analysis

PESTLE

P — Political

E — Economic

S — Social

T — Technological

L — Legal

E — Environmental
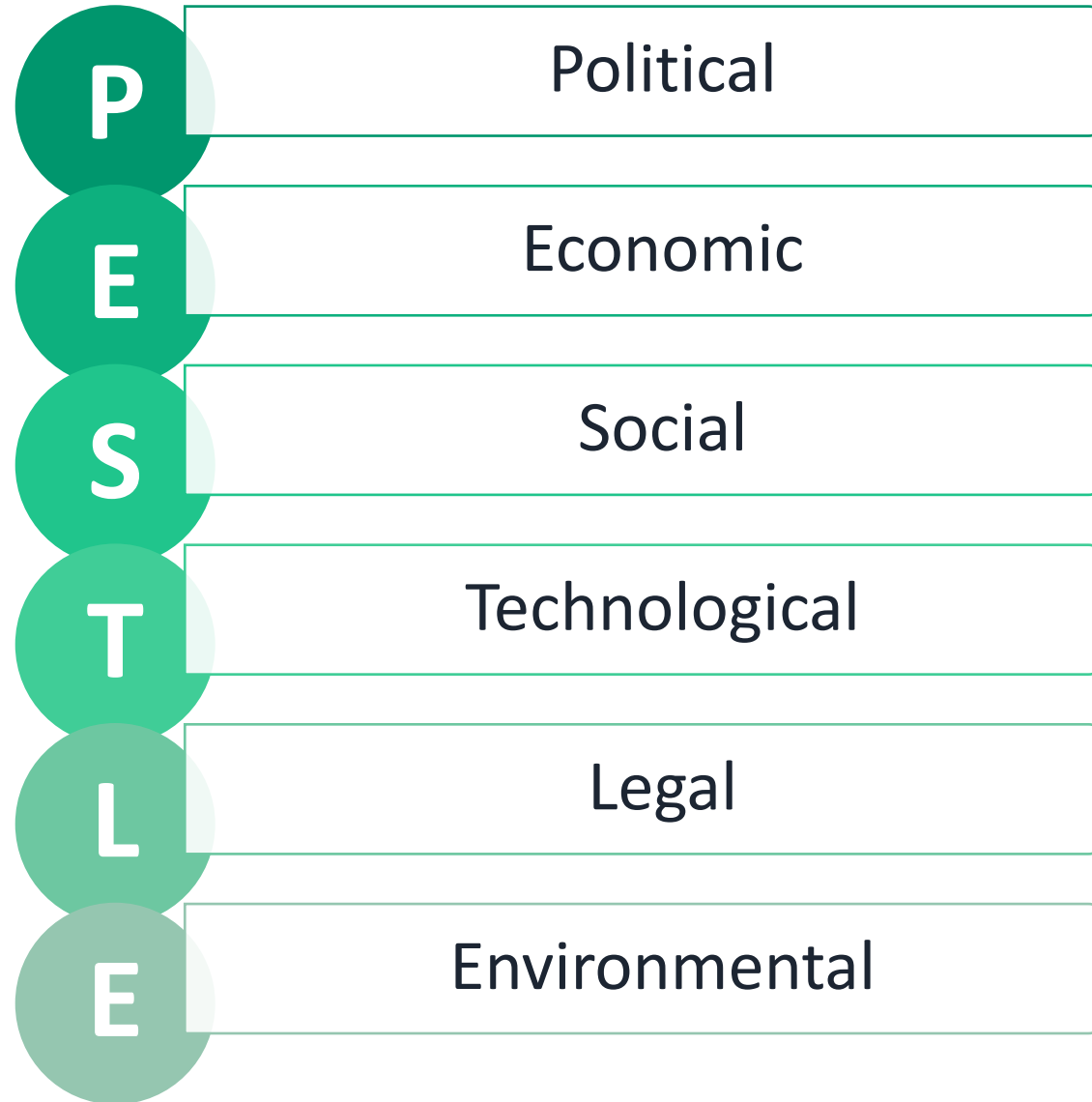
SWOT

The 4 P's

PRICE   PRODUCT   PROMOTION   PLACE

Geographic Information Systems

- Using digital mapping software to link data to geographic locations

