



# EVERYONE CAN DO RESEARCH

A Plain Language Guide  
on How to Do Research  
MAY 2013



**Access Alliance**  
Multicultural Health and Community Services



# Everyone can do Research

A Plain Language Guide on How to do Research

Produced by the Community-Based Research Department at:



This publication is an abridged and modified version of *Community-Based Research Toolkit: Resources and Tools for Doing Research with Community for Social Change*, October 2011, developed by the Community-Based Research Team at Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services.

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In line with CBR principles, we believe the tools and resources in this toolkit are common property. You do not need to get permission from us to use them. Of course, we would love to hear from you about your experience and relevance of these tools for your work.

## About this Toolkit and How to Use it

This plain language toolkit on how to do research was developed by Access Alliance and is intended for use by everyone, including non-academics and people from marginalized backgrounds. The key goal of the toolkit is to make research more accessible and inclusive by showing how everyone, including marginalized people, can do research by following key steps. This toolkit is grounded on Community-based Research (CBR) principles and can be a valuable tool to enable marginalized community members who have never done research to learn about research and start doing research. The information and tools in this toolkit were developed by Access Alliance based on almost a decade of CBR work.

This toolkit will help you understand what research is and how it is same or different from the inquiry we do in our daily lives. The information in the toolkit will introduce you the different phases and components of research in simple everyday language in a way that even people with low education can relate to. The toolkit will take you step-by-step through all of the key phases of research from how to develop your research topic/question, how to design your research method (i.e, how to answer your research question), how to do research in an ethical and non-exploitative way, how to collect data, how to analyze and make sense of your data, and how to share your research results to make a positive change. It provides easy to follow instructions on how to do each phase, with tools and tips along the way. The final chapter includes information on how to plan your project (budget, timelines, who is going to do what, etc.) and how to work together as a team. At the end of the toolkit you will find **worksheets** that you and your team can use to design and conduct your research (for example, developing key messages, project planning framework). You will also find a list of recommended further readings and resources.

Follow these icons to help you navigate the toolkit:



Whenever you see this 'checklist clipboard' icon, it contains a checklist of things to remember or steps to follow.



Whenever you see this 'tools' icon, it contains step-by-step instructions on how to do something.



Whenever you see this 'gears' icon, it contains information about how things work or background information.



Whenever you see a 'light bulb' it contains a useful quote or saying.

Don't worry if you don't understand certain things or words right away. The more you read the clearer things will become. Have fun using this toolkit and **good luck** on your research project.





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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Research



## What is Research?



*“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is to not stop questioning.”*

*-Albert Einstein*

In simple terms, research is a **systematic and organized way** of answering questions, solving puzzles, and understanding more about the world around you. It is a tool for creating answers, knowledge and solutions to make this world a better place. Research is asking good questions and identifying problems and then playing an active role in finding the answers and solutions. Being a researcher means helping to build knowledge. When you use research to make the world a better place, it is called **action research**. When you do research in collaboration with your peers and community around you, particularly people whose voices are not always heard (e.g., marginalized people), then it is called **Community-Based Research or Participatory Research**. This means that it is not just scientists and professors that are doing research.

**Community-based research recognizes that everyone can be researchers and that people are experts about issues that affect them.**

Research is an  
OrganizEd and  
Systematic way to  
gEt  
Answers to questions  
foR  
soCial  
cHange

(modified from Brigham Young  
University department of linguistics)

## Can Everyone do Good Quality Research?

### Yes, definitely!

There are many examples of how all sorts of people have done successful research projects.

For example, in a project named **Refugee Youth Health Project** carried out by Access Alliance, 14 youth who came to Canada as refugees took a lead in designing and conducting a very successful 3 year long research project about systemic barriers and discrimination that refugee youth face in pursuing their educational goals in Canada. They conducted 10 focus groups, 13 interviews and implemented a film-based research method called 'digital storytelling' (with 8 other refugee youth) to collect data about this issue. They presented their research findings in 6 conferences, wrote several reports, organized a policy roundtable with government officials, and co-wrote an academic journal paper. For more information see:

[www.accessalliance.ca/research/activities/refugeeyouthhealth](http://www.accessalliance.ca/research/activities/refugeeyouthhealth)

Take another Access Alliance research project called **Income Security, Race and Health** project. In this project, over 30 low-income people from racialized backgrounds ('visible minority' background) were involved in leadership capacity in doing research and producing new knowledge about the structural barriers that are preventing racialized families from getting good jobs.

In the **Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE)** project, over a hundred students from 8 public high schools conducted participatory action research about why the graduation rate was only 50%. The results and recommendations from this study have already helped to improve graduation rates in many of the schools.

Many students in schools in the United Kingdom have been doing research as part of the Harris Student Commission:

[www.nesta.org.uk/areas\\_of\\_work/public\\_services\\_lab/past\\_projects\\_public\\_services\\_lab/harris\\_student\\_commission](http://www.nesta.org.uk/areas_of_work/public_services_lab/past_projects_public_services_lab/harris_student_commission)

One of those students had this to say about doing research:



*"My enthusiasm and motivation came from knowing that the research that we were carrying out was going to make a difference – to benefit younger students. I like to think that we were the voice of all the students who took part in our investigation." -Student researcher*

A secondary school teacher who was involved in the Student Learning Commission project in the UK shared this:



*"The students' input was refreshing, inspiring and compelling...I left with a very different understanding of 'student voice' and an excitement about the part students can play in their own learning experiences and their contribution to the broader life of the school." -Secondary School Teacher*

## You are the expert of your own experiences.

People are experts of their own lives and about the issues and challenges they face. So it makes logical sense that people who are affected by the topic of the research project be involved as researchers (and not just as numbers in someone else's research). This leads to better quality research results because people affected by the research topic/issue can provide intimate and authentic interpretation of the issues being examined. This is why it is a good idea for you to do research on issues that affect you and your community. You are already an expert about the issues that you and your community face. You can take a leadership role in the research project by helping team members understand what specific questions to ask, who to talk to in the community, how to reach them (particularly those whose voices have not been heard), and how to make sense of the data collected.



And just because professors and scientists have been doing research for a long time does not mean they are necessarily better researchers. Nor does it mean that their research is always useful in finding real solutions regarding the issues you and your community face. Most researchers are from dominant background (mostly White males). Women, racialized people, First Nations community, and other marginalized groups have shown how researchers from dominant background continue to ignore the issues faced by marginalized groups or produce inaccurate information. They have also questioned how conventional researchers exploit, lie and coerce marginalized people into participating in their research. Worse, they rarely give anything back to the community (not even a copy of their research report).

As Albert Einstein wisely said:



*"The problems that exist in the world today cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them." -Albert Einstein*

We need to enable more people to become researchers, to become **agents of change**, to think outside the box, and become involved in finding real answers and solutions to real life questions or problems.

Take for example the issue of cyber bullying faced by students and youth. Many adults, scientists and experts may not have used social media like Facebook or Twitter and therefore have no idea what cyber bullying is or all the different ways that it happens and affects youth. They may not even know what questions they should be asking youth about cyber bullying. They may miss the real issues. Youth who use social media all the time, on the other hand, may have very intimate knowledge about cyber bullying. If given the opportunity, they could design and implement a more responsive research project that captures good quality and useful information about cyber bullying.



*"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"*



**So yes, people like you should be doing research about issues that affect you because you already hold expert knowledge, and thus can help to document this knowledge and become agents for real positive change.**

Paulo Freire, a well known social activist from Brazil, helped to develop what is referred to as **'popular education' principles and tools**. These principles/tools encourage everyone to involve marginalized people in research, education and policy making so that they can take leadership role in reversing the roots causes of their marginalization. In Paulo Freire's bold words:



*"Any situation in which some [people] prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence;... to alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into objects."*

Another reason why everyone should be doing research is because it is a really fun and empowering way to learn. In some ways, it is a different way of learning. Rather than just learning from the textbook and from research that academics have done, you can do your own research to learn about things that are important to you. In the process, you might even be able to really get to the bottom of things in a way that others have not done. And by doing research collaboratively with other peers who you trust, you may be able to collect more information, be able to make sense of the information, and learn from each other along the way. And doing research in a team makes it even more fun. This 'peer engaged' collaborative model has been shown to be the best way to do good research.



## How do I do Research?



*"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose."* -Zora Neale Hurston

### **Research is not a 'rocket science' but a 'process science'.**

It is basically a thoughtfully organized step-by-step process (as opposed to random and disorganized process) of answering questions that you have. Doing good research requires careful planning of every step to help you answer your question. You may have done school or work projects where you have asked people for information in a more random and informal way. **Research** is different in that you have to plan ahead of time all the steps you are going use to find answers including deciding about:



- ✓ what you want to find out?
- ✓ why you want to find this out?
- ✓ who specifically you are going to ask to get your answers/information?
- ✓ how you are going to reach them and get them to give you those answers/information?
- ✓ how you are going to make sense of the information you collect?
- ✓ how you are going to share that information to other people to meet your goal?

Planning these specific steps is called designing your **‘research methods’**. As a researcher, you need to design your research method before you can start your research. Also, you need to keep detailed notes about what happened in each step of your research method. Were you able to do what you said you would do? If not, what prevented you from doing it? Don’t worry if things don’t go as you planned. It is very common to have roadblocks along the way in research. The key thing is then you have to plan what to do next and keep good notes about any changes. And most importantly, you have to think about how these changes you made will affect the kinds of answers/information you get.

**Example:**

**Original Research Protocol:**

- interview 20 people (10 females, 10 males)
- mix of participants between 12-18 years old

**What you ended up doing: Scenario #1:**

- interviewed 10 males and 2 females

*Solution:*

Make note in final report/presentation about this change in data collection, discuss how these changes affected your research outcomes.

Explain why it was difficult to get more females to talk to e.g. Due to time, topic was too sensitive to girls experiences at school, females were more reluctant to talk to you, all of the interviewers were males etc.

**What you ended up doing: Scenario #2:**

- interviewed 10 females and 10 males
- all over the age of 16

*Solution:*

Make note in final report/presentation that research results did not capture younger participants and discuss reasons why and implications.

So do you see why research is called a ‘process science?’ It is because you have to carefully plan each step in the research process to help you answer your question. Every step makes a difference in what kinds of answers you will get. Suppose you are doing your research about impacts of bullying in school. Participants may give very different answers about impacts of being bullied depending on whether a teacher is asking them versus when another student is asking them. Similarly, you may get very different answers depending on whether a student from an older grade/age is asking versus student from the same grade/age. Also, you will likely get different answers depending on whether you are asking students out in the open hallway or in a closed private room or through an anonymous online survey. Thus, as researchers, you need to think about how every step will impact the type of information you get, and then try to make sense of that information based on those steps you took.



Okay, so let us learn some more research words:

When you read published reports about what is already known about the issue/topic, this process is called conducting a **'literature review.'** A literature review can ensure that you are not doing research that someone else has already done or on a topic that has been over-researched. It can also help your team narrow down the focus of your research topic and/or help your team understand where your research topic fits within what is already known or not known.

The information/answers you collect are called **'research data'** or just **'data'**. The process of getting 'research data' or the answers to your question is called **'data collection'**. The tools that you use to collect research data are called **'research instruments'** (eg. survey, interview guide, focus group guide).

The specific number and composition of people you plan to talk to in order to get the answers for your research question is referred to as the **'research study sample'** (eg. 120 people between the ages of 18-35 who are single parents) and the people who participate are called **'research participants'** or **'study participants'**.

Once you have finished collecting your research data as planned, you have to carefully review all the data together to see what it says overall (ie. the 'big picture'), what patterns and trends you see, as well as any unique cases. This process is called **'data analysis.'** The overall patterns, unique cases, and answers that you get from data analysis are called **'research findings'** or **'research results.'** A report written on this is called a **'research report.'**

One other crucial thing to keep in mind: as a researcher, you need to do your research in an ethical way. The government of Canada has put in place several **'research ethics'** protocols that they want all researchers to follow. It is called that *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. You can learn about these protocols from this website: <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/> . The government has also created a hands-on easy to follow tutorial on research ethics: <http://tcps2core.ca/welcome> . We strongly recommend that you take this tutorial; after you complete the tutorial, you can print a certificate of completion.

Doing research in an ethical way means that you do not force people to participate in your research, that you give people choice of what they want to talk about and not talk about (this is also referred to as **informed consent** to participate) , that you make them feel safe and comfortable when talking to you, that you protect their **confidentiality** to the best extent you can, that you make sure your research does not negatively harm people, and that you don't mis-report or misuse the research results. Before you begin your research, you need write down in paper all the steps you are going to take to make sure that you will do research in an ethical way.

Most universities, hospitals and research institutes have created a committee to review and approve the ethical protocol for research projects. This committee is often called a **Research Ethics Board (REB)**. The REB requires that research team fill out their **Ethics Review Application Form** that includes all relevant details about how the research team will follow ethical protocol. Research teams are not allowed to start data

collection before getting approval from an REB. If your research team includes a member from a university or research institute, you can fill out the Ethics Review Application Form from that university/institute and try and get approval from that university/institute. Community agencies can also establish their own internal research ethics committee and review ethical protocol with extra attention (even if the research project has received ethics approval from a university REB). In general, it is good practice to have other people who are not part of your research team to review the ethical protocol of your research project to make sure that your team is following good ethical practice. In particular, run it by people who have good knowledge about ethical issues or people who work with vulnerable communities and have intimate knowledge about how to minimize negative impact on vulnerable people.



## What are the Components of a Research Project?

There are **Six Components** in research that starts with creating your research team and ends with sharing your research results. Each component is described briefly below and in more detail in the chapters that follow in this toolkit. The first 3 components are focused on planning and the final 3 components are about how to implement your study.

### **Component 1: Create your research team**

Build your research team with people who can contribute different strengths to the team. Get to know each other by doing some team building exercises and talk about how you are going to work together. Talk about what interests you and what your strengths are.

### **Component 2: Design your research question and methods**

As a team, discuss what you want to find out more about. Narrow down your topic to a very specific 'research question' that you can answer within the timeframe of your project with the resources you have. Make a detailed plan about how you are going to find the answers to your question, who you are going to talk to, how you are going to reach them and convince them to give you information, how you are going to make sense of the information you collect, how you are going to share it to the people that should hear about your research findings.

### **Component 3: Prepare and get research ethics approval**

Sit down with your team and discuss how you are going to do your research in an ethical way; make sure that you don't force people to participate in your research and that you won't pressure them to say things they don't want. Also, think about how you are going to protect people's confidentiality, particularly if people don't want their names known. Also, think about how to make sure your research does not directly or indirectly harm people. Write down your ethical protocol. Where possible, get 'Ethics Approval' from a Research Ethics Board before you start your data collection. Ask other people not part of your research team to review your ethical protocol and get feedback on how to make your research even more ethical.



