A Simple Guide For Village Data Collection

Created By:
UMBC's Entrepreneurship, Innovation, & Leadership Graduate Design Thinking Program

For
Maryland Department of Aging
&
Washington Area Villages Exchange (WAVE)

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UMBC

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We are deeply appreciative to the villages and organizations whose collaboration was crucial to the success of this project:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Summary of What's Inside

In Fall of 2024, graduate students from UMBC's Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Leadership program took on a project driven by the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) and the Washington Area Villages Exchange (WAVE). Their task was to create a comprehensive resource to help "villages" (nonprofits supporting older adults) effectively collect and report on data to support village members. This effort was aimed at enabling these organizations to better assist older adults in their goal of "Aging in place."

The result of this collaboration was the Village Data Collection <u>Solutions Toolkit</u>. This document offered detailed guidance on assessing an organization's current data collection status, in addition to the best practices for safeguarding member data.

<u>A Simple Guide for Village Data Collection</u> is designed to provide training on key topics from the Village Data Collection Solutions Toolkit. Keeping with the original goals of the Village Data Collection Solutions Toolkit, this Guide addresses important topics such as why data collection is critical, what types of data are most valuable (including those related to Social Connection Activities), and how to implement best practices in the data collection process. To make the content more digestible, this Guide includes concise articles, informative videos, and a variety of practical tools and resources to support organizations in their data efforts. (Special note: Videos can be enlarged by holding ctrl + (+) on the keyboard.)

We hope you find this Guide to be a valuable and user-friendly resource that enhances your organization's data collection capabilities.

Sincerely,

The UMBC Spring 2025 Design Thinking Class

Data Collection: The Basics

Collecting data for villages is crucial for several reasons, all aimed at improving quality of life and operational efficiency. Collecting data is also important for the organizational aspect of the village. Optimizing staffing, financial management, and service availability is aided by using data for facilities, employee time, or dining services.

In addition, data can support better communication between individuals and villages, ensuring continuity in support and reducing errors. Long-term data analysis can guide future infrastructure planning, such as the need for more accessible events or new programs. It empowers decision-makers to act proactively rather than reactively.

Data can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of village programs or social activities over time. Environmental data, like air quality or temperature control, can be tracked to enhance comfort. Feedback systems powered by data give members a stronger voice. Ultimately, data-driven innovation can lead to new technologies tailored for aging populations.

Data Collection
What is it?

Data collection is what we encourage our villages to utilize to quantify social opportunities.

Data collection is the process of methodically collecting and measuring information on variables of interest so that it can be analyzed, used to support research, or used to make choices. In almost every industry, including science, business, marketing, education, healthcare, and more, it is used to find answers, test theories, and resolve issues.

Further Points on Data Collection

- Gathering data is necessary for strategic planning, creating social connection activities, and making well-informed decisions.

- Frequent data analysis supports the village's development and flexibility by highlighting patterns and potential areas for improvement.

- Villages can report progress to funders and the community using data, which further helps them show accountability.

- Villages can optimize volunteer assignments, determine which social opportunities are most in demand, and make sure resources are allocated where they are most needed with the use of precise data.

Data Collection
Why is it important?

Data collection is important for the village to quantify the services they offer to the village.

The practice of methodically gathering and analyzing information on variables of interest is known as data collecting. Accurate, comprehensive data that may be utilized for study, analysis, or decision-making is the aim.

Collect data to improve quality and understand needs

Data collection is essential for the success and sustainability of the Village model. It allows us to understand the real needs of the community, especially older adults and people with different abilities, helping us evaluate current services and plan more effective, personalized support.

By basing decisions on solid data instead of assumptions, we can use resources more efficiently organizing volunteers, materials, and funding with greater impact. Transparent sharing of goals and results, through dashboards or public reports, also builds trust and shows clear progress.

Most importantly, data helps set measurable goals and guide strategic planning. It's not just about tracking what we've done, it's about shaping what comes next. Data is the foundation for accountability, growth, and meaningful change within the Village.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA COLLECTION

- UNDERSTANDS COMMUNITY NEEDS
- USES RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY
- GUIDES STRATEGIC PLANNING

What Data Should be Collected?

When collecting data, villages should focus on tracking two kinds of information. First, they should keep count of things like the number of members they serve, how many people attend events, the number of volunteers, the number of meals delivered, and how much money is spent or raised. This gives a clear picture of how much work is being done and how many people are being helped. We designed this to support villages in creating meaningful social activities for their members.

Second, villages should gather personal feedback from members and volunteers about their experiences. This could include satisfaction surveys, stories about how services have made a difference, and ideas for new programs. Collecting this type of information helps villages understand what is working well and what can be improved in the future.

