People as Your Information Source

People are the most frequently used information source in evaluation studies. Whether using questionnaires, interviews, observation, drawings, artifact review, or other information-gathering techniques, the resulting information gathered from people is usually the best way to learn about people.

However, there are many considerations when using people as your information source.

* When your project involves many hundreds of people, there can be just too many people

Sampling a smaller, representative group saves time, effort, and resources and provides information that can be generalized to the larger group

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampling.php>

* There are ethical considerations when gathering information from and about people

* + Protecting respondents’ confidentiality and anonymity
  + Informed consent, including from parents and guardians for kids

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/index.html>

* There are communication and data interpretation issues when reporting on information gathered from people

* + *“I don’t understand what is meant by this question.”*
  + *“I don’t see why this applies to me.”*
  + *“I think I’ll have my spouse fill this out.”*
  + *“Questionnaires take too long – look at how many questions are on this one!”*

We have evaluation experts in the library community to assist and here is your “go to” page for general questions about IMLS policy research, program evaluation, and data collection.

<https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation>