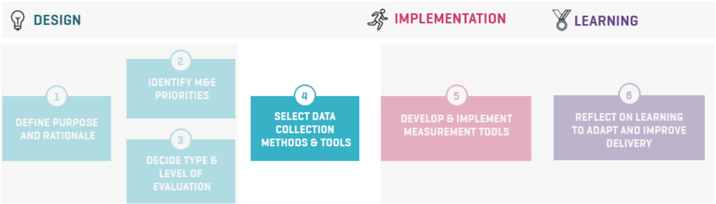
SPORT ENGLAND



Data Collection Methods & Tools

Use the interactive toolbox below to help identify the most relevant data collection methods for your project or funding stream

Click on a box to learn more about the data collection method.

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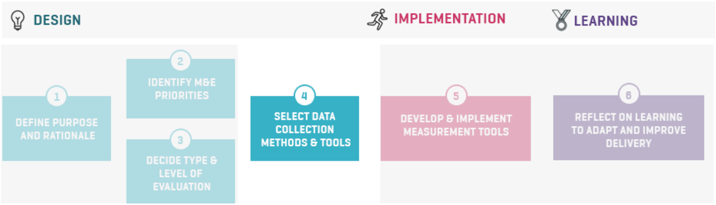
	Quantitative		Qualitative
Process Evaluation	PARTICIPATION & ACTIVITY RECORDS	MEETINGS & CONVERSATIONS	ETHNOGRAPHY & OBSERVATION
	SURVEYS & QUESTIONNAIRES	INTERVIEWS	DIARIES
Impact Evaluation	OFFICIAL DATA / STATISTICS	FINANCIAL / ECONOMIC ANALYSIS	FOCUS GROUPS

These are the most commonly used methods within project M&E systems



Participation & Activity Records

WHAT IS IT?

- Records of participants, activities and throughput (total attendances), including the number and nature of activities and participant demographics (age, gender)
- Participation and activity records form the basis of the process evaluation helping to ensure a project is going to plan
- The data collected enables any issues or problems to be identified, raised and addressed at an early stage

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- Recording of activities and participants should take place throughout the implementation of a project or programme
- Records should be kept for all types of activities (e.g. training, workshops) as well as sport / exercise sessions and events
- The amount of data you collect will depend on the nature of the project – and what you want to learn from the project

HOW TO DO IT

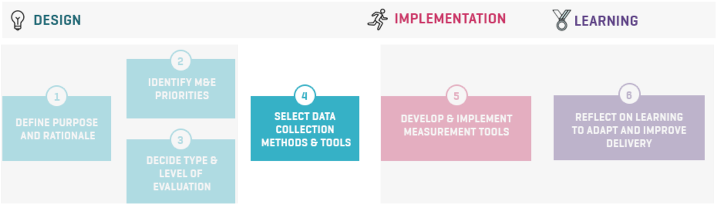
- Create registration forms, session registers and any other tools you will need to keep records of activities and participants at the outset of the project
- Collect as much information as is feasible, including:
  - **Participant registration details**
  - **Number of activities conducted & hours of provision**
  - **Participants attendance at each session (‘throughput’)**
  - **Participant demographics**

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

✓ Plan ahead! Create the templates & registration forms you need at the outset of the project

✓ Use Sport England’s ‘Standard Measures Question Bank’ for collecting demographic information

✓ If you are targeting a particular group – make sure your M&E tools enable you to identify them!



Surveys & Questionnaires

WHAT IS IT?