By keeping track of both the numbers and the real-life experiences, villages can better show the full impact of their work to funders, leaders, and the community.

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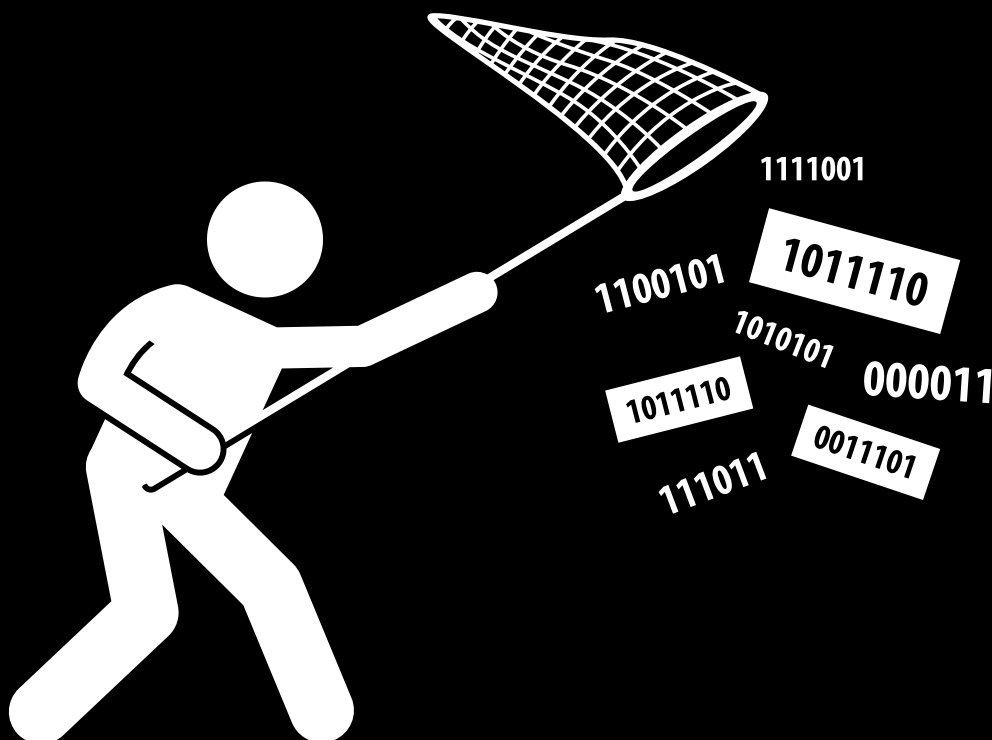
Data Collection
What data should be collected?

First, click the hyperlink below to learn more about what type of data you should collect.

This video will show the primary items each village should collect.

- **No** data collection: Learn about the different categories that would be helpful to start collecting data
- **Some** data collection: You might already have some items collected, but the video will show all the different data the grants require
- **Full** data collection: There are many suggestions here, so check to see if you are missing any.

What Type of Data Tutorial

Data Collection
What data should be collected?

Recommended Data Collection:

General Information:

- Jurisdiction served (County or Baltimore City)
- Age of population served (50-59, 60-69, 70+)
- Total number of people served (members or participants)
- Do you serve historically underserved populations?

Membership Information:

- Membership numbers & cost (full members, social members, and subsidized members)
- Participant living status (alone, with family, senior housing, or other)
- Median Income Range

Volunteer Information :

- Number of volunteers (total individuals who volunteer)
- Total volunteer hours and total value (e.g., Maryland rate of $33.49/hour)

Data Collection
What data should be collected?

<u>Recommended Data Collection:</u>

Services:

- Services provided and the number of requests fulfilled for each
  - Transportation (count each portion, i.e., round trip = 2 trips)
    - Hospital or medical appointments, Neighborhood event/social gathering, Ride companion, Grocery shopping
  - Wellness check-in (friendly visit to check on member/participant)
  - Food delivery
  - Home maintenance/cleaning
  - Yard maintenance (e.g. lawn, snow shoveling)
  - Pharmacy or grocery pick up
  - Social and/or Health Services navigation/coordination
  - Technical support (e.g. setting up phone or laptop; trouble shooting a problem)
  - Other: Specify...

- **Activities/Events:**
  - Educational/informational programs (e.g. lectures, end-of-life planning)
  - Social connection events (e.g. meals, parties)
  - Wellness activities (e.g. walking groups, exercise classes)
  - Unduplicated number of attendees at all activities/events (an individual who attends more than one event over the period counts as one attendee)

How Can Data be Collected?
Quantitative and Qualitative Tool Options

For villages that are just starting to collect data, or those moving towards larger data collection and management services, the articles below highlight practical tools for gathering both qualitative and quantitative data to understand member experiences and meet funder requirements.

