

Cultural Considerations for Gathering Information

The table below describes a variety of information-gathering methods and how they might be considered in order to ensure respect for cultural protocols and situations.

Gathering Information Procedure	Cultural Considerations
<p>Self-administered questionnaires that respondents complete</p> <p>Useful to gauge satisfaction with a program activity or event, or to determine what people need or want from a program.</p>	<p>This is an efficient way to gather information, but it has the following limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The terms and language should be at a level appropriate to the literacy level of respondents. • In some situations, terms may need to be translated. • Best used when participants have only a few responses to choose from (i.e. a close-ended question survey), but elders and others within a community may not like having to choose from forced answers. • Does not allow for relationship-building. Should be used only when respondents trust and understand the program, and the need for information. • Survey items should be clearly stated so there is no misunderstanding by those completing the questionnaire.
<p>Interviewer-administered questionnaires or open-ended questions by telephone</p> <p>Useful when time and distance makes in-person visits impossible.</p>	<p>This is another efficient way to collect information, but it, too, has its own set of limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not allow for relationship-building. Should be used only when respondents trust and understand the program, the caller, and the need for information. • Some populations may have limited access to telephones.
<p>Questionnaires and open-ended interviews in person</p> <p>Useful way to gather good information.</p>	<p>Visiting and talking about the program is an excellent way to gather information. Cultural considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan on spending time developing relationships before getting to the purpose of the interview. • Avoid direct questions if possible. Instead, find ways to stimulate a conversation about the subject of the interview. • Ensure that confidentiality is maintained. • Ensure information has been correctly interpreted; check back with respondents to ensure their quotes are accurate and any information used within a report is correct. • Offer a gift of appreciation.
<p>Focus groups</p> <p>Good for getting multiple viewpoints about the program. More efficient than individual interviews.</p>	<p>Focus groups are useful, especially when people feel comfortable enough with each other and the subject to discuss their views and experiences. The cultural considerations for focus groups are the same as those for open-ended interviews. The Talking Circle methodology can be adapted for use in focus groups.</p>
<p>Tests and measurement instruments of performance or attitudes and behavior</p> <p>Important if the evaluation requires a measurement of learning or changes in attitudes or behaviors. These types of measurement tools need to be valid and reliable.</p>	<p>Often needed to show changes in some element of the program; should be used in ways that, regardless of results, ensure all those measured are treated with respect and encouraged to realize their unique gifts. Cultural considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important that the measure is valid and actually measures the concepts or content central to the program. This applies to all tests or measurement instruments. Since Indian programs are place-based and community specific, it may be necessary to create measures or adapt those produced by publishers or other sources. • The measurement tool needs to be reliable—i.e., there is a consistency in responses if the test or tool is repeated again after the first administration. There are statistical measures for reliability which can be used, or you can pilot a measure using the test-retest process with a small sample of people to check for consistent responses. • When possible, authentic assessment or multiple ways of measuring also should be used. These include tests, written work, demonstrations, and artistic expressions (drawings, photographs).
<p>Observations</p> <p>A good method to describe what is happening in a classroom or at an event. It can also be used to assess demonstrations of participant accomplishments.</p>	<p>Observers can be recruited from the community to expand participation in the evaluation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants, such as students, can demonstrate their accomplishments to observers such as elders or tribal leaders. • Consider creating observation rubrics (sets of measurements) that elders or others can use to assess program events or student demonstrations. • Have observers practice using rubrics to ensure they are in agreement about observations.