



Webinar Transcription

Promising Pathways: Data Collection Methods



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Office of Family Assistance***

Good afternoon, everyone. I am James Butler from the Office of Family Assistance and I am the Federal Project Lead for the Promising Pathways Initiative. I would like to welcome all of the Promising Pathways sites and the regional office staff for joining us today for the second webinar in our Promising Pathways series.

We are learning a great deal from our Promising Pathways sites about the types of technical assistance or TA that would be helpful to you and how that TA can help community organizations build capacity for evidence-informed practice. We believe that some of the TA we have provided thus far has helped to improve the delivery as well as the quality of services provided to our TANF and low-income populations. Looking a little further into the additional types of TA we thought the Promising Pathway sites could benefit from what we put together today, which is this webinar series focusing on data collection and using data to show an improved program performance.

I am sure the information that is here today will help each of you as you focus on using data and making data actionable. What I would like to do now is turn the floor over to Yvette Lamb from ICF, who will introduce the webinar and our presenters for today. Yvette?

Yvette Lamb, ICF International

I would like to welcome all of our participants today. In addition to our sites, we have sites from Hawaii and Alaska who are joining us today so we want to say good morning to you. Then we have sites from Missouri and Kentucky participating today so we are going to say good afternoon to you. So as you can see, the Promising Pathways Initiative has covered a broad swath of the U.S. terrain. We would also like to welcome our Promising Pathways coaches as well as the regional office staff.

We have a really exciting, very exciting webinar for you today on data collection. This is the second one as James indicated. The first webinar that we did was on indicators and measures, and we think that this is a nice follow-on to what you do next after you've taken that first step to identify your measures and indicators.

We are using the webinar as a way of providing technical assistance to groups of sites so we hope that today everyone will understand that we are giving out information and we're sharing information, but we also want this to be as interactive as possible. Please make sure you ask questions when you want to, and you got the directions earlier about how to do that.

Leading our presentation is Stephanie Barr. Stephanie is one of our data coaches and has worked specifically with the Tanana Chiefs site and she is going to walk us through the various data collection methods. And we are certainly appreciative and want to thank in advance our Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) group from Alaska who is led by Don Shircel, their Project Director, Anita Taylor, their TANF Director, and Keith Bowman, their Data Specialist. They are going to share how they use data and how they collect data within their site. We always want to build on the experiences that we are having with any site to share with other sites. So that being said, we want you, as was said at the beginning of the process, to sit back, relax and share as we move forward. So Stephanie, take us away.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

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Thanks so much, Yvette and James, for the introduction. I will just go ahead and get started. If you look at the agenda for today's webinar, you will see that this presentation is set up to really be a review of and a refresher on concepts surrounding data collection, including a brief definition of primary versus secondary data, qualitative versus quantitative data; and going a little bit deeper into some common methods of data collection, sources of data, considerations for determining a method, when to collect data, tips for design and administration, briefly some free online tools that you all can use, and then there will be, hopefully, ample time for the Tanana Chiefs Conference to share a little bit about their experiences and insights through Promising Pathways with data collection. As Yvette said, we do have a few polls and some Q&A and activities throughout the presentation so, hopefully, everyone will get a chance to share and interact with each other.

Okay, so the first slide is just to set the context, so I included a couple of very straightforward definitions of data and data collection. So data basically are the facts or information about a program and data collection is the actual process of gathering and measuring information in a systematic way, based on variables that are of interest to you. So you can answer research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes.

All right, so this next slide just shows the differences between primary versus secondary data and this may be a review for a lot of you. But basically, primary data collection uses direct observation and/or includes conducting interviews, surveys or focus groups, or other methods like that firsthand. Then secondary data collection includes collecting information that has already previously been collected from a diverse source of documents or electronically stored information. Then you can just see some of the examples that I have listed out on this slide that represent secondary data collection. That could be looking at data sets from the Census Bureau, data sets from the Department of Labor, or Unemployment Insurance data sets. Also to note, secondary data can include reviewing interviews, surveys or focus groups, but it would be reviewing those that have already been previously conducted for another purpose.

So now I will just briefly talk about primary and secondary data strengths and limitations. Primary data's strengths are basically that researchers are collecting information for the specific purposes of their study, so the questions are very tailored and purposeful. Because with primary data, you are collecting the data firsthand, in a lot of cases, you can build relationships with your participants and get their opinions depending on the method that you are using. Then some of the limitations, of course, of primary data are that it can be very expensive to collect and analyze data firsthand and, depending on what method you are using, it could require some statistical expertise to really analyze and interpret the data.