- Surveys enable data to be collected relatively quickly and easily by asking a series of questions to a group of people, such as project participants
- Surveys can be used to track behaviours, opinions and attitudes over time, or at different points in time – this can be really useful for evaluating the impact of a funding stream or project
- Surveys can be conducted online, by post, in person or by telephone

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- Surveys can be used to find out a range of information about a group of people, including attitudes, behaviours and opinions
- The data that surveys produce is good for identifying patterns or common themes and for analysing trends or changes
- Surveys are very flexible and can be used for process evaluation and for impact and outcome evaluation

HOW TO DO IT

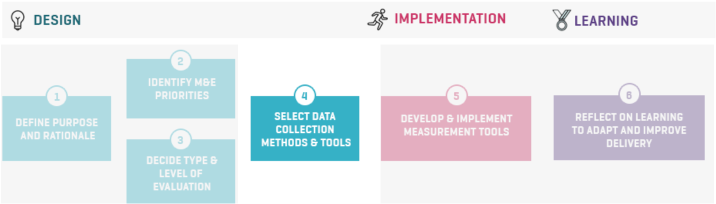
- Be clear about what you are trying to measure and the data you need to collect
- Develop a set of simple, concise, easy to understand questions that will provide you with the information you need
- If you are using surveys for impact evaluation, you may need to conduct the same survey at the <u>start</u> and again at the <u>end</u> of the project, so you can identify any changes that have occurred

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

✓ Be clear about what 'population' you want to find out about – this might be a demographic group (e.g. Men 65+) or just the participants of a specific activity

✓ Use Sport England's 'Standard Measures Question Bank' if you are measuring any of the standardised physical activity outcomes

✓ There are free online survey tools available (e.g. Survey Monkey, Google Forms) that can make designing surveys and collecting survey data quicker and easier



Interviews

WHAT IS IT?

- Interviews involve asking a series of questions to one person (or a small group) to gain in-depth information about a chosen topic
- Can be conducted in person, over the telephone or online
- Interviews allow respondents to explain and expand upon answers to questions, allowing richer data to be collected about individual’s attitudes, behaviours and experiences

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- Interviews should be used when in-depth information about a group/audience is required to provide more detailed understanding than a basic survey can provide
- Interviews are often used to complement quantitative data collected through other methods (e.g. surveys)
- Interviews can be used for process evaluation and outcome evaluation – to support both learning and measuring the impact of a project or programme

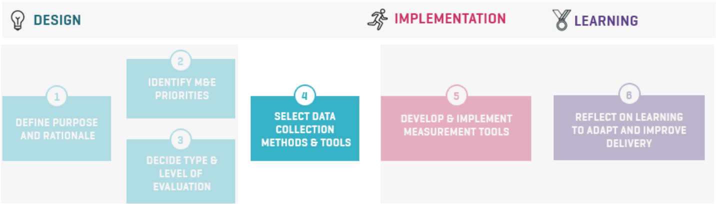
HOW TO DO IT

- Develop a question guide so all interviewees are asked the same questions – but be flexible in the interview and allow the discussion to progress naturally
- Ask open questions that encourage respondents to discuss a topic in detail and explore their thoughts and feelings
- Create a comfortable environment for respondents so they are more willing to open up and be honest

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

✓ Be clear about what you want to learn from the interviews – and the style of questioning (open or closed questions) that will give you what you need

✓ Be aware of the limitations: findings from a few interviews may not be representative of everyone, but can uncover things that other methods will not



Meetings & Conversations

WHAT IS IT?

- An informal method of obtaining information about how a project is progressing
- It is often overlooked, but regular meetings and conversations with the delivery team and other stakeholders can raise issues, unexpected outcomes and learnings that can be logged and feed into the process evaluation
- Speaking to participants can also provide an insight into how project delivery could be improved

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- Collecting data via meetings and conversations is suitable for process evaluation on any project or programme
- It is best used in conjunction with quantitative methods, such as participant and activity records, to provide context and understanding to numeric data
- Not generally suitable for impact and outcome evaluation

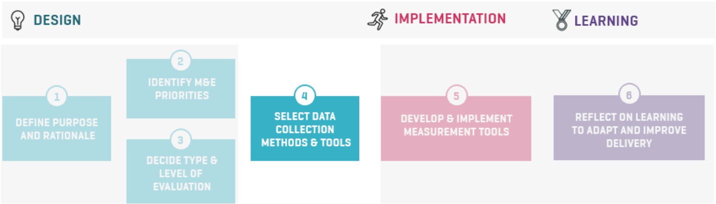
HOW TO DO IT

- Identify at the outset who are the most important people to talk to – schedule meetings or set time aside to speak to them
- Specify important topics and structure meetings or conversations around these discussion areas
- Take the time to document what is discussed so findings from meetings and conversations can feed into the process evaluation

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

✓ Identify the best people to speak to – those close to activities, such as participants and co-ordinators, can often provide particularly useful insight

✓ Try to speak to a range of people to develop a clear picture of how the delivery of the project is going



Focus Groups

WHAT IS IT?