Google Sheets and Google Forms are emphasized as accessible, free, and collaborative platforms for collecting, organizing, and analyzing data. Google Sheets is particularly useful for managing and automating qualitative data, like open-ended feedback, while Google Forms excels at gathering detailed responses and integrating them seamlessly into Sheets.

For quantitative data, tools like Google Forms, and SurveyMonkey are recommended for creating structured surveys to track service utilization and satisfaction.

Training village staff and volunteers on these tools will enable them to efficiently collect insights, demonstrate program impact, and improve services tailored to the needs of aging-in-place residents.

Quantitative data can tell you how many members use transportation services, how often wellness checks are requested, or what percentage of members feel safe and connected in their communities. These numbers help identify trends, justify funding needs, and evaluate program impact
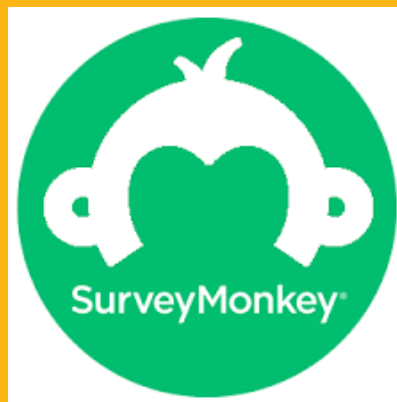
Quantitative Data Gathering Tools

Tools for Quantitative Data

SurveyMonkey
- User-friendly and accessible across devices
- Best for short, clearly worded surveys
- Built-in analytics to identify service usage and gaps
- Surveys can be shared via email or printed for in-person interviews
- Suitable for both tech-savvy and less tech-comfortable older adults

For additional support, click the hyperlink below for a Survey Monkey Tutorial.

Survey Monkey Tutorial

Qualitative Data Gathering

Google Forms

### Understanding Qualitative Data Gathering

Qualitative research is a way to collect detailed information to understand how people behave and feel. For example, it can help us learn how satisfied someone is with a service or what their personal experiences are. This type of information is different from numbers and statistics, which are called quantitative data. When we use both qualitative (descriptive) and quantitative (numerical) data together, we get a complete picture of people's experiences.

Qualitative data helps us understand why people do certain things. For instance, if we notice that many people stop using a service, qualitative research can help us find out the reasons behind their decisions. When we conduct interviews, we can adjust our questions based on what the person says, allowing us to gather more in-depth information.

For additional support, click the hyperlink below for a Google Form Tutorial.

How to Create a Google Form
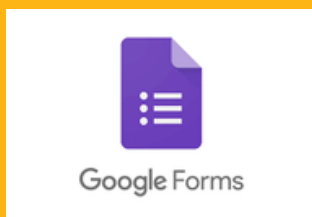
Benefits of Google Forms

- Open-Ended Questions: Allows people to write their thoughts and experiences in their own words, providing detailed and personal responses.
- Sections and Logic Branching: Organizes the form into parts and can show different questions based on previous answers, making the survey more personalized.
- File Uploads: Lets respondents attach files like photos or documents, which can add more depth to their answers.
- Integration with Google Sheets: Automatically collects and organizes responses into a spreadsheet, making it easier to review and analyze the data.
- Real-Time Collaboration: Multiple people can work on creating or analyzing the form together at the same time.
- Accessible on Various Devices: Can be filled out on computers, tablets, or smartphones, making it convenient for respondents.

Qualitative Data Gathering
Google Sheets

Thanks to its ease of use, it can be used by anyone—even without advanced technical skills—to collect information in an organized, collaborative, and real-time way.

For example, it can be used to create linked forms (Google Forms) to distribute to village residents or specific social groups in order to gather feedback, specific needs, preferences, and demographic data.

