

## Data Collection Methods

*This job aid presents various data collection methods you may consider implementing to measure the performance of your program. **Before considering the options below, be sure to check the National Service Knowledge Network to determine if there is a required data collection instrument associated with your performance measure.***

**Surveys** involve having program participants complete a written or online form containing a set of questions. As you develop a survey, reflect on your audience and what they may need. For example, consider what instructions they may need to complete the survey and how they will access the survey (online, hardcopy, etc.).

**Interviews** involve posing questions to respondents and recording their answers. Interviews can be face-to-face or via telephone. Interviews provide more in-depth information on respondent experiences but do not provide as much quantitative information. Interviews may be challenging to schedule.

**Observation** involves asking a reasonably impartial observer to record behavior or conditions using a checklist or similar form.

**Standardized tests** are used to assess students' knowledge of academic subjects, such as reading or math. Standardized tests have been validated nationally.

**Tracking sheets** may be used to document service delivery and are primarily used to track outputs. This may be most appropriate if you selected the volunteer audience to do your data collection as they can track and record service delivery on your behalf.

**Focus groups** benefit from multiple participants providing their insight and feedback. Facilitators may lead focus groups through an in-depth discussion of a topic or issue. Focus group participants can capitalize on each other's perspectives on data collection. However, like interviews they can be difficult to schedule and often do not yield quantitative information.

**Diaries or journals** may be used to record information. This can be a more challenging data collection method to implement and is contingent upon the willingness of your audience to regularly record information.

**Secondary data**, gathered by other agencies, may also be used to assess program performance.