

## DATA GATHERING METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS

Following are descriptions, tools, uses, advantages and disadvantages of data gathering methods for LDNA.<sup>1</sup>

Method	Description	Tool
<b>Documents Review</b>	Involves analysis of reports, records and other documentations that can indicate trends, performance levels, etc.	Document review guide (what to look for)
When to Use		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Best as a primary research technique to get an overview on the subject of the study</li> <li>● To aid the development of other data collection tools</li> <li>● To verify information gathered using other methods</li> <li>● To gather data unobtrusively</li> <li>● Save time and effort by minimizing data to be gathered through the other methods (may not be necessary to use other methods, e.g., interview)</li> </ul>		
Advantages	Disadvantages	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provides concretely documented and sometimes even quantified examples of performance</li> <li>● Provides a lot of “clues”—upon which further, more in-depth probing can be done</li> <li>● Easy and quick to collect if data is well managed</li> <li>● Relatively inexpensive</li> <li>● Can be done independently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May not show causes of problems, or possible solutions</li> <li>● Documentation may be inconsistent with practices</li> <li>● Sometimes only provides past perspectives—not the present</li> <li>● Information may be disorganized</li> <li>● There may be limited access to some documents</li> <li>● Information may not be complete or accurate</li> <li>● Not all things may be documented</li> <li>● Relevant documents may have already been disposed</li> <li>● Reports can be adjusted or edited</li> <li>● Can be time consuming</li> <li>● Requires skills in specialized content analysis</li> </ul>	

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from American Society for Training and Development (2008). Train the Trainer Volume 2 Instructional Design and Implementation. Baltimore: ASTD Press. (pp. 26-34)

Method	Description	Tool
<b>Observation</b>	Method of gathering visual information on what happens, what your object of study does or how it behaves; watching how people perform their job, documenting their actions, behaviors and methods	Observation guide or checklist
<b>When to Use</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To obtain background information on group dynamics, culture or work climate, among others</li> <li>● When studying a specific process or event which needs to improve or change</li> <li>● To collect data on individual characteristics or behavior or interactions between people</li> <li>● When unable to gather information from individuals</li> </ul>		
<b>Advantages</b>		<b>Disadvantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Presents a complete picture as information is gathered in the natural setting</li> <li>● Provides good opportunities for identifying unanticipated outcomes</li> <li>● Can be validated through repeated observation</li> <li>● Less likely to be manipulated</li> <li>● Relatively unobtrusive</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● People or group may feel uncomfortable or alter their performance knowing they are being observed</li> <li>● Susceptible to observer bias</li> <li>● Difficult to record for big groups</li> <li>● Data may be limited if restricted to work setting</li> <li>● May get inconsistent data when conducted by several observers without proper training</li> <li>● Time consuming</li> </ul>

Method	Description	Tool
<b>Interview</b>	Collection of data by asking questions from an individual or group considered knowledgeable about the competency of target learners; useful in gathering feedback on learners' competency level from various sources	Interview guide
<b>When to Use</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To gather background data at the start of LNA</li> <li>● When subject requires probing into feelings perceptions, insights, attitudes, experiences or beliefs</li> <li>● As follow-up to other methods</li> <li>● To explore issues</li> <li>● Gather information from people who can better express their views though one-on-one conversations</li> <li>● When collecting confidential information</li> </ul>		
<b>Advantages</b>		<b>Disadvantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Facilitates focused discussion</li> <li>● Allows the interviewer to probe into responses</li> <li>● Provides opportunity to observe non-verbal cues</li> <li>● Can be modified depending on the objective/s</li> <li>● Fosters a relaxed environment</li> <li>● Effective in demonstrating that the interviewee's opinion is valued</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relatively time-consuming and expensive</li> <li>● Interviewees may get self-conscious and provide what they think are acceptable answers</li> <li>● Can be influenced by interviewer's bias</li> <li>● Can be difficult to summarize and analyze if unstructured</li> </ul>

Method	Description	Tool
Focus Group Discussion	Obtaining in-depth information on concepts, perceptions and ideas of a group of carefully-selected people; provides opportunity to collect/validate and process data from different sources	FGD questions and process guide
<b>When to Use</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To obtain different perspectives, opinions or beliefs on a specific topic</li> <li>● To discover new information and consolidate old knowledge</li> <li>● When subject matter is not so sensitive that participants will temper responses or withhold information</li> <li>● When turnaround time is critical and funds are limited</li> </ul>		
<b>Advantages</b>		<b>Disadvantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provides valuable spontaneous information in a short period of time and at relatively low cost</li> <li>● Gathers information on group dynamics that is not provided by individual data collection</li> <li>● Can well complement surveys or other qualitative techniques</li> <li>● Quick and easy to set up</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can be dominated or sidetracked by a some discussion participants</li> <li>● For sensitive topics, group members may hesitate to air their feelings and experiences freely</li> <li>● Does not provide valid information at the individual level</li> <li>● Presents difficulties in information management and review, particularly if tape-recorders are used</li> <li>● Generates qualitative data that is difficult to analyze</li> </ul>

Method	Description	Tool
Survey	Involves developing a set of questions or statements that can surface data related to learners' proficiency level	Survey questionnaire
<b>When to Use</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When population is large or geographically dispersed</li> <li>● To determine areas of inquiry that will further be examined using other methods</li> <li>● When privacy and confidentiality are major concerns</li> <li>● To verify information collected from other sources</li> <li>● When there is limited time and resources for data gathering</li> </ul>		
<b>Advantages</b>		<b>Disadvantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Economical</li> <li>● Can reach many respondents in a short time</li> <li>● Yields comparable data that is easy to summarize and report</li> <li>● Can be structured and standardized</li> <li>● Allow respondents to express their views without fear or embarrassment</li> <li>● Does not require special training to administer</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Non-participatory</li> <li>● Offers limited opportunity to express unanticipated responses</li> <li>● Responses may be biased</li> <li>● Often lengthy and time-consuming</li> <li>● Can be costly to develop</li> <li>● Usually difficult to retrieve</li> </ul>