- Allows for tracking the spread or incidence of substance use or overdoses

- Can also track risk & protective factors and population clusters

- Requires location information about your data

Asset Map Elements

Asset Mapping Process

Identify community partners

Define community boundaries

Determine which community assets to include

Determine data collection methods/tools

Collect community asset data
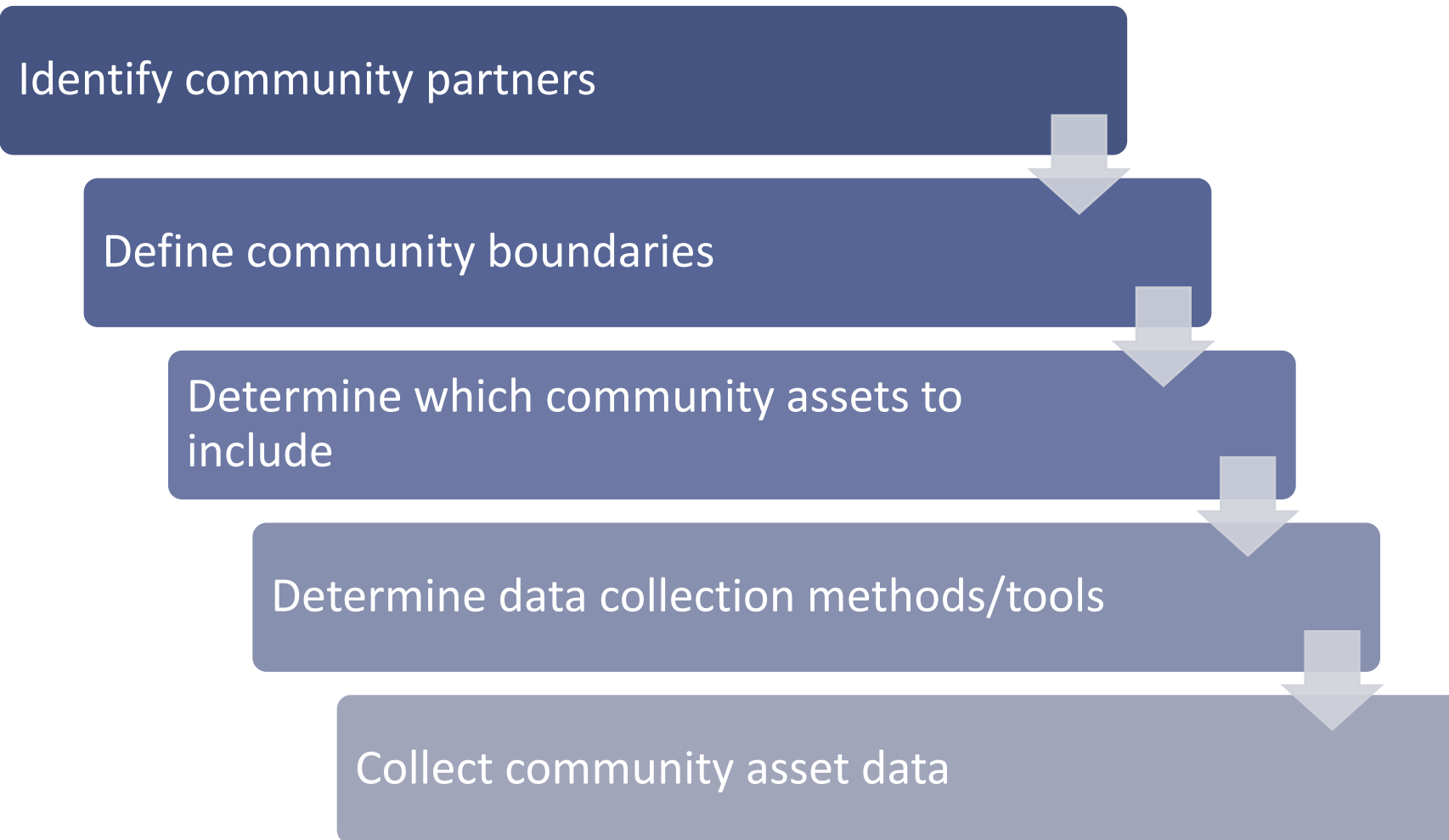
Collecting Data for Asset Mapping
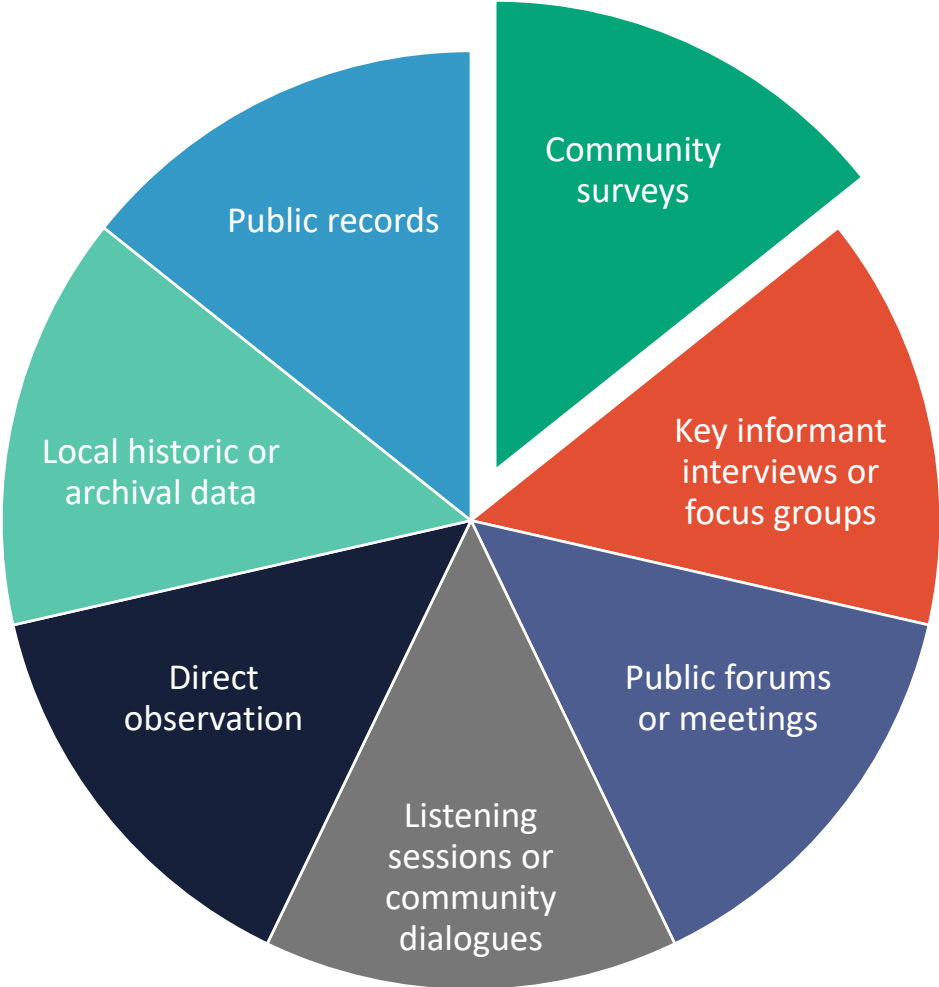
Asset Map Examples