- Group discussions involving 6 to 12 people who share similar attitudinal or behavioural characteristics
- Run by a facilitator, focus groups enable discussions to develop, with everyone encouraged to give their opinions
- Provide rich, qualitative data about a group of people's attitudes, behaviours and ideas about a particular topic

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- Focus groups are most suited to outcome evaluation
- Particularly appropriate where certain outcomes relate to participants attitudes, opinions or experiences
- This type of data collection produces in-depth, qualitative data – this is great for understanding an audience, but will not provide comparative, statistical data about a population

HOW TO DO IT

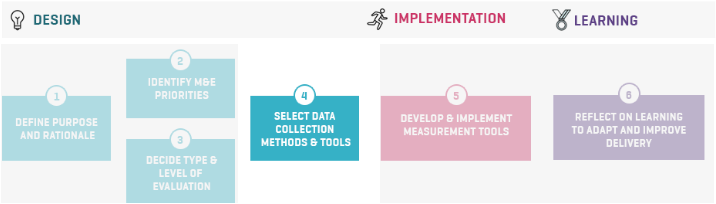
- Identify a facilitator and develop a discussion guide to provide a structure
- Recruit participants and break them into groups of between 6 and 12 based on their attitudinal or behavioural characteristics
- Make the groups feel as comfortable and natural as possible
- Record the group's conversation or have someone taking notes (preferably not the facilitator) on the discussions taking place

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

✓ Cover the most important topics first and encourage everyone to get involved in the group discussions

✓ Be careful not to ask leading questions – ask open questions, then probe for further information

✓ As a facilitator, don't make assumptions about what participants mean – if it's unclear, ask for clarification



Ethnography & Observation

WHAT IS IT?

- A way of gathering data through the observation of people in a natural setting
- Ethnography can be purely observational or participatory (when a researcher participates with the people they are observing)
- Ethnographic methods help to understand people’s motivations, behaviours and experiences ‘in context’ – uncovering things that participants may not realize they do or be unwilling to talk about in interviews or focus groups

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- In M&E, ethnography and observation is usually used for process evaluation
- It can be useful for refining project activities by identifying ways to better meet audience needs and can help establish what has gone well and what hasn’t gone well with a project
- Ethnography is most effective with small groups, where participant experience is a key element of the project

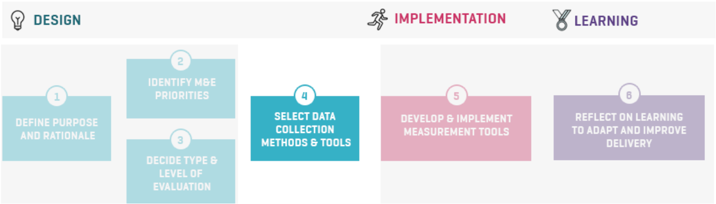
HOW TO DO IT

- You should inform the people you want to observe about what you are doing – there are ethical issues with conducting ‘covert’ observation of other people
- Get to know the people that you are studying – the more comfortable they are around you, the more natural they will be
- Develop pre-set questions to help focus your observations and field notes around the topics you are most interested in

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

✓ Think about what types of information you can collect – quotes, stories, photos and videos can help to bring findings to life

✓ Be aware of observer bias; our own values and beliefs influence the judgements we make about others



Diaries

WHAT IS IT?