The collected responses are automatically stored in a spreadsheet, where they can be easily viewed, filtered, and analyzed. This makes Google Sheets an ideal tool for transforming raw data into actionable insights.
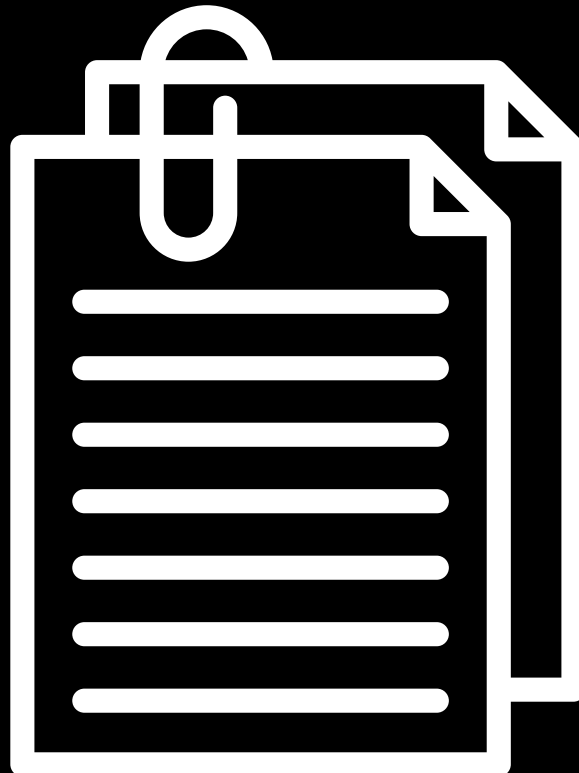
Benefits of Google Sheets

- Real-time collaboration: Multiple users can work on the same spreadsheet simultaneously, updating data without overlapping or losing information.
- Accessibility: Being cloud-based, it can be used from any internet-connected device, with no need for installations or licenses.
- Simple automation: You can use formulas, automatic charts, and integrate it with other tools (like Google Data Studio or Zapier) for deeper analysis.
- Integration with Google Forms: Data collection can be simplified using forms directly connected to the spreadsheet, reducing transcription errors and speeding up processes.
- Transparency and control: All data is traceable, with a version history and the ability to assign view or edit permissions.
- Zero cost: For many local initiatives or nonprofit organizations, the free use of Google Sheets is a major financial advantage.
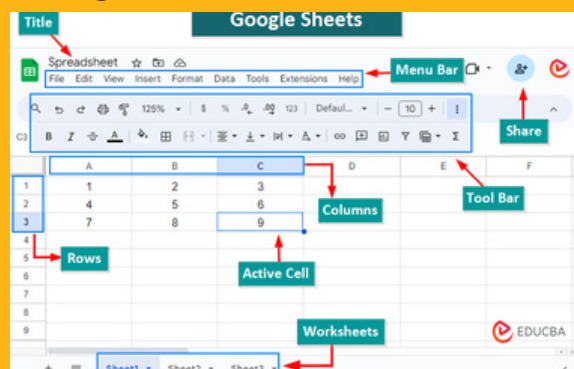
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Appendix

Example: Google Form Questionnaire

Sample Form for Village Data Management and Collection Tool.

This is a sample assessment created using google form, intended to help village organizations evaluate their current data collection capabilities and identify opportunities for growth. By assessing key areas such as data systems, privacy practices, and service tracking, this tool supports strategic planning and the advancement of operations. The insights gained will guide villages toward more effective, secure, and community-responsive data practices.

NB: This is a sample questionnaires for the purpose of this study, Villages can use this as a format/guide to create one to suit their interest.

SECTION 1
Participant Demographics

What is your age group?

○ 60-65

○ 66-70

○ 71-75

○ 76-80

○ 80+

What is your gender?

○ Woman

○ Man

What is your racial or ethnic identity?

○ Black or African American

○ Hispanic or Latino

○ White

○ Asian

○ Native American

○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

○ Middle Eastern or North African

○ Prefer not to share

Do you have any disability?

○ Yes

○ No

If "Yes" was answered on the previous question, please explain.

Your answer

What language do you speak?

Your answer

SECTION 2: Experience with the Program.
Purpose: Evaluate satisfaction, engagement, inclusion.

Overall, how satisfied were you with the program?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very Satisfied	○	○	○	○	○	Very Dissatisfied

What did you find most valuable about the program you participate?

Your answer

What could be improved for future sessions?

Your answer

Did you feel included and respected throughout the program?

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Other:

If "No" was answered on the previous question, please explain.

Your answer

How likely are you to recommend this program to others?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not likely at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Extremely likely

SECTION 3: Learning and Outcomes.
Purpose: Assess knowledge/skill gains and application.

What new skills or knowledge did you gain from this program?

Your answer

SECTION 4: Accessibility and Barriers
Purpose: Identify and reduce participation barriers.

Was the program accessible to you (location, format, timing, etc.)?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

Did you face any barriers that affected your ability to participate fully?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

If "Yes" was answered in the previous question, please explain.

Your answer

Did you struggle with any language barrier?

○ Yes

○ No

What could be done to make this program more accessible?

Your answer

SECTION 5: Final Thoughts

Do you have any additional comments, ideas, or suggestions?

Your answer

Submit   Clear form

Google Forms

This Guide was developed by the Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Leadership Design Thinking 608 class, Spring 2025.