#### **Component 4: Collect Research Data**

Once you have your research ethics approval, you can start collecting your data to help you answer your research question. This is the most fun part since you get to finally go out and talk to people and start getting answers to your question. Remember to carefully record everything they say (i.e. using a digital voice recorder or a camera if participants agree) and to take detailed notes. Data collections is also the most difficult part since convincing people to take part in your research is not always easy and talking to people and collecting information you need can take a lot of time and effort. Also, remember that you need try your best to follow what you said you will do in your research method/protocol in terms of how many people you are going to talk to (i.e. study sample), how you are going to reach them, how long you are going to talk to them etc. If you said you are going to do a survey with 20 people who are 25 years or older, don't start doing the survey with people who are under 25 years old just because they want to participate. Before you make any major changes, your team needs to carefully think about why you are making that change and how it will affect your research, and also what are new ethical issues in doing the research.

#### **Component 5: Analyze and Make Sense of Research Data**

Once you have finished talking to all the people you said you would talk to and collecting all relevant information you need, the next step is to analyze and make sense of this information you have collected. Analysing data is when you and team members look at all the information you have collected to see if there are patterns and trends. It is also about connecting the dots to see what the big picture tells you. Don't worry if everything does not connect or fit the overall big picture or pattern. You can present them as unique cases. In fact, finding out what information does not fit in the overall big picture is as valuable as finding out what does fit. Before you start analysing your data, it is a good idea to first organize your research data so they are in one place, properly labelled and easy to read and use. It is worth typing up what your study participants said into a document as this will make analysis easier. In order to get the overall picture, it is good practice to review all your data at least once and not just pick those that seem most interesting. Later, you can focus on a few issues or themes but here again it is important to consider all of your data. Also, remember that you need to take steps to protect the confidentiality of people. You can do this by removing all personal names and information that can identify anyone. To ensure confidentiality, make sure your research data is stored in a safe place that only your team members have access to.

#### **Component 6: Share your research results**

The final step is to share your research findings to relevant people that you feel should know this information. This may include community members, community leaders and agencies, government officials and policy makers. In an action research project, you want to use your research results to make a positive change in the world around you. As a team make a list of people you want to share your research results to, discuss why you want them to hear your results, and how you are going to communicate the results to them so that they will want to listen and make a change. Write up your results or make them ready in the formats you want (e.g. video); you may have to use different formats and media for different audiences. Consider how you can use technology and social media to get your message out and make it accessible for your audiences to listen to and make a positive change.



## A Quick Introduction to Research Methods

Research Methods generally refers to the type of research data you want to collect and the steps for collecting and analysing that type of research data. Recall that research data is the information you need to answer your research question. This is a quick overview of research methods. The following chapters will go into more detail on research methods.

Overall, there are two types of research data or data collection method:

- ❖ **Primary research/data or primary data collection** involves collecting and analysing original information and answers directly from research participants. In other words, doing ‘**primary research**’ actually involves your team going out and asking people for information or answers to your questions. The information or answers that your team collect from this direct interaction is called ‘**primary research data.**’ If your team does primary research, then your team has control over the data collection process and can decide who to talk to and what to ask them. You also know about what went well and what did not go well when you were collecting the research data and so can make thoughtful analysis based on the quality of the research data you collected.
  
- ❖ **Secondary research/data or secondary data collection** involves bringing together and analysing data that has already been collected by other researchers or organizations. For example, researchers at Statistics Canada collect Census data from Canadian households every five years. In doing so, Statistics Canada is doing primary research. If your research team requests and gets access to Census data and analyzes that data, you are doing ‘**secondary research**’ since you are working with ‘**secondary research data.**’ Getting access to and working with secondary data can save you time since you don’t have to go out and collect that research data. However, when you are working with secondary research data, your team has no control over the quality of the data or may have little knowledge about how the data was collected and what happened during the data collection process. Also, it can be difficult to get permission to use primary data collected by other researchers or organizations.

If you are doing Primary Research, you can use three types of research methods:

- i. **Quantitative Research Method**
- ii. **Qualitative Research Method**
- iii. **Arts-based Research Method**

Each method collects different types of data and uses different research steps, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data analysis tools; also each method has unique ethical considerations.

One research method is **not** better than the other

Each research method has its own set of strengths and limitations. Researchers need to choose the method that is best for their research question, be fully aware of the strengths and limitations of that method, and analyze the collected data based on those strengths and limitations of the method used. More and more researchers are starting to use a “**mixed-method approach**” that combines more than one method so that research projects can benefit from the strengths of each method while minimizing their limitations.

## ***i. Quantitative Research Method***

Quantitative research method focuses on collecting and analysing information/data that can be measured in numbers (or ‘quantity’).

**Type of Data:** In this method, you collect information about the world around you that already exists in numbers. For example:

- ❖ peoples’ age
- ❖ student graduation rate
- ❖ number of hours people watch TV every day

Or you convert information into quantifiable categories by providing a fixed number of answer categories that research participants can choose from. For example:

- ❖ You want to find out what people do when they are experiencing stress. For your question ‘What do you usually do when you are stressed?’ You may give your research participants the following pre-set answer categories to choose from:
  - A. ‘I talk to a family member about it’
  - B. ‘I talk to a friend about it’
  - C. ‘I talk to a professional counsellor or therapist about it’
  - D. I do exercise, yoga or meditation
  - E. ‘I don’t do anything’

**Results/Goal:** By focusing on numbers or converting information into quantifiable categories, the goal of quantitative research method is to try to get a quick snapshot or find general trends and patterns about the issues you are interested in. In the example above about response to stress, your research may find that 45% of people chose the ‘I don’t do anything’ category and 31% chose the ‘I talk to a friend about it’ category. This means that based on your research, only a small percentage of people actually talk to a professional counsellor or therapist or do exercise to handle stress. Quantitative research can provide a quick snapshot or an overall pattern about the issue you are interested in.

Government agencies, schools, hospitals, large organizations and big companies in general collect and analyze quantitative data to learn about overall trends and patterns about the people they provide services to so that they can improve services.

### **Research Instruments Used:**

- ❖ A **'survey'** is the most common **research instrument** used in quantitative research. In a survey questionnaire, you either ask for number-based information or ask 'close-ended questions' with pre-set answer categories for research participants to choose from (like the example above).
- ❖ **Scientific experiment** (e.g. testing the effectiveness of a medication) is another example of a quantitative research instrument.

**Research Scale and Sampling Techniques Used:** Since the goal of quantitative research method is to understand trends and patterns, this type of research method usually tends to be relatively big in scale (compared to qualitative methods) in which a large number of people are invited to participate in the research. Research participants (or study sample) are selected so that they proportionally or in some ways represent the larger population you want to find out more about.

#### **Census of Canada:**

Every five years, Statistics Canada conducts the Census survey with all Canadian households, mandatory for all households (although some do get left out).

This is how Statistics Canada produces information like the total population of Canada, total population of youth between the ages of 13-18, total birth rate, unemployment rate and many other statistics.

If the total population of the community you are interested in is small enough and you feel you can convince everyone or most of the people in that community to participate in your research, than you could do the survey with the whole population.

Usually the total population of the community you are interested in may be very large and so it may not be possible for you to do the survey with everyone. For example, if you are interested an entire neighbourhood of 1,500 people, it will be difficult to get all 1,500 residents to participate in your research. In such cases, you do the survey with a 'sample' of the total population. In a **'random sampled survey,'** your research participants are randomly selected from the total population (eg. put everyone's name in a hat and pick randomly) such that the research participant sample proportionally represents the larger population in terms of gender, age and any other characteristic relevant to your study. If you are able to do random sampling, usually a sample of 12% to 15% is enough. In order to do random sampling, you have to know the total number and other details about the larger population. If you don't know this information and cannot do random sampling, then you may need to get as many people to participate in your research while making sure they roughly represent the composition of the total population.

### **Strengths:**

- Good for capturing general patterns and trends; or getting a quick snapshot
- Because the data is in numbers or quantified numerical categories, you can do analysis quickly
- Government officials and people who manage large organizations like quantitative data

### **Weaknesses**

- May not tell much about reasons and other details about the general pattern or trend

- Not good for capturing diversity and complexities of human experiences and opinions (can reduce people and peoples experiences into statistical numbers)
- Not good for understanding things or unique cases that do not fit the general pattern or trend
- Can exclude voices of minority groups (in random sampling, small groups can be excluded in the sample)

## *ii. Qualitative Research Method*

Qualitative research method focuses on collecting and analysing research data that capture the rich, complex and diverse views, narratives and experiences that people have. In this method, the goal is to understand everyday complexities of peoples' perspectives, feelings, and experiences rather than trying to reduce these 'qualitative' aspects into numbers.

**Type of Data:** 'Qualitative' information about people and the world around us is generated by asking 'open-ended questions' where people can answer in their own words. Data can include:

- ❖ Narratives and discussions from people about their views, feelings and experiences
- ❖ Detailed observations about everyday lives of people and the world around us

For example, in a quantitative survey, a person may have answered that they usually 'don't do anything' when stressed. However, instead of pre-set answer categories to choose from, you ask the same person to talk in an open free flowing way in a qualitative interview and you may get a 15 minute long answer about how her response to being stressed varies based on many factors including the source of the stress, if it is mixed with anxiety or depression, how long it has been going on, if it is causing other physical health effects etcetera. It is not that one method is better than the other since the answers from the quantitative survey and qualitative interview are both correct and useful. The main thing to remember is that you get very different types of information from each method.

**Results/Goals:** If quantitative methods can provide a quick snapshot or general pattern or trend about something, qualitative methods can help us understand in more detail the reasons behind these patterns and trends (the inside stories, the behind the scene details), and about complex ways that different people view, feel and respond to these trends or any particular issue. Often, the goal of qualitative research is to give a human face and voice to the general trends and patterns. Qualitative methods are also good for finding out more about unique cases that don't fit the general patterns or for capturing the voices of people who are left out from quantitative research.

### **Research Instruments Used:**

- ❖ An in-depth **Interview** is a common qualitative research instrument. In this, researchers use open-ended questions to ask participants about their views, feelings, experiences, responses about issues related to the research. Interviews may be one-on-one or with a particular group (eg. A family, a group of colleagues).

- ❖ **Focus Groups** are becoming a popular qualitative research instrument. In a focus group, you bring together a group of people and ask open-ended questions to get group discussion about issues related to the research. Unlike in a one-on-one interview, the group dynamics in a focus group can affect what people say and don't say. In some cases, what one person in a group says might remind another person in a group about things they may not have remembered if it was a one-on-one setting. You can also observe how different people in the group respond to other people's views or about shared experiences. On the other hand, people may not feel comfortable talking about sensitive issues in a group setting.
- ❖ **Case Story/Life History Method** involves documenting in detail a particular case story about an event or person. Life history method is used by anthropologists where they do research about a person/family to understand as much as possible about the life of that person/family.

**Research Scale and Sampling Techniques Used:** Compared to quantitative research projects, qualitative research projects tend to be smaller in scale. This is partly because it takes a lot of time to process and analyze the narratives of qualitative data. More importantly, since the goal of qualitative research method/project is not necessarily to capture overall patterns, it does not need to be large scale. As mentioned earlier, often the goal of qualitative research is to put a personal voice and face to the overall patterns and trends. To this extent, it may be enough to talk to a relatively small number of people but make sure that this group has enough time to tell their stories and feeling in detail.

Qualitative research methods do not need to use random sampling techniques. Instead, qualitative researchers may target specific people ('lived experience experts' or marginalized people whose voices have not been heard) or use non-random sampling techniques such as '**sampling for diversity**' (to make sure that a very diverse group of people are included in the research) or '**snow ball sampling**' (in which participants who belong to the target group help to recruit other people in the target group).

**Strengths:**

- Good for understanding the causes and complex reasons behind certain trends and issues.
- Good for understanding the motivations and behaviors of individuals or groups of individuals.
- Good for documenting the experiences and voices of minority/excluded groups (who tend to be excluded in random sampled surveys)
- Good for capturing unique cases and diversity of opinions.
- Good for identifying key issues and indicators in areas where there has not been previous research.
- Flexible approach allows researchers to capture new issues and/or to follow up on issues (that was not previously identified)

**Weaknesses:**

- The results are based on smaller sample sizes (usually non-random sampling) and are often not representative of the population
- Compared to quantitative data, qualitative data may take a long time to process and analyze

- The research process and results usually cannot be replicated (analysing people’s opinions and feelings can be more subjective than analysing numbers)
- Governments and certain people might view qualitative results as not being very useful to policy making as it does not point to how many people are affected by the issue, and they overlook the value of qualitative research

### iii. Arts-based Methods



*“Arts-based methods seem to speak to the heart as well as the mind, opening up possibilities for deeper dialogue and potentially more holistic understanding of the subject” - Cox and Belliveau, 2009*

During the last decade, ‘arts-based research methods’ are becoming increasingly popular. It is called arts-based method because the research data includes one or more forms of art. If it uses photography it is commonly called ‘**Photovoice**’. Research that uses film and other moving digital media is referred to as ‘**Digital Storytelling**’. Researchers have also used drawings, theatre and other forms of art. Arts-based method uses one or more art forms with the goal that art can capture certain human emotions/expressions and experiences that may not be captured by verbal language or written text.

**Type of Data:** one or more arts-based expressions such as photography, film, drawings, theatre etc. Arts-based often combines art with some narratives and writing connected to that art. For example, in a photovoice project, participants may take photos and then write a paragraph about why they took that photograph and what the photograph means. In film-based research, the narratives may be embedded into the films. Because arts-based methods such as photovoice and digital storytelling include people’s actual faces and voices, there are additional ethical issues to keep in mind.

**Results/Goals:** You may have heard the saying that a picture’s worth a thousand words. It is for this exact reason that a growing number of researchers are starting to use arts-based methods like photography or drawings. The goal of arts-based method is to capture human emotions and social conditions that may be difficult if not impossible to capture by verbal communication or written text. There are certain things that are better said in pictures or on film. Another reason to do arts-based research is that it makes research fun. Also, arts-based results (photographs, films etc.) are easier and more accessible to share than written reports with diverse stakeholders.

**Research Instruments Used:** These are some common research instruments used in an arts-based method:

**Photovoice** uses photography (plus narratives) as research data. Photos are taken by the research team. Often research participants may also be trained in photovoice and take a double role of being a research participant as well as a researcher or ‘photo-researcher’ in the project. Research participants or ‘photo-researchers’ take photos (and write narratives related to the photos) that help to answer the research question. The core research team then analyzes the photos and narratives from all ‘photo-researchers’ to connect the dots and understand broader implications.