Associations

Animal Care Groups
Anti Crime Groups
Block Clubs
Business Organizations
Charitable Groups
Civic Events Groups
Cultural Groups
Disability/Special Needs Groups
Education Groups
Elderly Groups
Environmental Groups
Family Support Groups
Health Advocacy and Fitness
Heritage Groups
Hobby and Collectors Groups
Men's Groups
Mentoring Groups
Mutual Support Groups
Neighborhood Groups
Political Organizations
Recreation Groups
Religious Groups
Service Clubs
Social Groups
Union Groups
Veteran's Groups
Women's Groups
Youth Groups

Physical Space

Gardens
Parks
Playgrounds
Parking lots
Bike Paths
Walking Paths
Forest / Forest Preserves
Picnic areas
Campsites
Fishing spots
Duck ponds
Zoos
Wildlife center
Natural Habitats - coastal,
marine, amphibian
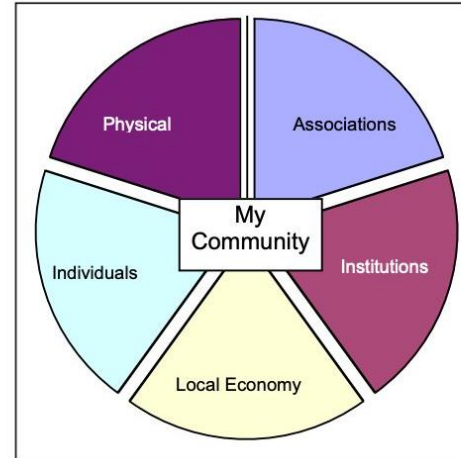Bird Watching Sites
Star Gazing Sites
Housing
Vacant Land & Buildings
Transit stops and facilities
Streets

Pie chart center: My Community — Physical, Associations, Institutions, Local Economy, Individuals

Institutions

Schools
Universities
Community Colleges
Police Departments
Hospitals
Libraries
Social Service Agencies
Non Profits
Museums
Fire Departments
Media
Foundations

Individuals

Gifts, Skills, Capacities, Knowledge
and Traits of:

Youth
Older Adults
Artists
Welfare Recipients
People with Disabilities
Students
Parents
Entrepreneurs
Activists
Veterans
Ex-offenders

Local Economy

For-Profit Businesses
Consumer Expenditures
Merchants
Chamber of Commerce
Business Associations
Banks
Credit Unions
Foundations
Institutional - purchasing power
and personnel
Barter and Exchange
CDCs
Corporations & branches