- A way of collecting qualitative data by asking individuals to keep a record of their experiences and feelings over a period of time
- Participant diaries can be structured or un-structured depending on what type of data is required
- The key advantage of using diaries is that experiences are recorded as they happen, so there is less reliance on recall

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- Most appropriate for projects with a longitudinal element, where participant's experiences, opinions and feelings over time are an important source of understanding
- Data from diaries are useful to support either process or outcome evaluation, but are most effective used in conjunction with quantitative data collection methods

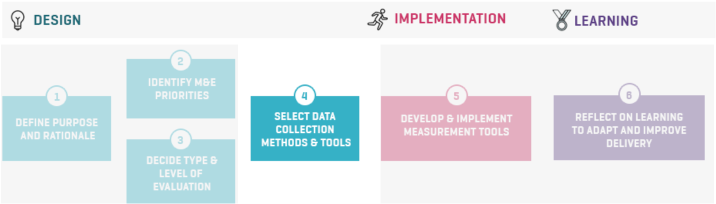
HOW TO DO IT

- Find/recruit a selection of participants who are happy to keep a diary about the activities or events they are taking part in
- Develop a diary structure – this might be specific questions you want answering or a set of general guideline topics that you want participants to write about
- Put time aside for analysing the data – this can take a long time, especially if diary entries are unstructured

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

✓ Provide clear instructions to diary-keepers about what they should write about and when they should write their diary entries

✓ Try to ensure that participants keeping diaries are a good representation of the audience you are interested in, so you avoid focusing on one perspective



Official Data & Statistics

WHAT IS IT?

- A variety of organisations collect and publish data and statistics that can be utilised in measurement and evaluation
- Public organisations such as Sport England and Public Health England produce data on a range of topics including physical activity, health and wellbeing
- Many official statistics hold data at region or local authority level, so they provide information on local statistical trends

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- Using official statistics as an evaluation tool is only appropriate for large-scale, long-term programmes that have the potential to impact large populations – even then, statistics should be used with caution and knowledge of their limitations
- Official statistics should only make up one component of a programme’s outcome evaluation – results are only indicative of a programme’s impact and do not provide proof of causation

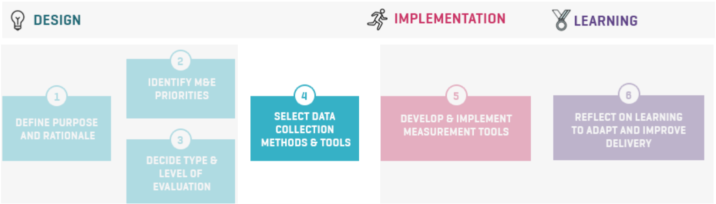
HOW TO DO IT

- After identifying your project objectives, carry out some research to see if any official statistics can be used as relevant measures for the outcomes you are trying to achieve
- Use the most recent data release as a ‘baseline’ – future releases can then be monitored to view trends within the locality where the project is operating

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

✓ Bear in mind that most official statistics track very large populations – this means they are often not appropriate for measuring project impact

✓ Most official statistics are only released once a year, so they will not give a short-term view of impact



Financial & Economic Analysis

WHAT IS IT?

- A method of collecting financial data to measure and evaluate the success of financial or economic outcomes
- Provides the data that allows commonly used financial analyses to be conducted, such as a ‘cost-benefit’ analysis
- Often involves a variety of other data collection methods – surveys, focus groups etc. – to collect data that can be converted into, or expressed in, monetary terms

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- Financial or economic analyses are relevant to project’s that aim to deliver one or more financial or economic outcomes
- It is only appropriate to conduct financial impact analysis when outcomes can be calculated in monetary terms
- Primarily used for impact and outcome evaluation, but the data collected may also support process evaluation

HOW TO DO IT

- Define your intended financial outcomes at the outset of the project
- Be clear about how success will be measured and whether a financial model (e.g. cost-benefit analysis) will be used to do this - Sport England has developed its own ‘Local Economic Value of Sport Model’ which is a good place to start
- Identify the data that is required to calculate the financial value of the project and develop the tools required to collect this data

TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST OUT OF IT

✓ Be very clear at the start about what financial outcomes you want to deliver and what data will allow you to measure if these have been achieved

✓ Define rules and be consistent and transparent with how non-financial data (e.g. improved physical health) is converted into monetary value for analysis