For example, an organization called **Streethhealth** in Toronto did a photovoice project with homeless people in 2007. The photographic face portraits managed to capture their emotions with such intensity that it would be hard to write about. For more information about the Streethhealth report, please go to: [www.streethhealth.ca/programs-and-services/research](http://www.streethhealth.ca/programs-and-services/research)

Another example is the photovoice project called ‘eXposed’ implemented by Access Alliance in 2008. Fourteen photo-researchers living in the Black Creek neighbourhood of Toronto used photography to capture the everyday impacts of poverty and racism when living in a low-income neighborhood. The images below visually capture how parks, playgrounds and public spaces are poorly maintained in their community.



For more information about the “eXposed” project please go to: [www.accessalliance.ca/research/activities/exposedphotovoice](http://www.accessalliance.ca/research/activities/exposedphotovoice)

**Digital Storytelling** uses video/film or some form of moving digital media to conduct research. Just as in photovoice, the film can be made by the research team or by the research participants. Digital storytelling can be used to record interviews with people who want their story to be heard. This allows participants to tell their stories while you can hear their voices, capture their intonations, and see their facial expression, and body language.

In 2009, Access Alliance trained 8 refugee youth in filming and asked them to each make a 5 minute film about barriers and challenges they face in pursuing their educational goals in Canada. The films captured not only the challenges refugee youth face but also the high aspirations they have about studying and getting a good education. More importantly, the films gave a real life view into the lives of refugee youth as they try to learn and pursue higher education in Canada in spite of having faced many disruptions and gaps in education before coming to Canada. These films have been compiled into a DVD called ‘Youth Find Strength’.

**Strengths:**

- Arts-based media like photography and film can visually capture emotions and real life contexts much more realistically than written texts
- Arts-based methods are accessible and engaging
- Research participants can become co-researchers
- People are more likely to look at photos and films as opposed to written reports

**Limitations:**

- Arts-based ‘data’ can be challenging to analyze
- Some people may not take arts-based data seriously

## Different Types of Inquiry

There are several different types of research/inquiry based on overall goals of your research and the way that your research question is framed.

- ❖ Exploratory research: If your research goal/research question is to find out about an issue that people know very little about or which has not been researched very much, then your project is exploratory research. Results from your exploratory research may capture initial information about that issue which then can become the basis for conducting many more in-depth research projects.
- ❖ Critical Inquiry: If your research goal/research question is framed in a way to understand and resolve a problem, it is called a critical inquiry. Eg. ‘What prevents newcomers from accessing health care?’ Or ‘Why does our community have so many unemployed residents?’ (if you know for a fact that your neighbourhood has a higher than average unemployment rate)
- ❖ Appreciative Inquiry: If your research goal/research question is about trying to raise awareness about what is working and/or what people are doing to make things better, then it is called



appreciative inquiry. E.g. ‘What steps are Crescent Town residents taking to stop crime in their neighbourhood?’ You may end up finding out in your research that the steps residents are taking are not working but your research has an appreciative inquiry framing in that you want to find out what residents are doing and can do.

- ❖ Needs/Gap Assessment: If your research goal/research question is specifically to find out what is missing or what is needed, then your research is about a needs/gap assessment. E.g. ‘What kinds of after-school programs do students in Crescent Town want?’



# Chapter 2

## How to Design your Research



## Key Steps in Designing your Research

Now that you have some introduction to research, the key components of a research project, and a quick introduction to research methods, you are ready to get your hands wet and start designing your research.

There are four steps in designing a research project:

- ☑ **Step 1: Identify the topic** or issue that you want to find out more about
  
- ☑ **Step 2:** Develop a specific **research question** that relates to the topic or issue, that is feasible to do with the time and resources that you have
  
- ☑ **Step 3:** Design the **data collection methods** to be able to collect answers to your research question. Step 3 involves five sub-components.
  - **3.1:** Decide which overall **method** you are going to use for your research (quantitative, qualitative, arts-based or mixed method)
  - **3.2:** Decide your research study sample and **sampling technique**
  - **3.3:** Decide your **recruitment strategy**
  - **3.4:** Decide what **research instruments** you are going to use (focus groups, interview, surveys etc.)
  - **3.5:** Figure out all the **logistics** involved in your research
  
- ☑ **Step 4:** Make sure that you do your research in an **ethical way**

You can use the **Research Design Tool in the Worksheets section page 81** to follow through and write down notes about key steps of your research project. In this chapter, we will cover up to Step 3. Chapter 3 will go more in depth about Step 4.

**Let's get started.**



### **Step 1: Identify your Issue/topic**

This is where you and your team identify the issues or topics you want to conduct your research project about. The topic may be something that your team is concerned about (e.g. poverty, discrimination, unemployment, access to affordable health services), or something your team wants to find out more about (e.g. how young women feel about the new marketing campaigns of a clothing company), or something that your team feels should be changed or receive more support (e.g. more support for the local homeless shelter).

Your team members may have different issues/topics that they are interested in. Openly share and discuss these as a team since you can learn a lot from this process. Linus Pauling, who received two Nobel Prizes for

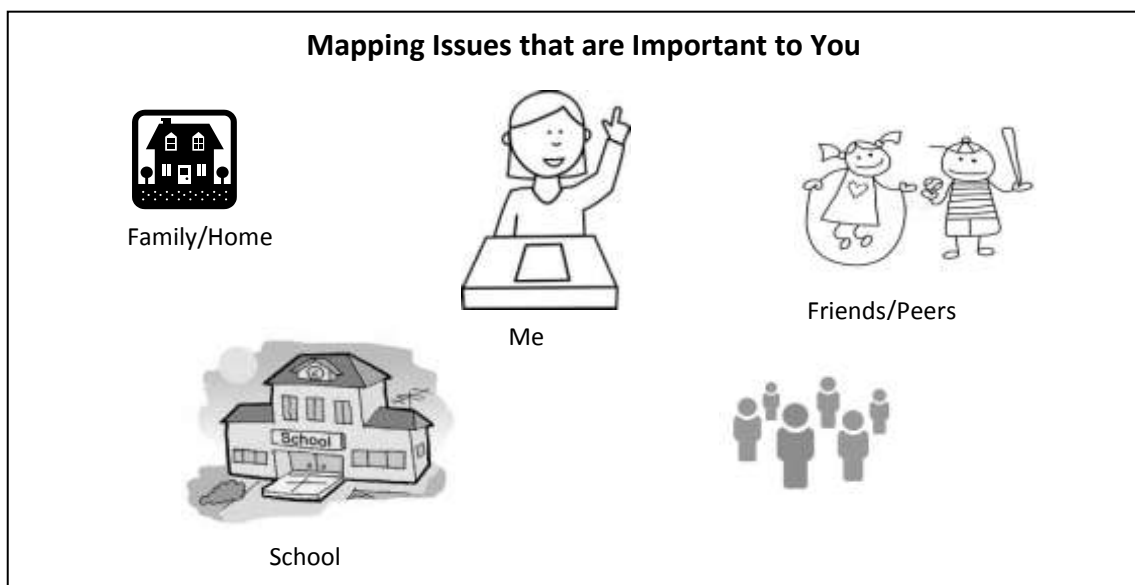


science, said that ***‘to have a good idea, you must first have lots of ideas’***. This is the benefit of working collaboratively in a team. You can get lots of ideas flowing in a team, and then your team can select the best idea/topic.

Remember that in order to have the best idea, you have to work in the spirit of a team. Don’t just focus on what you think the important issues are but listen carefully to the ideas and issues presented by your other team members. Doing so may help you think of or remember other important issues. Explore how your ideas and issues connect with those that others have proposed. Also try to build on each other’s ideas and thoughts rather than only trying to push your own idea. When you work in this collaborative team spirit to identify issues and solutions, it is called a ‘generative process’. Your goal is not necessarily to push your own idea but to find and develop as a team the best idea or plan. Eventually, your team will have to select the issue or topic to focus on. However, if you take this collaborative and generative approach in your team, no matter whose topic or which topic gets selected everyone in your team will feel that they have contributed to developing that topic. The sense of co-ownership and commitment among team members to that topic, irrespective of who first proposed it, is essential to a strong research team.



**How to do Step 1:** Begin with each member of the team thinking about and writing down all the issues that they are interested in. You can also visually map these issues on a blank sheet since visual representation can be quite helpful. This is where you visually locate all the key people and institutions that relate to your issues/topic and write down how each is related to the issue/topic. Your research team may also pre-design a Mapping Issues template with key people/institutions already pre-drawn; this way each team member works on a same basic template for mapping issues. The following is an example of a Mapping Issues template that we used with student researchers:





Then, as a team share your issues and topics and discuss why they are important and what you want to find out more about these issues. Write them down in a table. You can use the ‘Deciding on a Research Topic’ tool (**see Worksheets Section, page 80**) to do this or create your own template. See example below on how to use this tool. Remember not to focus just on your own issues or topics but to add and build on the issues and topics that other team members have identified.

Deciding on a Research Topic			
Issues/Topics	Why is this important?	What do we need to find out more about this issue/topic?	Notes
<i>E.g. Neighbourhood Safety</i>	<i>You have noticed that there has been an increase in violent incidents in your neighbourhood in the last year</i>	<i>Why has there been an increase in neighbourhood violence and how is it impacting the community?</i>	<i>The neighbourhood used to be considered safe, but more and more people are reporting feeling unsafe.</i>
<i>E.g. Employment help/support</i>	<i>A growing number of students are facing challenges finding summer jobs in this community.</i>	<i>Why is there increased youth unemployment and how can it be addressed?</i>	<i>Youth unemployment may have other effects in the community, so it's important to investigate.</i>
<i>E.g. Environmental Awareness</i>	<i>Our community faces a lot of environmental concerns, including litter on the streets and sidewalks.</i>	<i>How can we be more environmentally responsible in our own community?</i>	<i>Very practical</i>

Once you have this list of ‘good ideas,’ the next step is to decide as a team on one issue or topic to focus on for your research project. Deciding on one issue/topic as a team can be challenging. But you can follow this two-step process:

- First, see where there are overlaps in issues/topics and combine them. For example, three of you might have listed “safety”. You might connect the issue with anti-discrimination into one issue of ‘how to make the community more inclusive’. This process of **removing overlaps** or combining related issues may cut your list of issues/topics in half.



- ☑ Then, as a team, discuss and prioritize the issues/topics based on a number of criteria that are important to your group like urgency, need, potential for making impact, potential for being heard etc. For example, your team may prioritize topics based on which ones needs urgent attention. Or which ones your team thinks can make the most impact. Or something that many community members really want to see changed. Or a topic that people know very little about but you feel should know more about. Or a topic that has been identified by your community members or peers. Keep in mind the scope and feasibility of the project.

Your goal as a team is to discuss and decide on that one important and fitting topic. When discussing and deciding as a team, ignore who actually suggested the topics and instead work together to develop each topic further, assess why they are important, and then identify the one topic that your team together feels to be most important and most fitting. This process of having an open and constructive discussion and decision-making process is called consensus-based decision-making. If consensus-based decision-making does not work, you can always use the voting system and decide based on which topic gets the most votes. All team members need to respect the team decision and take ownership of the topic that the team selects, even if that was not your first choice topic. It is a good idea to have a 2<sup>nd</sup> topic as a back-up.

#### Guiding Questions to use for Step 1:

- What are the issues or concerns that you are interested in finding out more about?
- Why is it important to find out more about this issue or concern?
- What specifically do we need to find out more about this issue or concern? Why will finding out this information be helpful?
- Out of all the topics, which one do we want to do research about for this particular project and why? (assess each topic based on urgency, impact, meeting a particular need, overcoming information/knowledge gap as well as feasibility)



## ***Step 2: Develop your Research Question***

Once you have selected your issue/topic, the next step is to change the issue/topic into a question format which is referred to as a **'research question'**. Developing a specific research question related to your issue/topic will help you narrow down and figure out what exactly you want to find out about the issue/topic. Changing your issue/topic into a question format also gives it an 'investigative framing' so your project is geared at finding answers to a question rather than discussing random things about the issue/topic.

### What is Hypothesis Testing?

Instead of developing a research question, you propose a hypothesis or assumption about the topic and then try to prove or disprove it. For the topic of neighbourhood safety, you may propose a hypothesis that says 'Youth who are unemployed are more likely to be involved in violent crime' and then you collect information to either prove or disprove this hypothesis. Hypothesis testing is more commonly used in clinical experiments in labs. For research about humans and society, most researchers now prefer to use the 'research question' framework.

So, for example, let's say the topic that your team selected is neighbourhood safety. This is a very broad topic. As a team, you have to change this topic into a specific research question depending on what exactly you want to find out about neighbourhood safety. If your research is exploratory and you wanted to find out about all the different factors that promote or decrease neighbourhood safety then your research question could be 'What are the factors that promote or undermine neighbourhood safety?' You can narrow in by specifying which particular neighborhoods you are focusing on or limit it to 'low income neighborhoods in Toronto.' Thus your research question can be: 'What are the factors that promote or undermine neighborhood safety in low-income neighborhoods in Toronto?' Or you can be even more specific and make your research question look at particular relationships or connections. For example, 'How does increasing unemployment among youth impact neighborhood safety in low-income neighborhoods in Toronto?' You could narrow down further by saying that you will focus on unemployment of youth between the ages of 16-20 since you observed that this age group is high risk.



**How to do Step 2:** Decide as a team what exactly you want to find out about your issue/topic. Then frame that into a research question using the guide called '[What makes a Good Research Question](#)' (see below). Your goal is to develop a question that helps you clearly define your research goals and the subject matter of your research in a way that it generates curiosity (everyone gets interested as soon as they hear the question), that it leads to rich answers, but it is specific enough and feasible to do it within the time and resource limits that you have (i.e. you can find the answers/information that you are seeking in the time that you have and with the resources you have).