Asset Map Examples

Cultural Asset Map of

Asset Map Examples
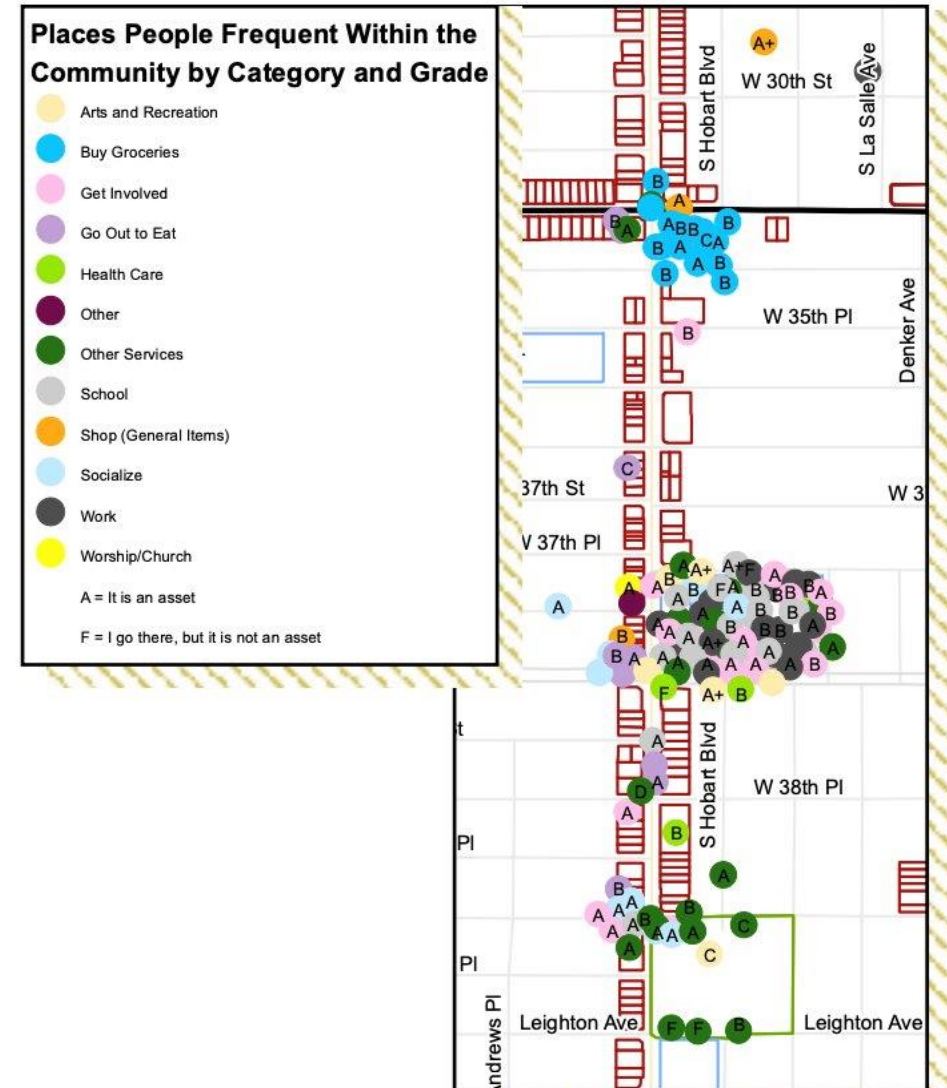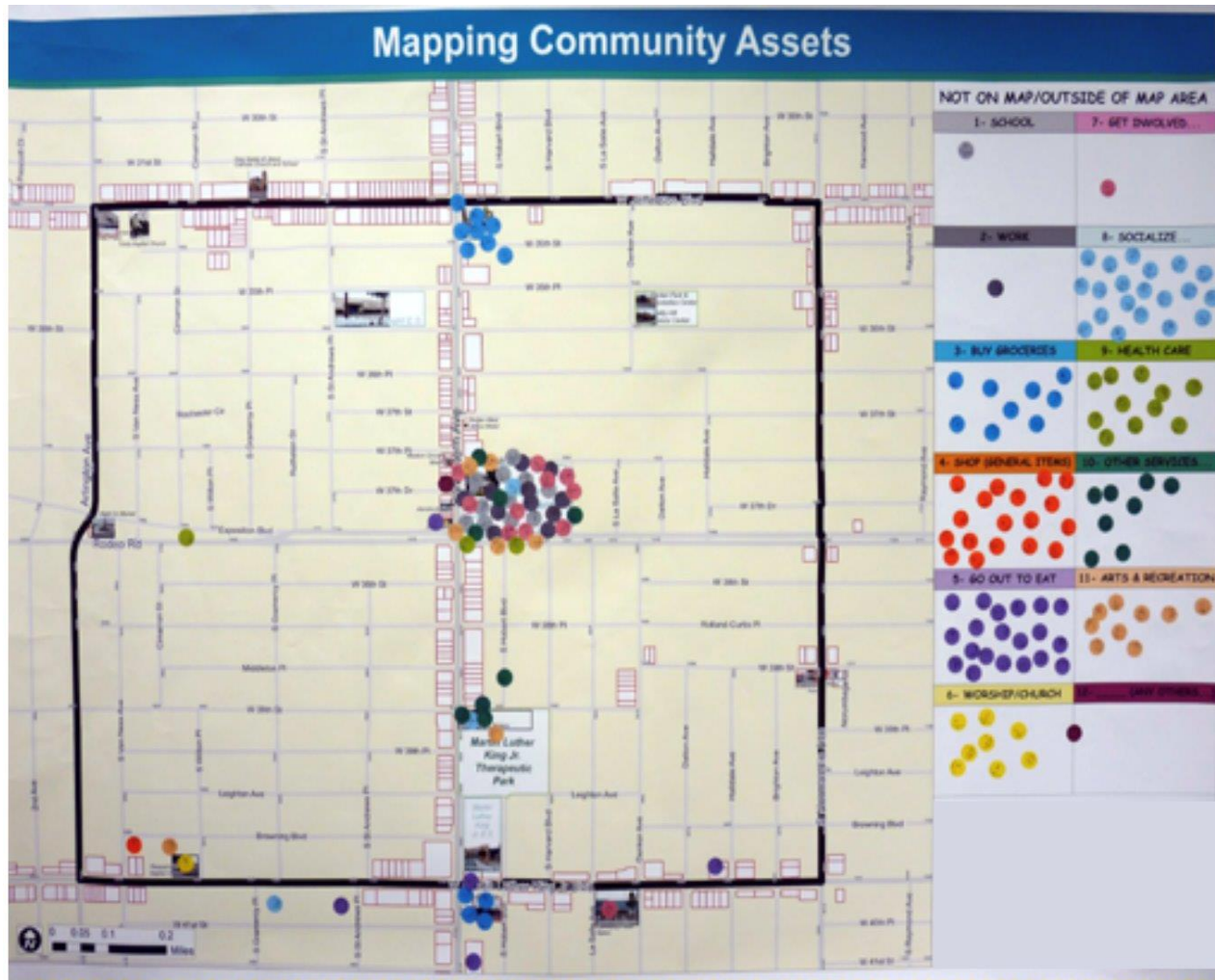
Incorporating Scans and Maps into Strategic Planning

