

## Data Collection

Gathering, organizing, and analyzing information can help you make more effective decisions when planning and developing programs, designing promotional campaigns, or making any type of organizational change. **Primary data** is new research that your organization conducts in order to answer a specific set of questions. **Secondary data** is research that has already been conducted with results that are transferable for your organization's use. Because of the expense and time involved in conducting original research, secondary data is often used in place of, or to complement the findings of, primary data. In the case that the information you need is specific to a particular set of people, place, or time it may be necessary to design and implement primary research in order to obtain accurate and relevant data.

### **The steps in the research design process are:**

1. Define the problem that needs to be solved.
2. Develop a set of questions that answer the problem.
3. Find secondary data that answers the questions.
4. Identify new sources of information that could be evaluated.
5. Design primary data collection instruments.
6. Conduct primary research.
7. Develop a tool to organize the data, usually a spreadsheet or database.
8. Compile and summarize the data.
9. Analyze the results and develop answers to questions.
10. Share the results with decision makers.

### **Sources of secondary data include:**

1. **Federal government agencies**, such as the US Census Bureau, Housing and Urban Development, and Bureau of Labor Statistics provide a variety of information. The online gateway to federal statistics is [www.fedstats.gov](http://www.fedstats.gov).
2. **State and local government agencies** provide statistics about education, crime, business and economics, and healthcare.
3. **Universities** often conduct community-based or other research of relevance to program planning and development.
4. **Think tanks and policy organizations** conduct research on a variety of topics
5. **Directories** list people, organizations, and places that could be sources of further information.
6. **Articles** in trade journals often cite statistics in addition to detailed analyses.

### **Sources of primary data include:**

1. **Interviews** with people who can provide insight
2. **Surveys and Questionnaires** which are comprised of
  - Yes and No questions
  - Ratings – statements are evaluated according to a scale
  - Rankings – items are placed in order of importance
  - Open ended questions
3. **Focus groups** moderated by an objective third party
4. **Observation** of people's behavior, expressions, actions, and reactions