## What makes a Good Research Question?

Your **Research Question** is the overall question that you want to answer in your research project. The **Research Question** is the main framework that then shapes all of your other steps in your research project including who you are going to ask, how you are going to ask them, which specific follow-up questions you will ask the research participants etc. So it is important to create a good research question. These tips below can help:



**Focus**

- The specific issues that you want to find out are **mentioned in your research question** (e.g. youth unemployment and neighborhood safety; discrimination in the labor market faced by racialized immigrants)
- **Key parameters** of your research are mentioned in the question like study population, location of study, and time frame if relevant (e.g. male youth between the ages of 15-19 in the Crescent Town Neighbourhood)

**Clarity**

- Your research question is written in a **plain and simple language**
- Your research question should not have words or things that people won't understand

**Richness**

- Your research question is framed in an **interesting** way so that people get curious, want to find out more about it and want to participate in your research
- Your research question is **not too general or not too narrow**
- Questions that start with **'why,' 'how' and 'what'** are good questions and lead to rich research processes and rich answers compared to 'yes/no' or 'either/or' questions
- Your research question **does not have assumptions that have not been proven**. In particular, make sure it is not 'loaded' with negative, stereotypical assumptions. (e.g. avoid questions like 'why are immigrant students always causing trouble in school?' since there is no proof about this and it is very discriminatory)
- Your research question **is not 'leading'**; this means that it does not lead to only one type of answer/information. As a researcher, you want to try to find all sides of the story and discover different views, not simply the negative sides. For example, if your research question is 'What are the negative impacts of living in social/subsidized housing?' you may only get information about the negative sides. This is called a 'leading question.' Instead, it is better to ask 'What are the impacts of living in social/subsidized housing?'. This will enable you will find both the negative and positive impacts, as well as how sometimes the impacts are mixed.

**Relevance and Impact:**

- Your research question should be about issues that are **important to you and the communities who will be involved in the research**.
- Your research question is framed in a way that can lead to useful answers and knowledge that **makes a positive impact**.

**Feasibility**

- It is possible to find answers to your research question within the time and resources that are available to you
- You can actually reach the people you want to talk to and get people to give you the answers/information you are looking for



Note your research question can be made of two or three related questions as long as the connections are clear and the research is feasible.

### Examples of Good Research Questions

Your topic: cyber bullying

Your research question: How are youth (from grade 7 and 8) from school in Toronto impacted by cyber bullying? How do they respond to cyber bullying?

Your topic: environmental awareness and practice among community members in Weston-Mt. Dennis

Your research question: How do community events about climate change influence community members of Weston-Mt. Dennis in the lifestyle choices they make about environmental protection?



## Step 3: Develop your Data Collection Method

Once you have developed your research question, the next step is to decide on all the steps you are going to use to find the answer to your question. This is called the 'data collection method' or also more generally the '**research method**' or the 'research protocol.' There are five steps to developing your research method.

Step 3.1 Overall Method: First, as a team, decide what type of data you want work with and the **overall method/framework** of collecting data. This is where you decide whether you want to use:

- ❖ **quantitative methods** (if you are interested in numbers and capturing overall trends);
- ❖ **qualitative methods** (if you are interested in capturing people's feeling, experiences and views in more details);
- ❖ **arts-based method** (if you want to make research more accessible, engaging and creative, and you want to capture results visually and artistically)
- ❖ or a **mixed-method** approach that combines two or more of the above methods

Remember from Chapter 1 that each method leads to different types of data and has different strengths and limitations.

Two other things to consider when selecting the overall method for your research:

- ✓ Which method is feasible and doable within the time frame your team has for this project?
- ✓ Which method does your team feel that team members have adequate skills to do?



Step 3.2 Research Study Sample: Second, you have to decide who you are going to talk to, why these people specifically and how many. In other words, you have to identify your **research study sample** using a specified ‘sampling technique’. Depending on whether you select quantitative or qualitative method, your sampling technique and sample size will vary (see below).

- ✓ Who are we going to ask? Why them specifically?
- ✓ How many people are we going to ask? Why this number of people?

**Sampling** is a strategy to identify who you are going to talk to from among the target community/population. The first step to sampling is, therefore, to define your ‘**population of interest**’. The group of people who you want to talk to in your research is called the ‘target population’ or the ‘community of interest’. Since in most cases, it may not be possible to talk to everyone in your target population, your team needs to select a smaller number of people to talk to from within your target population. This smaller number of people is referred to as your ‘research study sample’.

There are two different sampling techniques:

**i. Probability (random) sampling**

Probability sampling refers to the number of people you select at random from the group, and everyone has an equal chance of being selected for participation in your research.

**ii. Non-probability (non-random) sampling**

This means that you do not choose your ‘sample’ randomly from the ‘target population’. Rather, you have particular reasons for selecting your sample population to answer your research question.

There are three different types of non-probability (non-random) sampling:

Convenience sampling: This is when you just talk to anyone who expresses interest in talking to you. An example of this is going to a sports game to talk to people because you know there will be lots of people there. Or when you put up a flyer and see who expresses interest in talking to you. This is called a ‘response-driven sampling’ technique. Looking at the type of people who actually express interest to talk to you based on your flyer may itself be interesting. For example, if only men responded to your flyer.

Purposive sampling: Purposive sampling suggests that researchers have a clear purpose in reaching out to this specific group because of their significance in the research. For example, only teachers or government officials are recruited in your research because of their experience and opinions on teaching. Another way of doing purposive sampling is to ensure that you have got enough diversity and heterogeneity (age, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, religion, marital status, etc.) in your research study participants. You take extra steps to make sure excluded groups are included in your



research. In this case, your purposive sampling technique would be referred to as 'sampling for diversity or heterogeneity'.

Snowball sampling: This means that you start to reach out to somebody (i.e. a homeless person) who then refers you to his/her friends, and then their friend's friends. In this technique, you do not have much control over who you may get to talk to, but you are open to talk to those whose friends or contacts have referred them to you. Snowball sampling may work when you want to reach a very specific sub-group of people who know each other well or a hard-to-reach group. For example, if you are doing your research about LGBTQ youth. Once you interview one person who is LGBTQ and earn their trust, he/she can connect you with other LGBTQ youth.

Step 3.3: Recruitment Strategy: Once your team has identified the sampling technique and sample size, the next step is to identify how you are going to reach the people you want to talk to, how you are going to convince them to take part in the study, how you are going to screen them to make sure they fit the inclusion criteria for the study. This is called the **recruitment strategy**. Recruitment of research participants can be the most difficult and time consuming part of your research so it is important to plan this well.

In order to develop your recruitment strategy, first you need to identify the 'inclusion criteria' for your research project. The **inclusion criteria** list all of the requirements that participants have to meet in order to qualify for participating in your research. Inclusion criteria are based on the goals of your research and the study sample. Inclusion criteria can help to make your research more specific; at the same time, if you make your inclusion criteria too limiting, than it may be extra hard for you to find people to talk to. For example, inclusion criteria for your research may include the following:

- ❖ 16 years and older
- ❖ Not on social assistance
- ❖ volunteers in the community

Your team will need to develop effective recruitment tools and steps. This can include:

- ✓ Putting up recruitment flyers or posters
- ✓ Holding information sessions or presentations about your research
- ✓ Sending email invitations
- ✓ Getting referrals for potential participants from community members
- ✓ Getting your recruitment information out through internet and social media sites (i.e. Facebook or Twitter)
- ✓ Word of mouth



No tool is better than the other. You will often need to use more than one recruitment tool in order to get as many study participants as you are seeking for your research. Your recruitment materials should have brief information about the goals of your research, who specifically you are looking to talk to, and contact information that they can reach you if potential participants want more information or want to participate.

Remember to think of your **safety** when doing recruitment:

- For example, put up recruitment flyers or do presentations with more at least one other person from your team.
- Do not give your home or cell phone number on the recruitment flyer. Sometimes it is worthwhile to create a separate email account that all of your team members can access and put only this contact information in the recruitment information.

It is a good idea to do several check-in meetings with your team to see how recruitment is progressing. If you are having a hard time recruiting, then you should change your approach or use a different technique.

The more **trust** you build with your potential participants the more likely that they will agree to participate in your research. Also, if you take the time to carefully explain the goals of your research in person, people may be more convinced to take part in your research. As mentioned earlier, if you are using snowball sampling, you try to build trust with the first few participants you talk to and then ask them to help recruit additional participants that meet the requirements.

### Example of a recruitment flyer

#### Research Project: Clean Streets

We are looking for youth who are interested in talking to us about how the cleanliness of the streets in Moss Park impacts your sense of safety in the community. The results from this research will be used to create recommendations to local community agencies, city planners and local business owners.

**Your voice is important. We want to hear from you!**

You can participate in this research study if you:

- ❖ Have lived in Moss Park for more than 3 months
- ❖ Are 16 years or older

We are asking you to participate in an interview which will last about one hour. To thank you for your time and contribution, you will receive \$15 and 2 TTC tokens for your participation.

If you would like to participate in this research, please contact Monique at this email:  
Monique@hotmail.com

This research has received ethics approval from the University of Toronto.



Step 3.4 Research Instruments: Next, you have to develop your **research instruments** or **data collection instruments** specific to your research method. So if you are using quantitative methods, than you need to develop a **survey questionnaire**. If you are using qualitative methods like interviews and focus groups, than you have to develop your **focus group guide** or **interview guide**.

Developing your research instruments means that you have to come up with the specific **follow-up questions** you are going to include in your survey questionnaire or interview guide that will help you answer the broader research question and meet your research goals. A survey questionnaire includes a list of **close-ended questions** with pre-set answer categories for participants to choose from. In contrast, an interview guide or focus group guide includes **open-ended questions**.

See the chart below for examples of how questions about bullying are framed differently in a survey questionnaire compared to in an interview or focus group guide:

<u>Survey Questionnaire</u>	<u>Interview/Focus Group Guide</u>
<p>1. How often do you face bullying?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Everyday</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Once or twice a week</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Once or twice a month</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Never</li></ul>	<p>1. How often do you face bullying? <i>(probe for where, when and other details)</i></p>
<p>2. What do you <u>usually</u> do when bullied?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> I talk to my teacher about it</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> I talk to my parents/guardian about it</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> I talk to my friends about it</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> I don't do anything</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know</li></ul>	<p>2. What do you do when bullied? <i>(probe for outcome; probe if the way they respond has changed over time; probe if frequency has changed over time)</i></p>
<p>3. What is your opinion about this statement: 'current anti-bullying programs in my school work well'?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Agree</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Neither Agree or Disagree</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Disagree</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree</li></ul>	<p>3. What are your views about the current anti-bullying programs at our school? <i>(probe if they have suggestions for how it could be better)</i></p>



Remember that you can always add a few open-ended questions in your survey. Similarly, you can ask your interview participants to fill out a short survey with some close-ended questions about their background and some things you want a quick snapshot about.

When designing the survey questionnaire or interview/focus group guide, keep in mind **the sequence and flow of the questions** as this can affect the responses that people give. For example, it is a good idea not to begin with the very sensitive questions or difficult questions. In terms of flow and structure, survey questionnaires, interview guides and focus group guides can be designed in three ways:

- ❖ **Structured:** This means that the flow of questions as they are set in the questionnaire or guide is very important and should not be changed.
- ❖ **Semi-structured:** This means that there is some basic flow to how the questions are set up in the questionnaire/guide but that researcher conducting the survey, interview or focus group can adjust the flow and sequence of questions based on the responses from participants as long as all the key questions are asked.
- ❖ **Unstructured:** This means that you do not need to follow any set flow or structure in terms of questions.

Step 3.5 Research Logistics: Finally, you need to decide on some **logistical issues**. What type of interaction do you want to have with research study participants; face-to-face, telephone, or online? If you choose face-to-face, where are you going to talk to participants; a public place like a coffee shop or a private place like a room at the library? Who exactly from your team is going to talk to them (e.g. should you have female members of your team talking to female participants?) and other logistics like timing (e.g. evenings and weekends or daytime)? Remember again that every little step can make an impact on what type of responses you get.

As a team, use the guiding questions below to think about and make thoughtful decisions about each step:

- ✓ What type of interaction are we going to have with the participants (face-to-face, by telephone, online, one-on-one, group)?
- ✓ Where will we collect the data (coffee shop, library, participant's home)?
- ✓ Within your team, who is going to talk to which participants (e.g. do you want match by gender, age etc.)?
- ✓ How will the data be recorded (paper and pen, on a computer, digitally recorded)?
- ✓ Who is going to buy the supplies/equipment? Where will they be kept?
- ✓ As you finish the data collection (surveys, interviews etc.), where will you store the data? How will you make sure that it is safely stored and only your team members will have access to the data?
- ✓ How often will we meet as a team to see how the data collection is going?

**Now that you have designed your research, let us look into how to make sure that you do research in an ethical way. This is the focus of the next chapter.**





# Chapter 3

## How to do Research Ethically



## What is research ethics?

Research ethics are a set of guiding principles to ensure that research is carried out in a manner that “respect the dignity, safety and rights of research participants and that recognizes the responsibilities of researchers” (World Health Organization). Doing ethical research means that you are not pressuring or misleading people to take part in your research but that they are doing it voluntarily. It also means that you are protecting their confidentiality and making sure they are not negatively affected by taking part in your research.

In Canada, a joint council called the Tri-Council body sets research ethics guidelines. The Tri-Council body is comprised of representatives from the three main government agencies that give funds for research projects in Canada: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The body has developed a guideline called ‘*Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*’. You can learn about these protocols from this website: <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>. Ethical guidelines in the Tri-Council Policy include:

### I. Respect for Human Dignity

Your research must respect all persons regardless of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and other identity markers and you need to ensure people are not discriminated against during or because of your research.

### II. Free and Informed Consent

This means that people must participate in your research voluntarily without being pressured or coerced in any way. To enable ‘free and informed consent’, you need to make your research participants aware of the goals of the study, any potential harm in participation, and how you will use the information they give to you. You must also make them aware that they have the right not to participate in your research or to withdraw from your research project at any time without any consequences.

### III. Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality

This means that as a researcher you are responsible for keeping personal information confidential. In your analysis and research reports, no one should be able to identify who said what. In order to do this, you need to delete any personally identifying information (particularly their names) from the data; instead you can assign a ‘pseudonym’ (fake name) or a code number (e.g. P1, P2, P3) to your participants. Your research team is also responsible for securely storing any data you collect so that only your team members can use it.

### IV. Respect for Vulnerable Persons

You need to take extra steps to ensure that people who are vulnerable or marginalized are treated fairly with respect and dignity. Vulnerable groups refer to people who are socially, economically and/or politically marginalized position in our society; some such people include elderly people, children, people with disabilities,



mental illness, racialized people or low-income groups. Special attention should be given to make sure that vulnerable people are not negatively impacted by the research.

#### **V. Minimizing Harms and Maximizing Benefits to the Community**

This means that you are going to make sure that there is minimal or no harm from the research project to anyone or any group. Your goal instead should be to try to use your research to make positive change.