Step 1: Assessment

Step 2: Capacity

Step 3: Planning

Step 3: Planning → **Prioritize risk and protective factors** *(criteria: importance, changeability)* → **Select interventions** *(criteria: effectiveness, conceptual fit, practical fit)* → **Develop a comprehensive plan that aligns with the logic model**

Step 4: Implementation

Step 5: Evaluation

Summary

- Environmental scans and asset maps are valuable tools for informing your strategic planning efforts

- There are multiple ways of conducting them; consider your specific needs and capacity when deciding what to do

- Seek out guides and resources to learn more, including materials originally developed for other sectors (e.g., private industry)

Presenter

Josh Esrick

Learning Objectives

- Describe the importance of using data to tell your community's substance use story

- Describe strategies for working with imperfect data to tell your story

- List steps in the process of analyzing and using data to tell the story of your current and future prevention efforts.

- Discuss ways to share your community story with key stakeholders to build prevention capacity

The Importance of Telling Your Story

Hi! I work with our town's prevention coalition, and…

The Importance of Telling Your Story

…using data

"Without data, you are just
another person with an opinion"
- W. Edward Deming

Using Data to Tell the Story Well

- Data is the foundation of strategic planning. It tells us:
  - What problems are occurring in our communities?
  - How often, where, among whom, and why?

- We have to be able to **personalize** our data – that is, connect the numbers to the real people they describe

It All Starts With Needs Assessment

Nature and extent of substance use problems and related behaviors

Risk and protective factors that influence these problems and behaviors

Existing resources and readiness of community to address these problems

It All Starts With Needs Assessment

Nature and extent of substance use problems and related behaviors

Risk and protective factors that influence these problems and behaviors

Existing resources and readiness of community to address these problems

Community assessment

Capacity assessment

Your Assessment Will Tell You…

The substance misuse issues in your community and who is being affected

The availability of resources in the community to address these issues and its readiness to engage

Assessment and Storytelling

Once you've found and reviewed your data…

Consider who you want to share it with and why.

Then, craft a compelling narrative so that people listen.

Telling Your Story with Imperfect Data

What Do We Mean by "Imperfect"?

- Data may be flawed or have errors

- Data may be missing or incomplete

- The sample is not representative of the population

- Data is collected in ways that don't meet your needs

- It is time consuming or expensive to compile without additional resources

- The sample may include low response rates

Addressing Data Challenges

- Reframe assessment questions

- Increase surveillance efforts

- Collect data in multiple ways (e.g., observational, qualitative, quantitative)

- Anticipate partnerships you will need to obtain data and prioritize relationship development

- Build toward culturally appropriate data practices

When to Use the Data You've Got

- Sufficient for current need

- Data quality is good (enough)

- Answers priority questions

- Able to disaggregate to identify priority populations

Analyzing and Using Data

What is Data Analysis?

