



## Data Collection Formats: Pros and Cons

A needs assessment may take many different formats. The most common formats include surveys, interviews, focus groups, or key informant interviews. A needs assessment might utilize one or more data collection formats. The following table shows the pros and cons for these data collection formats.

Data Collection Format	Pros	Cons
Survey or Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Easy to administer</li><li>• Inexpensive</li><li>• Less time-consuming</li><li>• Reaches large numbers of respondents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doesn't allow for clarification of questions</li><li>• Can be hard to analyze because of combination of open- and closed-ended questions</li><li>• Provides limited answer choices</li></ul>
Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allows personal interaction</li><li>• Obtains in-depth information</li><li>• Can be conducted in person or on the phone</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small number of respondents</li><li>• Time-consuming</li><li>• Can be difficult to analyze</li></ul>
Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allows personal interaction</li><li>• Obtains in-depth information</li><li>• Generates a group dynamic where interaction can yield richer conversations</li><li>• Provides ability to observe nonverbal cues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be expensive</li><li>• Less able to generalize</li><li>• Time-consuming</li><li>• Needs experienced moderator</li><li>• Generates a group dynamic where participants may be less likely to speak in front of others</li></ul>
Key Informant Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obtains key insights/knowledge from informants</li><li>• Better ensures that minority or less visible audiences are included</li><li>• Can help establish rapport</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May overlook other perspectives</li><li>• Requires interviewer to know who would make good informants</li><li>• Not representative</li><li>• Gives more room for biased data</li></ul>