#### **What is a Research Ethics Board (REB) and what is an Ethics Review?**

Academic institutions, some hospitals, government bodies and school boards have 'Research Ethics Boards' (REB) or research advisory committees. They are responsible for making sure all research projects conducted within their department, organization and affiliates follow research ethics guidelines set by the Tri-Council body. Before you can begin your research, you need to fill in an ethics review application **and submit it for review to a designated Research Ethics Board or a research advisory committee**. Only after you get 'ethics approval' from the Research Ethics Board or research advisory committee, can you begin conducting your research. In general, it is good practice to have other people who are not part of your research team to review the ethical protocol of your research project to make sure that your team is following good ethical practice.



## **How to follow ethical process in research?**

Sit down with your team and discuss all the steps you are going to take to make sure that you meet all of the ethical guidelines. You can then use this information to fill in the relevant sections in the Research Ethics Review Application form and submit the form for review.

#### Steps for getting informed consent:

- Making sure that you do not directly or indirectly pressure people to participate in your research; that they participate voluntarily on their own. Explain in simple and clear words the goals of your research, what they are being asked to do, what potential harms and benefits there are from participating, and what will be done with the research data. This ensures that people can make informed decisions about whether or not to participate.
- If there are potential negative impacts from participating in the study, let them know beforehand.
- Make sure that they know that they have the right to share only things they want to.
- They should also know that they can withdraw from your research at any time without consequences.
- Note that for children under a certain age (usually 16 years) you need to get consent from their parents/guardians in order for children to participate in the research. \*Note, there are exceptions to



this protocol in cases where either the participants don't live with a parent or guardian, or in cases where the parent/guardian consent will have an unintended effect on the research. This request for an exception can be cleared through the REB and special protective measures should be taken in order to ensure informed consent with the young participants.

- ☑ In photo-voice or digital storytelling based projects, take extra effort to explain that faces and voices of participants may be identifiable unless participants specifically request to be anonymous. Also, mention that if photos and videos are shared over the internet, researchers may have no control over how it gets shared.

#### Steps for protecting confidentiality

- ☑ Remove any information from the research data that can identify a person.
- ☑ Make sure you store all research data in a safe and secure place and that only your research team members have access to the data.
- ☑ In a focus group setting, make sure you tell people that you cannot fully guarantee that other people taking part in the focus group will keep confidentiality and thus to say only things that they are comfortable saying in a group setting.
- ☑ In photo-voice or digital storytelling based projects, use editing tools to blur or mask faces and voices if participants request that they remain anonymous.
- ☑ Once you finish your research, research data is usually destroyed after a certain amount of time (usually 2 years). This is an added security measure to make sure that research data does not get used in the future out of context.

#### Steps to protect vulnerability, minimize harm, and maximize benefits

- ☑ Make sure that people (particularly vulnerable people) don't feel badly during or because of your research. If they cry or feel badly during an interview or focus group you are conducting, acknowledge and check in with them by asking if they would like to take a break, stop, or be referred to a counsellor or other professional. Be sensitive, but do not start giving therapy to that person since you may not be a trained to do so and you don't want to cause more harm than good.
- ☑ Some research results may be mis-interpreted by others in a way that could harm vulnerable groups rather than benefiting them. It is your job as a researcher to try to foresee this, and make every effort to have your findings interpreted the way you and your team intended.
- ☑ Try to share your research findings to relevant stakeholders so that you can use the findings to influence positive changes in your community.



## How to get Ethics Approval?

In order to get ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) or a research committee, you will need to fill out an 'Ethics Review Application' and submit it to the relevant REB or research committee. In the ethics review application, your team will be asked to write down information about:

- the goals of your research
- the methods you are going to use
- research study sample and your recruitment strategy
- how you plan to get informed consent from participants
- the steps you are going to take to ensure confidentiality
- how you are going to securely store and use your data
- what you are going to do with your research findings

You may also be asked to attach the following documents with your ethics review application:

- Informed Consent Form
- Recruitment Flyer
- Draft of your research instrument (survey questionnaire, interview or focus group guide)

Research ethics review process can take anywhere from 2 weeks to 3 months to process depending on how big and complex the research project is or how busy the REB is. It is therefore a good idea to get your research ethics application submitted as soon as you can. The REB or research committee will review your application and then give you feedback about what additional steps your team may still need to take to make your research ethical. You will need to send one more written response to the REB or research committee about how you are going to take the additional steps that they suggested. They will review that information and if satisfied, they will give you a final approval letter to go ahead with your research. While waiting for your approval, your team can do team building, capacity building and training around the subject of your research and the way you will be conducting research. You can also do a lot of the on the ground planning of the project, without yet starting the actual data collection.



## What is a Consent Form and How to Get Consent?

All researchers are required to **get signed written consent** from research participants before they can take part in your research. Research teams need to develop a 'consent form' specifically for your research project for this purpose. This 'consent form' is usually 1 to 2 pages long and written in simple language so potential research participants can understand. The consent form should include basic information about the goals and focus of the research project, who is being invited to participate in the research, what will research participants be asked to do (e.g. take part in a 20 minute survey or a one hour one-on-one interview), what types of questions will they be asked and what the potential risks are from participating in the research (if any).

The consent form then includes a series of statements about rights and responsibilities that the participant is agreeing to by signing the consent form. Add the relevant information about your research project in the consent form to begin using it to get consent from participants. In the text box below, the series of statements about rights and responsibilities for participants is listed for you to review and become familiar with.

### **By signing this consent form to participate in this research, you understand that:**

1. Your (your child's) participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences.
2. You (your child) have the right not to respond to any questions.
3. Your (your child's) decision to participate or not to participate will not have any negative effect on your relationship with the researchers.
4. All research data will be safely stored and used only by our research team. For extra security measures, all research data will be destroyed after 2 years of completing this project.
5. Confidentiality: to their best capacity possible, the research team members will try to protect your (your child's) confidentiality. The extent of confidentiality, however, varies:
  - a. If the research involves surveys and one-on-one interviews, your (your child's) name will be kept completely confidential and no one will be able to identify what you (your child) said in any of the research reports or communication materials. All research findings will be presented using a pretend name (alias name) or no name at all (e.g. participant code number instead).
  - b. If the research involves focus group discussions, all steps in 5a will be followed. The research team will also ask other people participating in the focus group discussion to keep everything confidential. However, the research team cannot give full guarantee that other participants will keep everything confidential. If you (your child) are (is) being asked to participate in a focus group discussion, please keep this in mind and only share information that you (your child) are (is) comfortable sharing in a group setting.
  - c. If the research uses photography or other visual/digital media (e.g. photovoice, film), then your face and your voice may be captured. If you don't want people to see you or hear your voice, you can still participate in the study but request the research team to digitally edit your face and voice so that no one can identify that it is you (or your child).
6. You will receive a copy of this consent form.
7. You can request a copy of the final research report or research communication material.



The consent form also should include the contact information of a designated person on your research team in case participants want to follow up later about the research.

Note that if the research project includes photography or video, then you will need to add some extra provisions for consent specifically related to being photographed and videotaped. This is because participants can be more easily identified if they are photographed and or included in a film. In some cases, participants can consent to being photographed or videotaped with the condition that their face and voice is made confidential; there is digital editing software that can make faces or voices unrecognizable. In the consent form, you can include the following:

If participation in this research involves being photographed or filmed, **I consent to** (*check ones that apply; if it does not involve photography or film, leave this blank*):

- Being photographed
- Being filmed
- Being filmed with my face and voice remaining confidential

#### Steps for getting consent from research participants:

- Give the consent form to the participants (or their parent/guardian where appropriate) and give them adequate time to read the information. You can give a copy of the form to take home so they can carefully review all the information.
- Try to explain and reconfirm their rights to voluntary participation, withdrawal and confidentiality etc.
- Ask them if they have any questions or if there is anything they don't understand.
- If they need more time to review and think about whether they want to participate or not, don't pressure them and say they should hurry and make a decision soon.
- Once participants feel that they understand what they are consenting to and about their rights, you can ask them to sign and date the consent form. Ask them to sign an additional copy of the consent form and keep one copy for their own records.
- Remember that the signed consent form is a highly sensitive material that can identify people who participated in your research. So extra precaution to safely store all signed consent forms in a secure and locked cabinet/location that only your research team has access to.





# Chapter 4

## How to Collect Data



## What is Data Collection?

Once you get research ethics approval for your project, you are ready to begin data collection.



Data collection is the most fun part of the research since this is where you will get to talk to people and start getting answers to your research question. It can also be the most challenging and time consuming part of research since it can be difficult to get people to talk to you and it is common to face roadblocks while doing data collection. But even the challenges and roadblocks can be great learning experiences. Remember to keep detailed notes about the data collection process in terms of what worked, what did not, and what changes you had to make to your research plan. Data collection process can take at least 3 weeks or longer. Meet as a team to get all the materials ready for data collection and decide who is going to do what, when, and how.

### *What do I need to start doing Data Collection?*

**As a team, get all of these materials ready before you begin the data collection process:**

- Recruitment flyer/information:** This is the flyer or the information that you will use to tell people about your research and to convince people to take part in your research.
- Email Account for your Project:** It is a good idea to set up a different email account for the research project and not give out your personal emails or home/cell numbers to potential participants. Make sure only your team members can access this email account. You may want to create a Dropbox account or another online file sharing account to securely store and share data online.
- Screening List:** Create a spreadsheet document titled 'Screening List'. This is the document you will use to write down the names and basic information of people who express interest in taking part in your research and check to make sure they meet the 'inclusion criteria' to participate in the research. Remember that this Screening List document is one of the most sensitive documents as it will contain names of potential participants. Make sure that this document is password protected and only your team has access to this file. If you are using printed copies of this document, make sure that no one else apart from your team members can see the content of this Screening List.
- Copies of Consent Form for Research Participants:** Make enough copies of the consent form. At least 2 per participant. You will keep one signed copy and give one to participants to keep.

- ☑ **Your research instruments:** Final versions of your survey questionnaire, interview guide, focus group guide etc. If you are getting people to fill out the survey on paper, make sure you make enough copies of the survey. If your team is doing a survey online, then set up the survey online (using an online software like Survey Monkey). Remember to test out the online survey to see if everything is working. Then write down the link to the online survey to give to potential participants.
- ☑ **Recording equipment:** e.g. Digital recorders (for recording your interviews and focus groups), digital cameras (if you are doing photovoice), video cameras (for digital storytelling) etc. Make sure you have enough batteries and space on the memory cards.
- ☑ **Location to securely store research data and equipment:** You will need a cabinet or storage box that can be locked to store hard copies of research data, signed consent forms, as well as our recording equipments (digital recorders, digital cameras etc). For electronic copies of your research data (e.g. screening list, data files, digital recordings of your interview or focus group etc.), create password protected files and folders to make sure that only your research team can have access to these files.
- ☑ **Memory key:** To store and/or transport data, remember to password protect all files and encrypt the memory key for extra security).



## *So, what do I do next?*

Follow these standard steps when doing data collection. Steps may vary based on the type of method or research instrument you are using and can be adjusted necessary.

**Step 1 Recruitment:** Start by putting up your recruitment flyers and distributing your recruitment information widely (by email, online). Talking to people face-to-face is often the most effective form of recruitment since this way you will be able to give detailed information about the research and convince people to participate; get people excited about your research and tell them why it is important.

Please keep your safety in mind when going around to post and distribute flyers or sending information by email/online. Don't go alone to places you don't feel safe. And don't give out your personal email and contact information.

**Step 2 Screening and Selection of Participants:** Once the information about your research project goes out, you will start getting interest from people about taking part in your research. You need to make sure that they meet your 'inclusion criteria' to be able to participate in your research. Use the Screening List to take down the information you need related to the inclusion criteria for your research. For example, if you only plan to talk to people who are 16 years and older and those who have single parents, make sure you confirm those details as part of your recruitment.

**Step 3 Explain ethical issues and get informed consent:** Before people agree to participate in your research, make sure you explain to them clearly all of the information about your research, what is involved,



their rights, and about the confidentiality protocols and consent process. Give them (or their parent/guardian) a copy of the Consent Form to read and remind them that they can ask you any questions about the research or what they are consenting to. If they need consent from a parent/guardian, give them a copy to take home for their parent/guardian to review and sign. Remember to keep one signed copy of the consent form with you and give one copy to the participant for their record. See also Chapter 3 for more information about how to explain ethical issues to potential participants and get informed consent.

**Step 4 Arrange logistics for the data collection activity:** If it is a face-to-face interview, set up the date, time and location of the interview. For focus groups, you will need to coordinate a date, time and location that all the people participating in the focus group can attend. For surveys, the logistics vary based on whether it is an online survey, a self-administered written survey (that they fill out on their own), or a survey interview (in which the research team fills out the survey by asking participants the questions on the survey). If it is an online survey, give participants the online link to the survey. If it is a self-administered survey, you can arrange to give the printed copy of the survey to participants to fill in on the spot or later. If it is a survey interview, arrange for the date, time, and location. Remember to do the data collection (interview or focus group) in a location that participants feel safe and comfortable.

If your team is doing a photovoice or digital storytelling based research in which you get participants to go and take their own photos or make their own films, then arrange to have training sessions with the camera equipment and give them very clear instructions on what you want them to do. Remind them that they need to get written consent from people who they are taking photos or films of.

**Step 5 The Interaction:** When people show up and/or agree to do the interview, focus group or survey interview, follow these general steps (steps may vary by the method you use so modify as needed).

- Thank them for agreeing to participate in your research and work to create a safe and comfortable space.
- If they have not signed the consent form, ask them to do so (without pressuring or coercing them). Keep one copy of the signed consent form and give one copy to them to keep for their record.
- Before you begin, explain to them what will happen, how long it will take, and other details. Give them the opportunity to ask any questions or clarifications about the process. Remind them again that they don't have to answer any questions they don't want to. If it is a focus group, remind the group that although you will ask all the people who are there to keep things confidential, you cannot guarantee full confidentiality; thus people should only talk about things they are comfortable sharing in that group setting.
- Once everyone is ready and all questions are clarified, begin the interview, focus group, or survey interview using the guide and process you designed as a research team. If you are digitally recording it, start the recording and tell people that you are now turning on the digital recorder. Double check to make sure that it is actually recording. If you are doing the interview or focus group in pairs, remember to be clear about who is doing the asking and who is taking notes. You can of course share these tasks.



Try to enjoy this interaction since it is a great learning opportunity and can be one of the best parts of doing research. See the next section for how to ask good probing questions to have stimulating discussion about the topic. Remember to give participants breaks if they need. It is always a good idea to have light refreshments (water, tea, fruit, cookies), especially if it is a long interview or focus group.

If participants are doing a self-administered online survey, give them the online link to the survey and ask them to follow the instructions online. Remind them that they can contact you if they have any questions about the online survey. If participants are doing a written 'pen and paper'-based survey on their own, give them a copy of the survey to complete either on the spot or later. If later, tell them where to drop off the completed survey.