- Process of reviewing data to discover useful information that can support your story

- Informs conclusions and supports decision-making

- Using data underpins the concept of delivering evidence-based prevention

- Guides our efforts throughout the SPF process

What Data to Look For?

- Prevalence data
  - What substance misuse problems are happening in the community?
  - Where in the community are they happening?

- Risk and protective factor data
  - Why is this happening in the community?

- Capacity data
  - How capable are we of helping the community?
  - Who can we work with to help the community?

Questions for Assessing Prevalence

- What substance use trends are occurring?

- How often are use, consequences, and related behaviors occurring?

- Where are use, consequences, and related behaviors occurring?

- Who is experiencing this use, consequences, and related behaviors?

  - And how does prevalence compare across populations?

Questions for Assessing Factors

- Are certain groups or populations disproportionately likely to engage in substance use?

- If so, are there commonalities within these groups?
  - e.g., lower perception of harm, less parental support, reduced access to health care services, lack of economic opportunity

- What does the research say about our population of focus?
  - Can we use that as a starting point?

Questions for Assessing Capacity

- How many resources do we have?
  - e.g., funding levels, trained staff, volunteers, equipment, materials
- How many resources can we obtain?
  - e.g., Are there new funding opportunities?
- Who is willing to work with us? What are their goals?
- What does the community at large believe about the issue?

Data Prioritization

- Once you have your data, you need to figure out what it means.

  - What are the "biggest" problems facing the community--and how are these defined (e.g., impacts largest number of people, consequences most severe)?

  - How do those problems compare to similar communities or to our state?

- Need a process to determine these answers

Creating Your Community Story

As Easy as 1, 2, 3?

Identify the goal → **Identify stakeholders** → **Create an effective story**

1. Identify Your Goal

- Be better understood

- Activate the community's "network of energy"