Then secondary data, some of the strengths of secondary data, which again is data that has previously been collected, is that it is pretty unobtrusive because you are not directly collecting information from participants. The collection can be relatively easy because it involves data that was already collected by someone else, it can be readily available and inexpensive, and it can be examined over a long period of time depending on what data sets you are looking at. But then some of the limitations of secondary data are that it can be good to get background and historical knowledge and as a supplement, but it probably should not be used in isolation. It probably should be something that you are doing along with primary data collection. Because it was already collected previously for another purpose, it may need to really be teased out or mined, so to speak, to get the relevant data that you need. Then lastly, because it is not something that you are collecting yourself, it may not be complete or reliable and you might be looking at including a lot of disclaimers and making a lot of assumptions when you are looking at data sets that have already been collected.

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Okay, so I just wanted to go over the two different types of data, primary and secondary, and do a quick poll. For everyone who is on the line, if you could just answer these questions. Does your organization collect both primary and secondary data? Yes or no. Then, what primary data collection method, if you are collecting primary data, does your organization utilize? We listed out a few options for you all there, that we will go more in-depth into later on in the presentation, but we just wanted to get an idea from you all on what kind of methods you are using now. The polls are going to be open for another ten seconds, so if you could submit your answer. We are just tabulating results, so just give us a couple of seconds.

Okay, so we see that about 75 percent of you collect both primary and secondary data, and it looks like about 25 percent of you do not, so you are probably doing one or the other. Then, in terms of the primary data collection method, we have about half of you doing observation, half of you doing interviews, a little less than half doing focus groups, a little more than half doing surveys, about a quarter of you using mixed methods, and then no one using other methods. So great, that gives us an idea of what you all are doing now and as we move forward, we will talk a little bit more in-depth about some of these primary data collection methods. Then, for those of you who said that you are doing some of these, if you want to chime in and talk a little bit more about your experience with some of these methods that would be great.

Okay and we just wanted to also do a quick Q&A with everyone. For those of you that are doing secondary data collection, we are just wondering where you most often look for secondary data, whether it is certain websites or other means. So if we could now open up the line and just have anyone share where they are really looking for this secondary data.

Anita Taylor, Tanana Chiefs Conference

This is Anita at Tanana Chiefs. What we do for secondary data, I believe my first place is the state, looking at what the state has been collecting.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

Okay, that is great.

Keith Bowman, Tanana Chiefs Conference

And some Census information as well.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

And some Census Bureau information? Okay. Anyone else? We were wondering if we could hear from Tom? Is Tom on the line?

Okay, so it looks like state data and Census Bureau data and if you all think of anything too, feel free to chime in later.

So this next slide just briefly talks about quantitative versus qualitative data collection. So when you are thinking about your data questions, it is obviously important to determine if they are quantitative or qualitative questions before you can really think about a specific data collection method. So it is good to ask what you want to know about your program, is it something that is easily defined by a number or a

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percentage, or do you want to know why or how a change happened? So looking at this slide, you will see that qualitative data just focuses on information on attitudes, perceptions and motivations, if you want to understand the context of your program and the processes that took place, to explain why or how a change occurred, or if you want to explain confusing or contradictory data. Then quantitative is when you want to measure actions or knowledge, if you are trying to determine how many, how much, how often, when what you are measuring can easily be defined and categorized, and if you have basic knowledge of statistics or you are interested in statistical significance, you would probably want to do quantitative data collection.

All right, so this slide just shows four different data questions that we came up with and we wanted you all just to take a look at these and think to yourself about whether or not these questions would be considered quantitative or qualitative data questions. So just think about that and keep that in mind. Okay, and then if we could just open up the lines and get some responses just from participants about what questions you think would be quantitative and what questions are qualitative.

Andrea O'Neal, Local Investment Commission (LINC)

I believe the first couple are quantitative and the last two are qualitative.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

Yes. Thank you. So the first two questions are quantitative because you are asking how much and how many and there is a defined number, and then the last two are qualitative, the third one because you are asking how a change occurred, so it can be projective, and then the fourth one, by asking about a process. Thank you so much.

So moving on to the next slide, we just included this slide as an illustration that your logic models are, of course, the starting point for thinking about your data questions. Actually those data questions that were provided on the previous slide were taken from various sites' logic models, so they should or may be questions that you have already answered through various data collection methods and, hopefully, this will help you reflect on those.

So now we are going to a little bit more in-depth into some of the different data collection methods that you all mentioned you are already doing. You can see that qualitative data collection methods can include observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys with open-ended questions, and then quantitative can be documents or records review, and surveys with closed-ended questions. Obviously, this list is not exhaustive of all the data collection methods that are out there, but these are just some common methods that we thought you all might be using currently, so it would be a good review to go a little bit more into those.