- ☑ Once you are done, thank the participant again for their time and contributions. Turn off the digital recorder and announce to everyone when you are turning off the recorder so that they know that things are not being recorded anymore. Remind them one more time what you plan to do with the research results.
- ☑ Once participants leave, debrief quickly with your co-interviewer/co-facilitator on key points and what went well and what can be improved. Write down these reflections in your notes.
- ☑ Collect all the signed consent form(s) and seal them in an envelope, label it, and store it right away in a locked cabinet. Do the same with hand-written surveys that participants have filled out. Upload digital recordings to your computer, password protect the file, and then delete the recording from the digital recorder. For photovoice projects and film, upload photos and film to the computer, password-protect, and delete from the camera. Store these securely until you are ready to do your analysis.

## ***The Art of Asking Questions and Probing***

The quality of the data you will capture is dependent on how you ask questions and how you probe further, particularly in interviews and focus groups. Sometimes in an interview, we do not receive the type of information we are looking for. Probing is a technique where you ask follow-up questions that help to increase clarity, depth and richness in responses from participants.

### **Types of Probing**

- ☑ **Nudging probes:** These "questions" encourage interviewees to keep talking, but don't suggest a particular direction.  
*Yes, tell us more about that.*  
*Yes, go on*  
*Yes, I would like to hear more about that.*  
*Do you want to talk more about that?*
- ☑ **"Clearinghouse" probes:** These probes can be used to close an interview topic while ensuring that you have elicited all the information an interviewee wants to provide.



*Is there anything else you would like to add?*  
*Are there any questions I should have asked, but didn't?*  
*Was there anything more you wanted to cover?*

- Probes to increase depth of content:** These probes encourage interviewees to provide more information about a particular topic.  
*Can you tell me, in detail, all the steps you had to take to find a job?*  
*Please elaborate on how you juggle all of the work and family responsibilities you mentioned.*
- Probes to increase clarity:** These questions focus on clarifying particular words or phrases the interviewee uses during an interview.  
*I'm not sure I understand what you mean by "incompetent." Could you explain?*
- Probes to capture feelings, perspectives and opinions:** These questions are designed to ask the interviewee to explore the feelings or thoughts underlying a particular statement.  
*How did that experience of discrimination make you feel?*
- Probes to find out reasons, causes, and links:** These questions prompt interviewees to make connections between their experiences and larger issues. They follow a statement made by an interviewee.  
*What holds you back from being engaged in your community?*  
*In your opinion, what actions can youth take to improve safety in your neighbourhood?*
- Probes to find more information on impacts.** These questions ask participants to elaborate on a statement. These statements are often directly linked to the research question.  
*How did that negative experience impact you?*  
*What are the direct and indirect health impacts your family experienced during that time?*
- Hypothetical probes:** These questions pose a hypothetical situation and ask interviewees to respond.  
*Suppose the government introduced affordable childcare program in Ontario. How would that impact you?*  
*Imagine that you could go back in time. What is one thing that you would do differently?*  
*If you were a man in the same situation, what would be your experiences?*
- Probes to get the interviewee back on track:** Use these questions when the interviewee veers far away from the topic or doesn't answer the question you asked.  
*Let's return to when you first came to Canada. Please tell us...*  
*We were talking about how not having a job impacts your sense of participation. Can you tell us more about that?*
- Case scenario or vignette-based probes:** Like the hypothetical probe, these probes pose a case scenario or a vignette, and conclude with follow up questions. These probes are useful for generating discussion on sensitive topics like mental health.

**Case scenario:** Mohammad and his family came to Canada one year ago. They are originally from Afghanistan but due to the war there, they had to flee and live in refugee camps in Pakistan for 7 years. Mohammad is beginning grade 9 at a new school and does not know anyone, He has been bullied in the past for the way he speaks, and finds it difficult to relate with his peers. Mohammad has recurring nightmares at night and cannot sleep. He wishes he did not have to go to school.

To what extent do Mohammad’s experiences reflect the experiences of other students? Why? In which ways? What kinds of services and supports will be useful for Mohammad?



## Tips on Note-Taking during Data Collection

Effective note taking is an important component of data collection. Good note taking means documenting important data from the focus groups, such as observational data. Also, note taking can complement voice recorders in ways that enhance consistency, detail and comprehensiveness of the data being collected. Note-taking can be done by the facilitator or by a separate note-taker. Note-takers can assist focus group facilitators in a number of ways including reminding them of questions that might have been missed, important side discussions that may be taking place, or making the facilitator aware of non-verbal signs of discomfort/tensions among participants. Here are some tips on effective note-taking for focus groups:

### What to take notes about

- I. **Observational notes:** In addition to taking notes about *what* participants are saying, note-takers need to take notes of *how* participants are saying it. Note-takers may also want to take observational notes on how other participants are reacting, the nature of the discussion, etc. Note-takers may want to take notes on the following:
  - i. Non-verbal signs, cues and body language when participants are speaking
  - ii. Tone, voice level, ‘feelings’ of what is being said
  - iii. Responses from other participants (non-verbal or verbal)
  - iv. Nature and levels of participation from each participant
- II. **Capturing ‘soft’ voices and ‘crowded’ discussions:** Note-takers have an important responsibility of capturing ‘soft’ voices, and ‘crowded’ discussions where multiple people are talking at once. They may also want to take notes on side discussions (voice recorders may not necessarily capture these).
- III. **Taking notes on content:** Note-takers also need to take detailed, accurate notes on content - *what* is being said. Note-takers may decide to take verbatim notes (if they can), summarize key points or a combination of the two. If doing a combined approach, note-takers should remember to put verbatim notes in “quotations.”



- IV. **Identifying important/relevant discussions:** While taking notes, note-takers can use their discretion to identify discussions that they feel are important and relevant to the study. You can develop symbols to identify important discussion points. This can help researchers in the transcription/translation and analysis process.
  
- V. **Keeping track of flows and connections:** By linking which participant said what throughout the focus group, note-takers can help to keep track of flows and connections in the focus group discussion.



# Chapter 5

## How to Analyze your Data



## What is Data Analysis?

After you have collected your data, you need to **organize, process and analyze it**. Data analysis is the process by which you review your data in order to answer your research question. More broadly, data analysis is the process of ‘making sense’ of the data you have collected to understand its significance and meaning in peoples’ lives. It is also about ‘connecting the dots’ based on the information you have collected to understand connections, patterns and trends (as well as exceptions and unique cases) about the world around us. It is very much like putting together a puzzle. Once you analyze and make sense of the data, the data becomes referred to as ‘research results,’ evidence, facts, or knowledge.

Doing good analysis means making sense of the data based on type and quality of the data you have collected. Since you designed the steps for collecting data and have been keeping notes on how each step affected the type and quality of data you got, you can interpret the meaning and implications of your data based on this knowledge. Doing good analysis also means that you do not distort and misuse data.

### Step 1: Organize and prepare your data for analysis

The first step before you start data analysis is to properly organize and prepare all of your data so it is ready for analysis. Things you can do to organize and prepare your data include:

- Entering your data (for example, entering data from your surveys into a spreadsheet).
- Saving all your data files in properly labeled folders
- Naming your files so that it is easy to track and read
- Formatting your files so they all have the same format

### Step 2: Ensuring confidentiality in data

This is a very important step. Review all of your data and delete all names of people or agencies. You can replace them with a code number or pseudonym. Also delete or change the markers that could identify someone (for example, ‘that teacher with a big moustache’ or ‘the director of the safety department at the Ministry of the Environment’).

### Step 3: Building your analysis

Doing analysis is a step-by-step process that grows with every step. The more you become familiar with your data, the more things you will notice. It is important to look at all the data you have collected to understand the full scope of the data you have or what you don’t have. Then, you can decide to focus on a couple of issues that are important to your team (since you may not have time to analyze everything). Start with more descriptive analysis by looking at what people are saying and comparing them to what other people are saying and then grouping them into similarities and differences. Then you can do more in-depth analysis and look at



why people are saying what they are saying and how they are being impacted. The final step is to develop your key findings/messages by synthesizing all of your analysis.



## How to Ensure Confidentiality of your Data

### Processing of raw data

- First level security processing – remove all references to names and identifiers.
- Second level of security processing – closer read to remove any data that can potentially identify an individual, agency or small group of people.

### Secure storage, access, and utilization of data

- All consent forms, recruitment/screening forms to be stored in a sealed envelop and stored in locked cabinet (accessible only to research team).
- All raw data to be stored in secure, locked cabinet; all electronic raw data to be password protected and stored in password protected folders.
- Research team members should have access to different levels of security-processed data as per their role and responsibility.
- Keep close track of data requests, utilization, and transfer; share data in password protected, secure mediums (e.g. memory key should be password encrypted).
- Remind all data users to practice confidentiality when storing and password-protecting raw data in their personal computers.
- Raw data is to be securely destroyed following completion of project.

### Security and data sensitivity audit for results and reports

- Ask people reviewing reports to check for data confidentiality/sensitivity.
- Be sensitive and prepared about how some stakeholders (e.g. media) may distort results for negative purpose.



## Connecting the Dots and Making Sense of Data

We practice analysis each day as we interpret the world around us. These daily analytic skills can be applied to research. There are some specialized analysis software (e.g. NVIVO for qualitative analysis and SPSS for quantitative analysis) available that can facilitate analysis. If your team has access to this software, you can get training on how to use this software for your study. The software can be expensive. You can use Excel or Word to do high quality analysis as long as you follow the necessary steps to ensure depth and rigor.



Use the checklist below as a guide for identifying what is important in your data and trends and patterns. You may wish to do this in partners, small groups, or as a team.

**Quantitative Significance:** Identifies the most frequent and infrequent responses. This may include answers to how many, how long, how much, etc.

- What is the majority of participants saying? What is the second most frequent response? What do you think is important but perhaps not a lot of people are saying it?

**Example:** 50% of participants identified bullying as a significant barrier to their learning

You can use advanced statistical analysis tools to find which of the trends are statistically significant and generalizable to larger population.

**Qualitative Significance:** Identifies subjective meaning behind human experience. This might include personal experiences, feelings, understandings, and explanations. It includes not only what someone said but also how they said it (e.g. they laughed, they cried). The list below points to different examples of qualitative significance: categorical significance, comparative significance, diversity/complexity/heterogeneity, uniqueness, personal significance, outliers.

**A) Categorical Significance:** Identifies common groupings within or across data sets. Without organizing data into groups, there is no way to make sense of it.

- What types of responses can be grouped together? What heading or theme could you assign each group or sub-group?

**Example:** Findings from our study point to different types of discrimination as a key barrier to finding and keeping work. Response from participants can be grouped into the following categories of barriers: racialized discrimination; gender-based discrimination; xenophobia and discrimination faced by immigrants; place-based discrimination; discrimination based on language; age-based discrimination.

**B) Comparative Significance:** Identifies comparisons between two or more categories, quotes, or themes, etc.

- What are the differences and/or similarities in responses between groups of participants?

**Example:** While the majority of focus group participants identified racism as a key barrier to enjoying school, participants in the Vietnamese focus group and male participants who have been in the country less than 2 years noted that they did not perceive racism as a barrier.



**C) Diversity/Complexity/Heterogeneity:** Identifies data that challenges our simplistic or initial reactions to phenomenon.

- How do these differences or similarities correspond to race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, ability, or unique experiences?
- Which responses do you find puzzling or complex?

**Example:** In an Access Alliance study on refugee youth, we initially started out with differentiating between two types of groups within refugee communities; sponsored refugees and refugee claimants. However, during data collection and analysis, we quickly realized that there were more layers of heterogeneity within refugee communities that we needed to consider including the nature of forced migration, the number of migrations, the length of being a ‘refugee,’ and whether refugee youth came as ‘unaccompanied minors’.

**D) Uniqueness:** Identifies data that provides unique insight in response to the research question.

**Example:** *“I just think it is not really now as we go to 2010 I don’t really think it’s a black and white issue anymore, I think there is more diversity now a days and with the whole Black Creek area and the OW I think it is all laziness. People get so used to the cheque coming in direct deposit every month that they don’t want to do better. Then they get down on the big man, oh it’s the big man, the white man doesn’t want me to prosper or I’m in Jane and Finch and the police won’t leave me alone and yet you walk around with a gun on you so how will he leave you alone and the brother who is next to you hang with you who is trying to prosper gets brought down with you because you’re doing it and he is hanging with you. That is what it is.”* (Female Participant, Black Community Focus Group- Income Security, Race and Health Project, Access Alliance)

**E) Personal Significance:** Identifies moments in the data that resonates with your personal experience. These moments will help you acknowledge and account for your own subjective interpretations.

- Which data do you (as a researcher) find familiar? Which interviews can you relate to?

**Example:** One interview participant is from the same community as you are from, and describes her experiences facing barriers to finding support at school that are similar to your own experiences.

**F) Outliers:** Identifies data that do not seem to “fit” with the rest of the data. Sometimes, these pieces of data are anomalies. Other times, they provide valuable information and new insights to your study.

- Which responses don’t seem to “fit” with your analysis? Which responses confuse you?

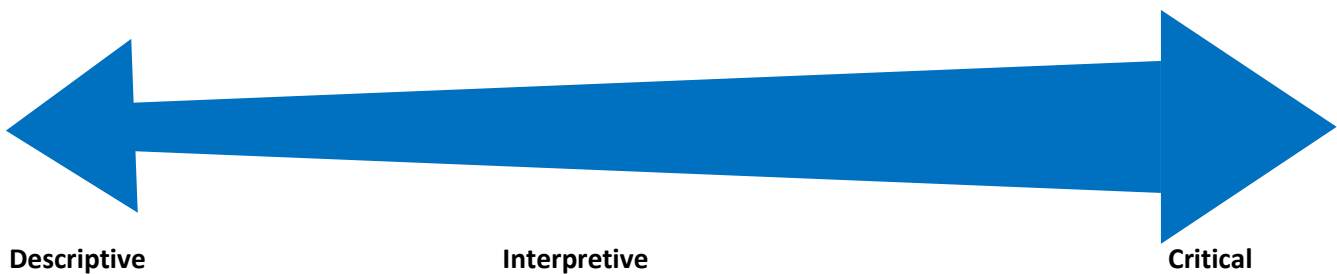
**Example:** In an Access Alliance research project on precarious employment, we had recruited for participants who had at least two years of paid work experience in precarious types of jobs. However, we realized after

examining our data that some of the participants had self-employment experience. We had not considered self-employment as a variable in our study parameter. Thus the self-employment data was an ‘outlier.’ However, upon closer analysis, we realized that many more participants have had some kind of experience with self-employment (even short term ones) and that self-employment was an important experience in people who are stuck in precarious employment. Based on this realization, we decided to make this ‘outlier’ an integral component of our analysis.