- Build support among key stakeholders

- Develop partners to support efforts

- Strengthen prevention infrastructure

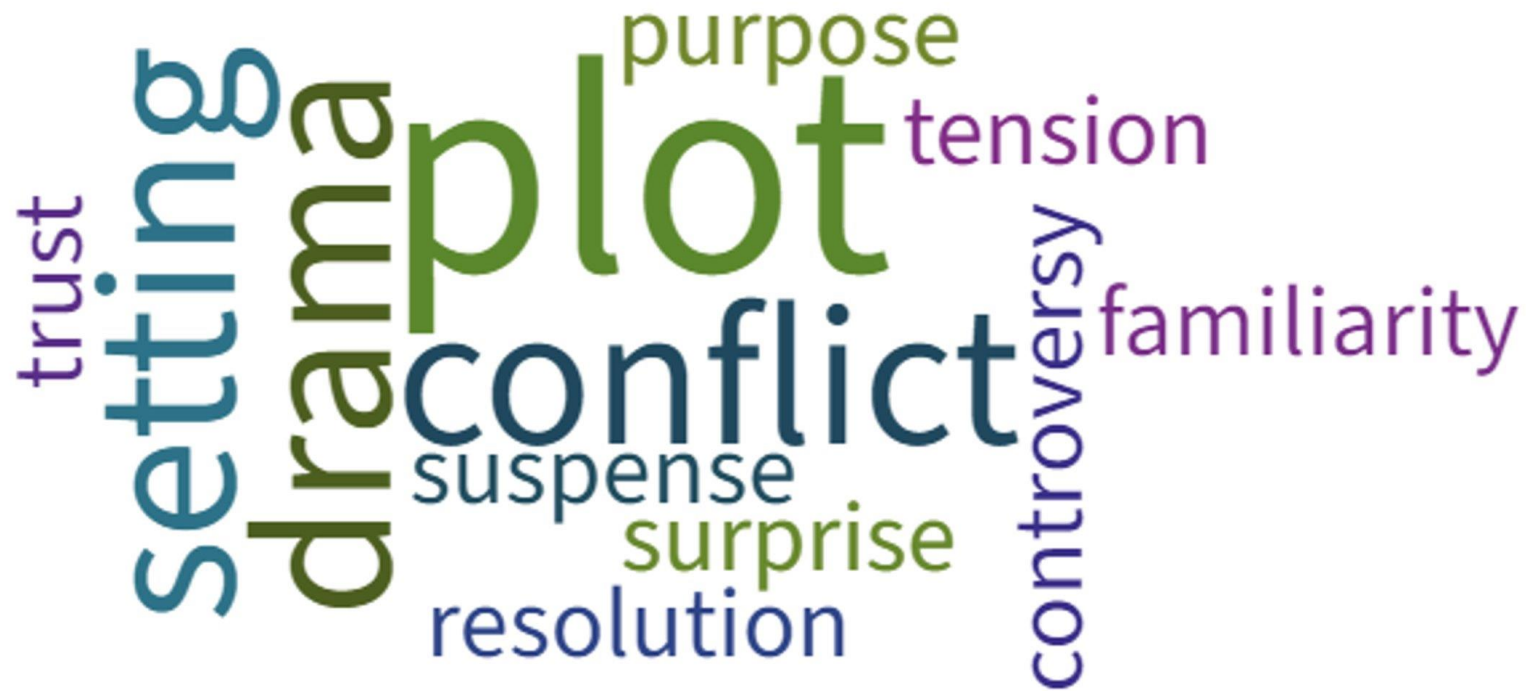# 2. Identify Your Audience

3. Create a Compelling Story

Great stories…

- Are complete and comprehensive
- Include a clear, central message and structure
- Are relevant and relatable
- Are easy to follow

Elements of an Effective Story

Telling a Prevention Story

- **Setting:** What is special about your community? What makes it different from the town next door?

- **Plot:** What is happening in your community? What has changed over time?

- **Characters:** Who is being directly or indirectly affected by substance misuse issues?

- **Relatability:** Why should your audience care?

- **Conflict:** What needs to be addressed?

- **Resolution:** What are your next steps to address the conflict (and how can they be involved)?

Before Incorporating Data into Your Story...

Consider Your Goal

- How does data help you achieve it?
- How should the audience use the data provided?

Consider Your Audience

- What is their data literacy?

Using Data to Tell Your Story

- **Setting:** Demographic, environmental scans

- **Plot:** Prevalence (rates of use, problem behaviors, harmful related behaviors), time trends, comparison

- **Characters:** Populations impacted, SDOH, human and organizational resources, community readiness

- **Relatability:** Prevalence, time trends, SDOH

- **Conflict:** Risk/protective factors

- **Resolution:** Data gaps, future data needs

What Kind of Story Will You Tell

Which kind of story do you want to tell?

An **upstream** story provides evidence of early *success* in influencing change, building new partnerships, or reaching new audiences.

A **midstream** story conveys *overall progress of strategies* in both numerical and anecdotal form, using participants' own words.

A **downstream** story describes *how things changed* because of the work and/or relationships created during implementation.

Data Tips

- Data needs context

- Provide a denominator

- Demonstrate change over time (when possible)

- Connect to a logic model

- Include illustrative quotes

212 opioid overdose ER visits last year

Out of 5,313 total ER visits last year (or, 4% of all ER visits)

Up 2% since 2021

Our coalition has provided training to ER staff about opioid misuse prevention and stigma

"At the training, we did a role play and practiced talking to a patient about tapering an existing opioid prescription. It gave me confidence to have the conversation with my patients."

Visualization Tips

- Use charts and graphs that easily convey your data
- Use predictable formats and layouts
- Use simple, contrasting color cues
- Add contextual clues through shapes and designs
- Consider the size of various elements
- Be careful and intentional about text

Summary

- Storytelling is an important tool in our prevention toolbox

- Stories that include community assessment data transcend opinion and can unite us around facts.

- Data need interpretation; asking the right questions about your data will help you determine the kind of story to tell

- The elements of a compelling story are known; applying them to how you talk about your work will pique your audience's interest (which, in turn, may help you achieve your goals).

Contact us!

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💻 [Access the SPTAC Website](#)

❓ [Click here to request a TA from our region](#)!

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Funding for this presentation was made possible by SAMHSA grant no. 1H79SP081018. The views expressed by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of HHS; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

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