Data Collection Methods for Knowledge Management

Adapted and Updated Version of the Table 1 (pp.13 - 14) from the 2013 KM M&E Guide

Methods	Description	Strength and Weakness	Relative Cost	Resources
Routine records	Administrative documents kept in storage for a set amount of time (Library and Archives Canada 2010).	Do not require additional research. Depending on when the information was collected, however, it may not be current.	Low	
Web analytics	Software (e.g., Google Analytics, Piwik, WebTrends) that tracks which pages website visitors view, the amount of time they spend on the site, resources downloaded, the geographic origin of users, and whether the visitor is new or returning (Sullivan et al. 2007).	A fast and easy way to track visitors to a website, but it is important to keep context in mind when analyzing these data (e.g., time of the year influences Web traffic, server location may affect how users are categorized geographically).	Low	GHKC M&E Guide Appendix 3 Web Analytics: Recommendations and a Success Story (pp.83 - 86)
Usability assessment	Assessments designed to test the product, not the user. It examines how well users are able to learn or use a product by observing how they perform specific tasks. Participants are instructed to perform an activity on a computer or phone (in person or via virtual meeting spaces), and the interviewer documents how long it takes the participant to complete the task and any issues that came up.	A cost-effective and quick method for determining product usability. Only a small group of users is needed, but technical issues (Internet connection, computer software, mobile model) and the skill levels of participants may affect results.	Low	GHKC M&E Guide Appendix 6 Usability Assessment: Attributes and Methods (pp.96 - 99)
Pop-up questionnaires	Short surveys that appear in a separate window on websites.	Allows for targeted and rapid collection of information from website users. However, response rates may be low, and the sample is biased because only certain users will participate.	Low	

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Bounce-back questionnaires	Questionnaires distributed inside print publications through postal mailing lists, consisting of both multiple choice and/or open-ended questions (Sullivan et al. 2007). Clients can either mail back the completed questionnaire or submit it online.	Advantages include collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, cost-effectiveness, and potential online administration. However, response rates are low, and recipients may experience survey fatigue from receiving too many requests.	Low	
Surveys	Structured questionnaires that include close-ended and some open-ended questions. Can be administered in person, over the telephone, or online.	Cost-effective, quick, provide precise and easily-analyzed data, and maintain the confidentiality of participants. Limitations include the fact that the survey is available only to those with Internet access (online surveys), the response rate cannot be determined, and the self-selection of participants biases the sample (K4Health 2011).	Medium	
In-depth interviews	Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth responses from participants. Interviews can be conducted in person or over the telephone.	Interviews obtain detailed information and give the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. However, in-depth interviews take time to plan, coordinate, and conduct; results are subjective and not necessarily representative of the population; and, depending on sample size, analysis can be time-consuming (K4Health 2011).	Medium	Bernard, H. R., Wutich, A., & Ryan, G. W. (2016). Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches. SAGE publications.
Focus group discussion	Interview with group of stakeholders.	Can yield nuanced responses, insight into how opinions and behaviors are informed, and information about the intended users' attitudes and beliefs, and it allows for more rapid collection of information than individual interviews. However, focus group discussions are expensive and take time to plan and conduct; some groups may be difficult to direct; participants may give in to group dynamics and simply agree with the majority or an outspoken participant (K4Health 2011).		Bernard, H. R., Wutich, A., & Ryan, G. W. (2016). Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches. SAGE publications.

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Net mapping	Analysis tool to specify links among actors and the informant's perception of the amount of influence that each actor has. An interviewer works with a participant to discuss a topic or question and create a map of actors connected to the topic or question. (K4Health 2011).	Inexpensive; helps identify bottlenecks and opportunities in a network. Drawbacks include the difficulty of scheduling sessions with stakeholders and the subjective nature of information from participants.	Medium	Netmap Toolbox (website) available at https://netmap.wordpress.com/about/
Content analysis	Study of KM activity users' text, recorded speech, and photographs on a specific topic. This method can reveal communication trends and patterns and the attitudes and beliefs of individuals and groups.	Useful for learning about intended users but requires much time, and the findings will not necessarily be representative of the larger population (Colorado State University 2013).	Medium	
Case studies	Study of an event and how and why it occurred, through interviews, participant observation, and records, to explore a specific topic or event (Colorado State University 2013).	Provides a comprehensive examination of an issue. It is costly, narrow in focus (not possible to extrapolate to the larger population), and takes time.	High	
Social network analysis	Study of discussions on a specific topic on Internet social media sites to determine how people connect, their views on issues, and trends in opinions over time.	Assists with learning how users perceive your organization and can inform strategies to make your own social media sites more interactive. Often expensive and time-consuming, however.	High	

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Most significant change	Participatory monitoring and evaluation technique that involves the collection and analysis of stories describing the most important project outcomes. The method captures differences in development outcomes across sites and time, as well as different perspectives on the same outcomes by different groups of stakeholders.	Instead of measuring indicators, MSC collects and analyzes qualitative data on broadly defined “domains of change.” Domains of change allow people to come to a general agreement about what to track without being too prescriptive. The method can be adapted to meet different needs, however, when done systematically, can be time consuming.	Medium	Davies, R., & Dart, J. (2005). The ‘most significant change’(MSC) technique. A guide to its use. www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf
Outcome harvesting	Method to identify, formulate, analyze, and interpret outcomes to answer useable questions. It employs various means to collect data including face-to-face interviews or workshops, communication across distances, and written documentation (Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2012).	Corrects the common failure to search for unintended results and uses a logical, accessible approach that makes it easy to engage informants. However, skill and time are required to identify and formulate high-quality outcome descriptions, and only those outcomes that the informant is aware of are captured (Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2012) .	High	Wilson-Grau, R., & Britt, H. (2012). Outcome harvesting. Cairo, Egypt: Ford Foundation Middle East and North Africa Office. http://www.managingforimpact.org/sites/default/files/resource/wilsongrau_en_outome_harvesting_brief_revised_nov_2013.pdf