## Building your Analysis

**There are three levels of analysis: Descriptive, Interpretive and Critical.** These levels of analysis are not fixed categories. Rather, they are on a dynamic continuum. The more meaning and significance you assign to your analysis the more you move from descriptive to interpretive to a critical level of analysis; the process is cumulative. However, researchers may go back and forth in this continuum depending on the type of data and research goals.



**Descriptive analysis:** Simple descriptive analysis involves creating a list of themes/issues based on the data without examining the significance, meanings or relationships in and between these themes/issues. In descriptive analysis, you list and describe these without assigning them any order or significance. See example below of descriptive analysis of all the types of strategies that study participants said they used to get jobs and achieve income security (this is from Access Alliance’s Income Security, Race and Health study):

Example of Descriptive analysis: Strategies Utilized to Achieve Employment and Income Security	
<b>Strategies</b>	resumes, internet searchers, job posting boards; temporary agencies, approach potential employers directly; volunteering; networking; job fairs; adapt to Canadian labour market; government funded employment programs; Volunteering (to get Canadian experience); Take on survival jobs; employment insurance, workfare/welfare; income earning activity outside of the mainstream labour market (working ‘under-the-table’ jobs, criminal activity); Education & training (ESL, upgrade skills, obtaining equivalency for foreign credentials, apprenticeships, etc...); self-employment, Hope; patience; denial of negative impacts; advocating for change



**Interpretive analysis:** In this step, you give significance, hierarchical order, or meaning to the themes/issues you have generated. To do so, you may regroup themes/issues into the related categories and assign significance or order to them.

Continuing on the example based on data from Access Alliance’s Income Security, Race and Health project, the range of strategies identified by participants can be grouped into three categories : 1) Strategies used to find work, 2) Strategies used to financially make ends meet, 3) Strategies that invest into long-term solutions; and 4) protective responses..

<b>Example of interpretive analysis: Strategies Utilized to Achieve Employment and Income Security</b>		
<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Strategies Finding Work (short-term)</b>	Traditional Job search methods (resumes, internet searchers, job posting boards, etc...); temporary agencies, approach potential employers directly; volunteering; networking; job fairs; adapt to Canadian labour market; government funded employment programs; Volunteering (to get Canadian experience)
	<b>Strategies for Making Ends Meet (short-term)</b>	Take on survival jobs; make personal & professional sacrifices; employment insurance, workfare/welfare; income earning activity outside of the mainstream labour market (working ‘under-the-table’ jobs, criminal activity)
	<b>Long-term Solutions (resource intensive)</b>	Education & training (ESL, upgrade skills, obtaining equivalency for foreign credentials, apprenticeships, etc.); self-employment, financial literacy/strategies
	<b>Protective Responses</b>	Hope; patience; determination; denial of negative impacts; advocating for change



**Critical analysis:** This step takes interpretive analysis a step further and assigns social or political significance to the themes/ issues and come up with key arguments and conclusions. Critical analysis looks at participants' actions/experiences and places them in a wider context (the 'so what?' question). Answering the 'so what?' question can take you in many different directions. It is important to continually return to the goals of the research project.

See below for critical analysis generated from building from the descriptive and interpretive analysis from the data from the Income Security, Race and Health project.

#### **Example of Critical Analysis: Strategies Utilized to Achieve Employment and Income Security**

Findings from the study suggests that in spite of using all available mainstream resources and supports, racialized groups continue to face barriers in securing decent well paying jobs in their field and consequently face difficulties in meeting their everyday basic needs. In general, our preliminary analysis indicates that the most accessible mainstream programs/services to finding work present short-term strategies supporting families in their efforts to make ends meet from month-to-month. While participants from all focus groups did identify successful mainstream programs and services presenting long-term solutions, findings indicate that many racialized residents face multiple barriers accessing these programs/services. This suggests that existing mainstream job search, career training, and settlement services may not be effective solutions to addressing the challenges and barriers facing racialized groups, particularly barriers that are deeply rooted in larger systems of oppression and racism.



## ***Reading, Memoing and Coding***

**Reading** is the process of extracting meaning from written or printed word. As such, reading and reviewing your data is an important element in data analysis.

**Memoing** is the process of recording observations and thoughts about the data. This can be done in the margins of transcripts, in a notebook, or in emails to team members. Memoing can include first impressions, personal reflections, or questions and is a valuable stage of data analysis. Often, these initial memos frame the foundation of our later writing. It is also a rigorous method of naming and accounting for subjective reactions to the data.

**Coding** is a process of classification. Without classifying the data, it will be difficult to know what it is you are analysing. During the classification stage, if you are using interviews or focus groups, you may begin to generate a list of possible codes amongst your team. Codes are used to mark the processes that arise in your interview or focus group transcripts. Codes can be used to categorize the data both within and/or across



transcripts, and make up the foundation of your analysis. This is sometimes called the 'thematic' or 'coding framework'.



## ***Discussing Limitations of your Research***

All research projects have limitation. As discussed earlier, each research method has its strengths and weaknesses in terms of what kinds of data it can produce and not produce. Also, things may not go as planned during your research that changes the nature and quality of your data. Thus discussing the limitation of your research is vital part of analysis. It is good research practice to write down what went well and what did not and discuss how it impacted the quality and type of your data. It is also good practice to discuss what is not captured in your research. Discussing the limitations in your research data increases the integrity of your analysis/project. Moreover, it can help to identify what additional research needs to be done.

## EXAMPLE: IDENTIFYING CODES & MEMOS

Expectations of Canada:

Education Expectations:  
Continue studies home

R10B: For me, I also told myself that I was going to learn English and then from there go back to study something that I

had previously studied. But, I come here and I face a completely different reality. My challenge

was my English. Even though I was there, but as a Latino, being the way that it is, the majority of the time, the ones who are able to come in are the ones with very little money, no? Because they come

"caribe?" What does that mean?  
Need to check

here to work. But they have to give more time to work because we have to pay for things. So, in my case, the time passed, almost more than seven years, one as a *caribe* is not able to study English because

they have to dedicate themselves...so

over those seven years, I fell behind. So, the longer I was here, the longer this process unfolded. But for writing,

grammar, so then I told myself 'I'm going to bring my degree' and so I went to the west and converted (?)

translated everything ??? but, the barrier was always my English. One has to know the language to write the TOEFL

examination, and in my case, study...or for being a teaching

assistant, in order to be a teacher. But yeah, as we get older, we have and it becomes more difficult. So, this...well, your dreams no longer

reality. So, you try to take up different types of jobs. In my case, was work with kids and in childcare.

Barriers to Learning

English: No time, need to work (pay bills)

"Although they did not explicitly say that their expectation to learn English was not meant, this is definitely implied. Lack of time is mentioned as a barrier, so is family (I am assuming they are related)"

our own families ever seem to become a something that I was able to do

"Why was childcare selected to be the profession they were to pursue in Canada? Is this the live-in care giver program? Need to find out if their plans to be a child care worker improved their chances of being accepted into Canada? Is it possible that these expectations around 'taking care of children' limited their imagination of what could be possible?"

Expectations of Canada:

Work Expectations: Child care worker;

Expectations Not Met:

Dreams Disappear



## Simple Quantitative Analysis Practice Exercises

*In your team, do the following exercises.*

**Exercise 1- Current Health Status:** Calculate what percentage of participants said that their current health status is less than 'good'. Calculate both actual percentage and 'adjusted percentage' (adjusted percentage is based on total number of participants that answered the question).

Would you say your current health is:

		Frequency
Valid	Excellent	9
	Very good	13
	Good	23
	Fair (Just ok, Not good, not bad)	20
	Poor	10
	Total	75
Missing	System	3
Total		78

**Exercise 2- Change in community responsibilities, Gender and Age:** This data is from a research project about refugee youth talking about changes in their responsibilities after coming to Canada. Calculate the 'adjusted percentage' of participants who said their responsibilities 'changed a lot' vs. 'changed a little' and compare them by gender and age. Take a closer look at the missing value (those who did not answer the question) and see if there is a pattern in that and discuss how this impacts on the results.

### Change in Community responsibilities after coming to Canada & Gender

	Female	Male	Grand Total
Changed a little	17	8	25
Changed a lot	6	13	19
Not changed		1	1
(blank)	5	8	13
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>58</b>

### Change in Community responsibilities after coming to Canada & Age

	16-19	20-24	(blank)	Grand Total
Changed a little	13	11	1	25
Changed a lot	9	10		19
Not changed		1		1
(blank)	3	10		13
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>58</b>





# **Chapter 6**

## **How to Share your Results and Make Positive Change**



## Sharing your Data

You have finished analysing your data and have summarized your findings. Findings are like stories. What story do you want to pitch? Who do you want to tell it to? What key messages do you want people to hear? The story might change depending on the audience. The **Knowledge Exchange Planning Tool** can be found in the **Worksheets section on page 82**. Use this tool to brainstorm possible knowledge sharing options.

### **Now what? So what?** **new knowledge → positive change**

**WHO** do you want to reach?

- ✓ If you want your research to affect the community, you need to share with community members, families, service providers, local activists and community leaders.
- ✓ If you want to make changes at the municipal, provincial or federal level, you need to share your findings with government officials, politicians and policy makers.

**WHAT** findings to you want to share?

- ✓ This depends on what the goals of your research project were? If your goal is to highlight a policy gap then you need to succinctly synthesize the findings that show the presence and impact of the policy gap. If your goal was to influence particular practices within social service agencies, you may want to share findings on best practices with social service workers.

**HOW** to share your findings?

- ✓ How can you disseminate your findings in a way suited to your audience? What community leaders can help to connect you with people, and ensure that your message is accessible?
- ✓ Are there major events that you can connect your research to once it has been completed? (e.g. conferences, days focusing on a particular issue, etc.)
- ✓ What resources do you have (human and material) to maximize your ability to distribute your findings?
- ✓ How are you going to make sure that relevant people read your report and take action on your recommendations?

**WHEN** do you want to share your findings?

- ✓ What are the timelines for sharing your results?
- ✓ Are there other related community events that you can partner with?
- ✓ Does a newspaper or magazine have a special focus or edition that will relate to your work?
- ✓ Are some of the dissemination activities time-sensitive?

**WHERE** do you want to share your findings?



- ✓ What are the available venues to share your findings? Do you need a space where you can display photos, show a presentation or a venue that's big enough to accommodate your audience?

Follow up is also important in doing effective knowledge exchange. Make sure you build in time and process to find out if relevant people have read your report and have taken action on your recommendations. If they have not, you can brainstorm new strategies to make this happen.

## Knowledge Exchange Planning Tool

*E.g. Research Question: Safety- what spaces and places in schools are safe/not safe? Tool: Photovoice*

Who	What do they want to hear?	What do YOU want THEM to hear?	How? (tools, strategies)	When?	Where?
<i>Eg. My classmates/peers</i>	<i>What the other students are saying about safe and unsafe spaces.</i>	<i>That the students have spoken up and have something to say about where safe and unsafe spaces are in school.</i>	<i>Have an event to display the photos and the stories.</i>	<i>May 14</i>	<i>Gym</i>
Principals, Teachers and School Board					
Policy Makers and Local Politicians					
Students/Classmates/Peers					
Parents/Guardians and Community					



## Mediums for Sharing Knowledge

There are many different tools, formats, and mediums through which you can share your research findings. This can include:

- Research Report
- Plain language report
- Policy Brief
- Academic journal article
- Fact Sheets
- Conference presentation
- Workshops/forums
- Lessons learned/Best Practices
- Webinar
- Deputations to government committees
- Policy roundtables
- Press Release

Different audiences may prefer certain types of report or communication format. Service providers may prefer face to face workshops/presentations and plain language version of your report.

Reaching policy makers is important in making broader change. Policy makers prefer short 2-3 page policy brief. If the timing works, you may be able to give a deputation about your research findings to a relevant government committee. You can use the following tool to help develop policy solutions based on your research findings:

### Policy Solutions Mapping Tool

Theme	Findings and Implications	Policy Domain (list all relevant policy, regulations and guidelines)	Policy Effectiveness/Gaps (identify opportunities and gaps within existing policies)	Policy Solutions/Next Step (Who, How, When and Opportunities for Collaboration)



## Developing Key Messages

Most people are busy and may not have time to read your full research report. Developing concise key messages is an important part of knowledge sharing. Below is an example Key Message from Access Alliance’s Income Security Race and Health Project. A blank version of this tool can be found in the **Worksheets section, on page 83**.

<b>Developing Key Messages: Promoting Good Jobs</b>	
<p><b>SNAPSHOT: Working rough, living poor: Employment and income insecurities faced by racialized groups in the Black Creek Area and their Impacts on Health.</b> By Wilson R, Landolt P, Shakya Y, Galabuzi G, Zahoorunissa Z, Pham F, Dahy S, Joly M-P. 2011; Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services.</p> <p>This report is a result of community-based research conducted in Toronto’s Black Creek neighbourhood in collaboration with local residents. We conducted 8 focus groups with diverse groups of racialized residents from the Black Creek area (n=105) who identified as being stuck in precarious employment. We also conducted 3 focus groups with service providers (n=24).</p> <p>Participant narratives reveal the everyday forces that systematically push racialized families into protracted conditions of precarious employment (part-time, low-paying, unstable jobs without benefits). Experiences of study participants point to a highly discriminatory and exploitative Canadian labour market where race-based discrimination and racialization strongly determine access to stable ‘fair’ employment. Moreover, we found that existing employment resource programs, resume clinics, and job search services are largely ineffective because these services seek to meet the needs of, rather than overcome, the highly discriminatory and increasingly precarious labour market. “Temp agencies” in particular play a salient role in channelling people, including highly qualified immigrants, into precarious employment trajectory.</p> <p>Study results also indicate that protracted exposure to precarious employment and income insecurity is damaging to health (and costly to Canadian healthcare). Participants attributed precarious employment conditions as the key cause of many health issues including digestive disorders, physiological and cardiovascular impacts, injuries, and mental health. Participants were particularly concerned about the cumulative “health strain” and deterioration of overall health for themselves and their family and children.</p> <p>For more information about this project and to download a copy of our report visit: <a href="http://www.accessalliance.ca">www.accessalliance.ca</a></p>	<p><b><u>POLICY MAKERS (LABOUR MARKET): Improve Regulations</u></b> <b>Evidence calls for policy solutions to stop systemic discrimination and growing precarity in the labour market:</b> Study evidence underscore urgent need for bold policy solutions to (i) protect precarious workers and enable them to get stable employment (expand and enforce <i>Employment Standards Act</i> to extend rights to precarious workers and promote ‘fair employment;’ improve enforcement of <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act</i>; improve regulation of temp agencies through the <i>Employment Standards Amendment Act -Temporary Help Agencies</i>); (ii) eliminate discrimination in the labour market and promote employment equity (revive the <i>Employment Equity Act for Ontario</i> and improve implementation of <i>Federal Employment Equity Act</i>; stronger oversight by <i>Ontario Human Rights Commission</i> in the labour market and establishment of national <i>Equity and Anti-Racism Directorate</i>).</p> <p><b><u>EMPLOYMENT AND SETTLEMENT STAFF: Strengthen linkages</u></b> <b>Cross-sector collaboration that build direct linkages to stable employment pathways works best:</b> Our evidence indicate that most employment and settlement services focus on retraining job seekers to fit the needs of a highly discriminatory and increasingly precarious labour market. We need to move away from short-term and superficial fixes (like ‘re-jigging resume’ or training immigrants on Canadian labour market ‘etiquette’) and instead offer services that can build long-term employment security for everyone.</p> <p><b><u>HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP: Improve access and quality</u></b> <b>Healthcare sector leaders have an important role to play in promoting health of precarious workers:</b> Precarious employment not just results in detrimental health impacts (with high costs to Canadian healthcare) but also undermines access to healthcare and the ability to take care of one’s health. Healthcare leaders need to (i) develop proactive solutions to improve access and responsiveness of healthcare for precariously employed families; and, (ii) champion for ‘fair employment,’ anti-discrimination, and workplace safety policies since these are important determinants of health.</p>





# Chapter 7

## How to Develop a Project Plan



## Project Planning

Planning for a research project is different than planning another project. As we outlined earlier, doing research has many parts:

Design → Method → Ethics → Data Collection → Analysis → Sharing

This chapter discusses important things to consider in planning your research project and contains useful tools to help you.



