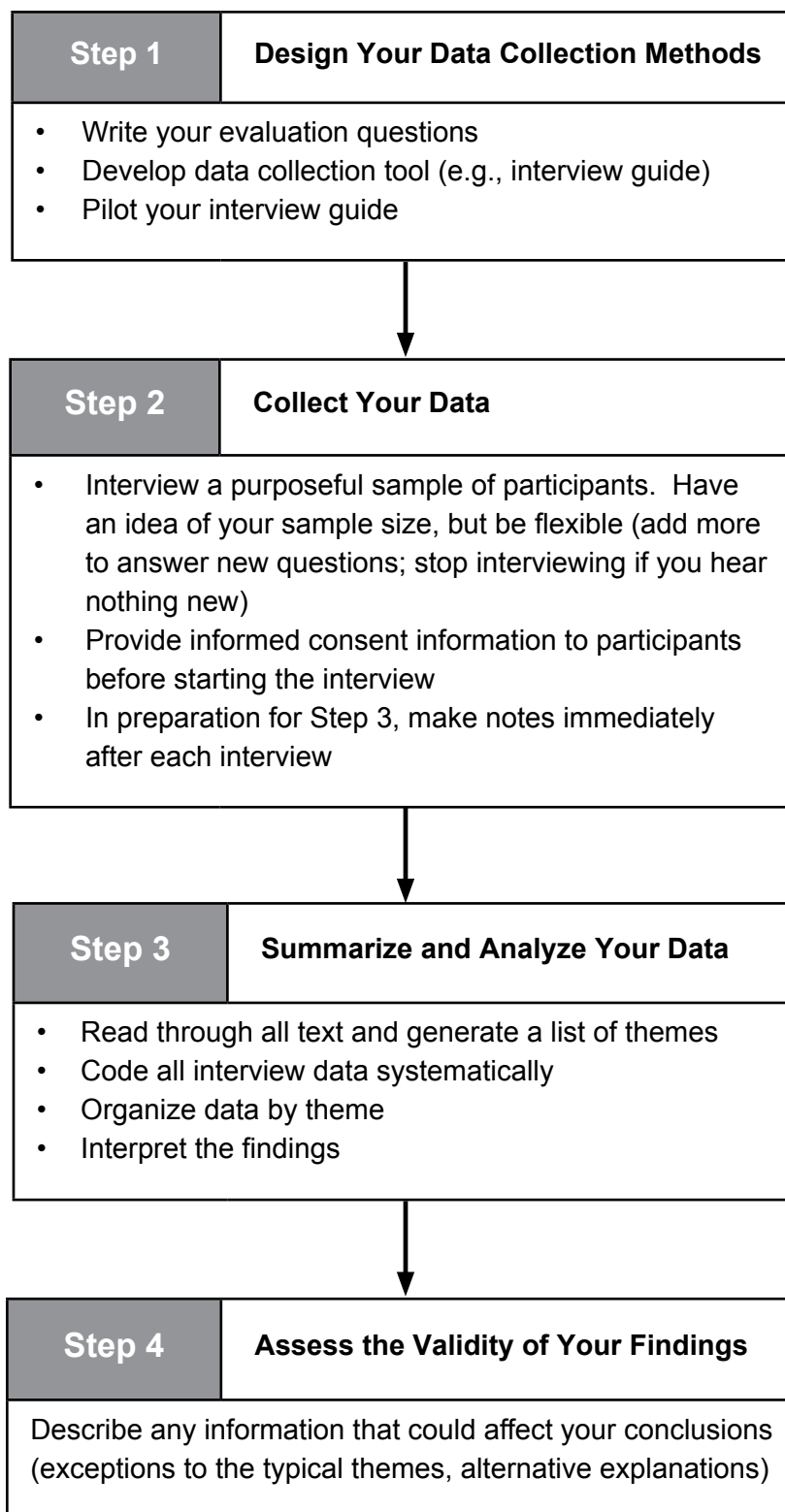


Evaluation Using Qualitative Methods***Collecting and Analyzing Evaluation Data***

Planning and Evaluating Health Information Outreach Projects, Booklet 3

Outreach Evaluation Resource Center

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[reprinted] Qualitative methods produce non-numerical data. Most typically these are textual data such as written responses to open-ended questions on surveys; interview or focus group transcripts; journal entries; documents; or field notes. However, qualitative researchers also make use of visual data such as photographs, maps, or videos.

The advantage of qualitative methods is that they can give insight into your outreach project that you could never obtain through statistics alone. Qualitative methods seem particularly useful for answering the following types of questions:

1. Why were certain activities more effective than others?
2. What important changes happened with clients as a result of their training?
3. How did our clients use the resources outside of training?
4. Why did some clients continue to use the resources while some did not?
5. What barriers were discovered in implementing the project? Which ones were dealt with effectively and which ones continued to be a problem?
6. What unexpected outcomes (positive or negative) occurred as a result of our project?
7. How was the intervention *valuable* to clients and different stakeholder groups?

Qualitative evaluation methods are recommended when you want detailed information about some aspect of your outreach project. Listed here are some examples of the type of information best collected through qualitative methods:

- *Community or pre-project assessment.* Qualitative methods are useful for identifying factors in the community that may impact the implementation of your project. These may include readiness

of different groups in the outreach community to use the technological resources you want to introduce, community resources that can help your outreach effort, or level of support among community leaders for your project. This type of information is usually discovered better through qualitative methods like interviews and observations of the community.

- *Process assessment.* Qualitative methods are useful for getting specific feedback about outreach activities from those involved in the project and answering the “why” questions of process assessment: Why are morning training sessions more popular than evening ones? Why do we have more women signing up for training sessions than men? Who in the community is not signing up for training sessions and why?
- *Outcomes assessment.* Qualitative methods can provide compelling examples of your results in a way that numbers will never capture. While numbers may tell you how many people use MedlinePlus after a training session, you will get examples of how they used it through qualitative methods like interviewing or responses to open-ended questions. Because of the exploratory nature of most qualitative methods, you also are more likely to find out about unexpected outcomes (positive and negative) when you talk with those involved in the project.

Appendix 3 describes some typical qualitative methods used in evaluation. Interviewing individual participants will be the focus of the remainder of this booklet because it is a qualitative method that has broad application to all stages of evaluation.