### Project Planning Framework

The following is a description of the different components of your project framework. A blank version of this tool can be found in the **Worksheets section, on pages 84-86.**

#### Objectives and scope of the project

What is it you are interested in finding out about? Once the team has decided on a research question and methodology of how you are going to try to answer your research question, you can plan out your objective and scope.

*Example: You may decide based on your budget, time and other resources that you have, you are going to buy one camera and get 6 participants to do photovoice to capture their experiences in youth drop-in programs.*

#### Guiding principles for the project

As a team, you should decide what each person will be responsible for, when each part of the project will be completed by, and what is your communication and work plan, which will help you address any conflicts if they come up.

*Example:*

- *Communication plan- you have decided that email is the best way to reach everyone and that team members have 2 days to respond and give feedback unless otherwise stated.*
- *Safer community- you have decided that as a team that your research should contribute to making the neighbourhood a safer place*

#### Team members and partners

List all of the team members' names and what their roles/responsibilities will be on the project. Some examples of responsibilities:

- Organizing meetings
- Managing the budget



- Purchasing the materials needed
- Doing the data collection (either conducting interviews, running a focus group) – this will likely be many of the team members
- Doing the data analysis- likely a collaborative effort with all of the team members
- Producing the knowledge exchange materials (report, toolkit, infographic flyer, zine)
- Organizing a knowledge exchange event

List all other external partners and what you see as their role. These can include:

- People/agencies to deliver training sessions to your project team
- People/agencies to consult with on the subject matter of your project, community expert or policy maker for example
- People/agencies who are interested in seeing the results of your research

### Project timeline

Your project timeline will map out when the key project activities will be completed. Here is list of average times you should allow for the different parts of your research project (these can vary significantly).

Project Activities	Average Time
✓ Ethics approval	3-8 weeks
✓ Recruiting participants *This depends widely on what your data collection method is, and how many participants you plan on reaching. This should be kept in mind when choosing your method.	2 weeks minimum for a small sample 1 week notice to anyone who you would like to participate in your data collection
✓ Data Collection *This depends on what method you choose and how many participants.	3-6 weeks minimum
✓ Data Analysis	3 weeks minimum for initial framing of streams of analysis
✓ Event to share research (knowledge exchange)	4-5 weeks' notice of an event that you want community members and partners to attend

### Project budget

This is where you will estimate all of your project costs and plan what your team can afford to do. This is an important component of project feasibility.

Here are some average costs you might encounter in your project.

Project Materials	Costs
Disposable camera	\$8-\$15
Digital camera	\$100-\$150 (for basic digital camera)

Voice recorder	\$30-\$60
Black and White photocopies (50 copies)	\$2.50-\$5.00
Colour photocopies (50 copies)	\$15-\$25
Memory key/USB key (2GB)	\$10-\$15

Another key component of project planning is to have a good project evaluation plan. Identify all the things you want to achieve and how you are going to measure if you succeeded in these. Then develop evaluation forms and follow process to find out to what extent you met these goals. Discuss this in your process report.

## Working in a team

Conventional research is often conducted by a single researcher or a few researchers. In collaborative action research projects, or community-based research projects, working together with a team or people who bring different strengths to the team, **working collaboratively** is fundamental. People who do this type of research believe that doing research in collaboration allows for richer, more rigorous and more socially meaningful knowledge. Partnering with people who have a shared interest in working with you or supporting you in your project is central to collaboration.



Benefits of doing research collaboratively:

- 1) All members of the team and external partners can bring their strengths and their different perspectives to the project;
- 2) Roles and responsibilities can be divided between many people;
- 3) Doing research in collaboration can make the research process more fun and engaging.



## How do we work together as a team?

It is important that all members of your project team have agreed to some guidelines of how you will conduct your research project. Some things to consider:

1. What is each person's role on the team? Is there one team member who will be in charge of setting up meetings? Another team member who will lead recruitment for your data collection?

As a team, have each person write down what they think their strengths are, what they can bring to the team. It's important to provide an opportunity for each person to share their strengths with the team.



Based on the strengths identified and each member's availability/capacity to carry out different tasks, you will be able to determine everyone's roles and responsibilities. See the **Worksheets section, "Mapping your Strengths" on page 87.**

2. Discuss your communication plan, and how you will make decisions. You can use different ways of decision making depending on situation and need:

a) **Consensus** maintains an open dialogue to allow for team members to come to the same agreement/understanding. In a situation where there are 2 different approaches on the table, a 3<sup>rd</sup> approach is developed that fulfills the views of all team members.

b) **Compromise** meets halfway between 2 (or more) different opinions. This could be adopting some components of both opinions, while dropping some other components.

c) **Voting** is used when consensus and compromise fail to work and uses a system of "majority wins" to vote on decisions.

### **Process Report**

You can learn a lot from doing research together. These lessons can be written up in a process report and shared broadly so other research teams can also benefit from these lessons learned. In the process report, document how you formed your team, how you worked together, all the steps your team followed to plan and implement the study, the challenges and roadblock you faced along the way, and how you tried to address/overcome them. And then include a list of lessons learned and recommendations. Process report is also where you discuss the results from your project evaluation.





# WORKSHEETS



## Deciding on a Research Topic

Issues/Topics	Why important?	What do we need to find out more about this issue/topic?	Notes

**Final Research Topic/Issue:**

**Why your team decided on this topic:**



## Research Design Tool

*Use these guiding questions to help your team identify your research question and specific steps about how you are going to get answers for that question and what you are going to do with it.*

**Issues/Topic:** What issues/concerns do you have? What do you want to see changed/improved?

**Research Question:** What specifically do we want to know about this issue? What do we need to know?

**Research Goals:** Why do we want to know this?

**Participant sample and Recruitment:** Where do we go to find out? Who do we ask? How are we going to reach them?

**Research Ethics:** How are we going to convince them to talk to us? How are we going to make sure they don't feel pressured or coerced to talk to us? How are we going to ensure they feel safe and comfortable talking to us?

**Data Collection process/questions:** How are we going to ask so we get relevant information to answer our question?

**Analysis and Sharing of Results:** What are we going to do with this information? Who needs to hear this information? How are we going to use this information to make a positive change?



# Knowledge Exchange Planning Tool

*E.g. Research Question: Safety- what spaces and places in schools are safe/not safe? Tool: Photovoice*

Who	What do they want to hear?	What do YOU want THEM to hear?	How? (tools, strategies)	When?	Where?
<i>Eg. My classmates/peers</i>	<i>What the other students are saying about safe and unsafe spaces.</i>	<i>That the students have spoken up and have something to say about where safe and unsafe spaces are in school.</i>	<i>Have an event to display the photos and the stories.</i>	<i>May 14</i>	<i>Gym</i>



## Developing Key Messages

<i>Research Question:</i>	
Project Snapshot	COMMUNITY MEMBERS:
	OTHER ACTIVIST GROUPS/NON-PROFIT AGENCIES:
	POLITICIANS:
	POLICY MAKERS:



## Project Planning Framework

Our Research Question:

*Objective: What do we want to accomplish as a team?*

*Guiding Principles: What are some important values/considerations going into our project?*

*Project Team Members (name and contact)*

*Roles and Responsibilities*

<i>Project Team Members (name and contact)</i>	<i>Roles and Responsibilities</i>

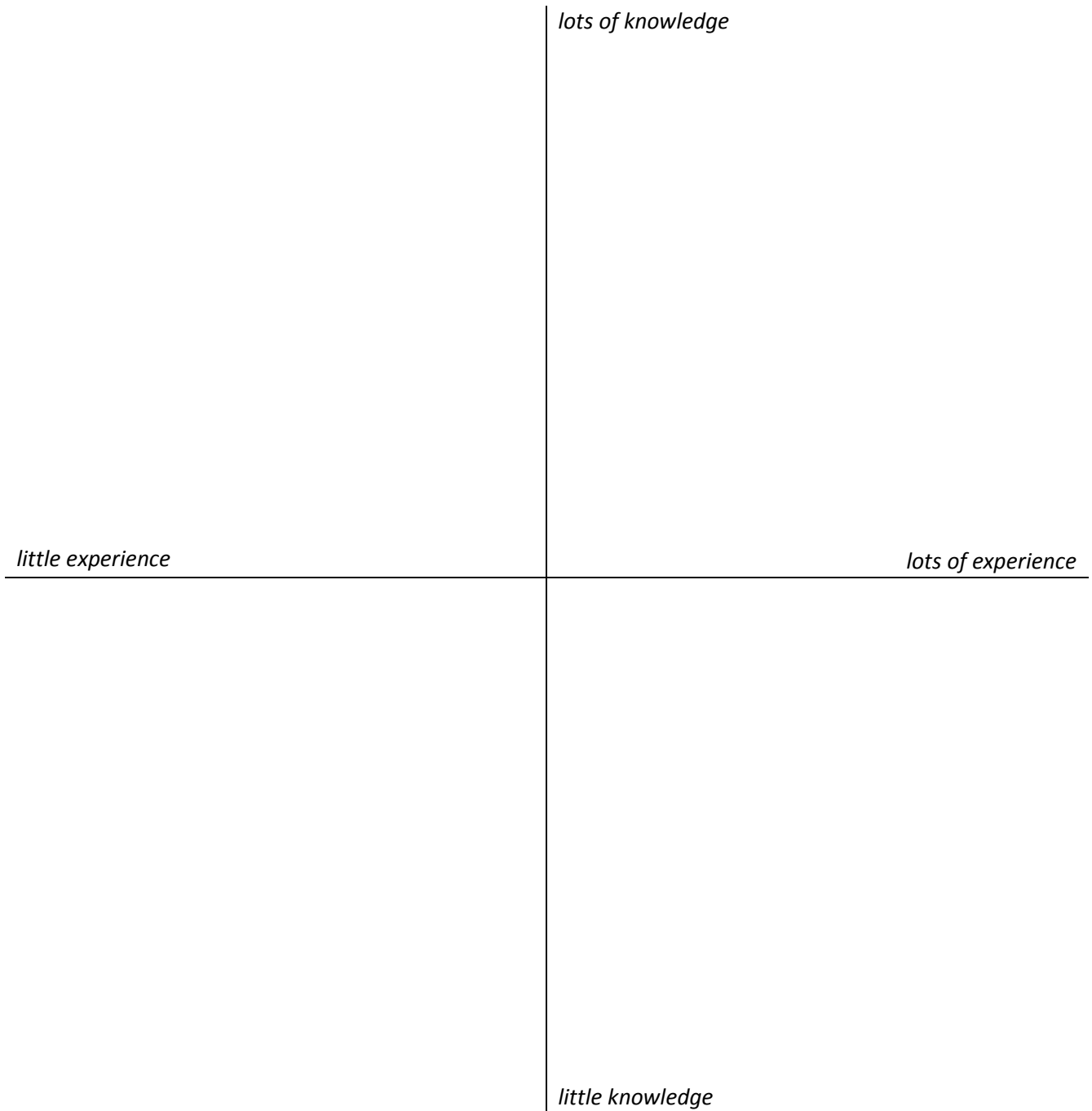






## Mapping your Strengths

Plot your research skills (e.g. focus groups, recruitment) and other relevant skills (e.g. spreadsheets, networking) on the chart below.





## Resource List

Access Alliance (2011). *Community-Based Research Toolkit: Resources and Tools for Doing Research with Community for Social Change*. Toronto: Access Alliance. Can be downloaded from <http://accessalliance.ca/research/capacity/cbrtoolkit>

ArtReach Toronto. (2011). Community-Based Participatory Research Kit (GOAL Youth Workshop Series). Available for download here: [www.artreachtoronto.ca/toolkits/](http://www.artreachtoronto.ca/toolkits/)

Israel BA, Eng E, Schulz AJ, Parker EA. (Eds.) (2005). *Methods in Community-Based Participatory Research for Health*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Minkler M, Wallerstein N. (Eds.) (2003). *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Pass, Siobahn, and Elsie Vasquez. "Contributions and Challenges of Observational Research in Evaluating Participatory Action Research." *Practising Anthropology* 26.2 (Spring 2004): 56-61. Print.

Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans  
[www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/tcps-eptc/](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/tcps-eptc/)

Tutorial for the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Tutorial  
[www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/tutorial](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/tutorial)

*The Research Matters Knowledge Translation Toolkit: A Resource for Researchers*. (International Development Research Centre and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) Available from [www.research-matters.net](http://www.research-matters.net)

### See also the following websites for more resources on CBR:

Campus Community Partnership for Health (CCPH): <http://ccph.info/>

<http://www.cbprcurriculum.info/>



**Good Luck with your Research Project!!!!**

**We would love to hear from you about how you used this toolkit and whether it was useful for your work. Send feedback at [research@accessalliance.ca](mailto:research@accessalliance.ca)**