Okay, so observation involves detecting how people behave and interact in the social setting chosen for the study and it is usually done by listening and watching as unobtrusively as possible. You would want to use this when you want to see observable behaviors as they happen in real life instead of how people are reporting on, say, a survey, or when you want to understand implicit and unspoken meanings. I just provided an example on this slide for you all of a study that used observation as a main part of its data collection. The link is provided there, but it is a study of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative and Oklahoma Department of Human Services and they included a relationship education program called "Within My Reach" in their orientation for new TANF participants. So this study included a researcher observing the "Within My Reach" classes in three Department of Human Services Centers in Oklahoma City, and he used

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his notes from the observation of the classes to help to provide information on whether the program was a good fit between the topics covered in the curriculum and the TANF participants' actual relationships, situations, and concerns. So they annotated and analyzed the observations to determine different things, like the amounts of time spent on certain curricula. They provided descriptive accounts of the environments of the classrooms and they noted the rapport that was built between the instructors and the clients and the instructor's style and adherence to the curriculum to really get more information about whether or not the curriculum was focused on what is really of concern to the TANF participants.

Now I will explain some strengths and limitations of observation. So strengths are, obviously, you can use observation to discover behaviors and it can provide indicators of the impact of programs that might be a little more reliable than data that you are gathering from people by asking them. Observation can also really work well when you are trying to observe specific products and outcomes. Then some limitations are that observations can potentially be obtrusive to participants so it is important to really try and minimize any distracting or inhibiting impact that the presence of someone in a classroom setting might have on participants. Also, it can require a lot of staff time to observe and record behaviors and you cannot really ask questions when you are observing. Then lastly, it might be important to do follow-up interviews to just verify your observations. This was actually the case with the "Within My Reach" implementation study that I just mentioned. They did the observations but they also conducted a couple of sets of interviews to make their study a little more robust.

Now I am moving on to interviews. So interviews are methods of obtaining information directly from people who participate in a study. They can be structured or unstructured and they can be conducted face-to-face or over the phone. Generally, there are three types of interviews. There is the really informal, conversational type of interview. There is more of the interview guide approach. And then there is a really standardized, open-ended interview that you can do. You would use these to get detailed information that is not conducive to a group. When you want to understand unfamiliar topics, using open-ended questions, you can probe and explore answers with participants, which is useful if you want to understand variation and commonalities and experience. Then you can obviously use interviews to verify information you may have observed using observation, as we just mentioned with the "Within My Reach" implementation study.

Okay, strengths and limitations. Interviews are good for gathering attitudes, beliefs, and anecdotal information from individuals. The personal contact that you have with participants can elicit richer and more detailed responses. You can probe and you can explore questions using interviews so it is a great qualitative method. Participants do not need to know how to read and write and a lot of times you are getting higher response rates because you are conducting the interview yourself and entering the responses. The limitations are that it usually requires intensive staff time to conduct interviews and you might need special equipment to record or transcribe interviews. The lack of anonymity could be an issue for some participants – they could feel intimidated. There is also potential interviewer bias just because participant responses are pretty open-ended and subjective, that leaves a lot of room for personal influence and bias on the part of the interviewer.

Documents and records review. We just have a couple more data collection methods to go over. This is basically a method to unobtrusively get an impression of how a program operates and to gather an understanding of the setting or the group being studied, especially when you want to get historical or background knowledge. Documents or records review is a good way to supplement other data collection methods. A lot of times you can use this, too, if you want to look at data over a longer period of time.

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Then some strengths and limitations, as you can see on the slide, documents and records review can be objective, unobtrusive and non-reactive, and you don't really need a lot of expertise to review documents. There are some limitations though, just depending on the situation and what type of data set you are looking at, it could be hard to get access and it might be difficult to interpret. Then it can require a lot of time and then the data could be incomplete or outdated.

Moving on to surveys, these are used to collect information from a sample of individuals that represent a population. The individuals are asked questions as a way to gain information about their background, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, behavior or other topics. They can take a number of forms, including oral, written, and electronic. They can include both open-ended and close-ended questions, so they can be quantitative or qualitative. You would want to use these specifically if you are trying to measure change. For example, you could do a pre-test or a post-test to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Surveys are also useful if you want to collect responses from a large number of people. If you have responses that might require anonymity, using a survey would be a good way to do that. I just provided an example here for you all as well. In this link, you will see the University of New England School of Social Work and the University of Maine conducted a study where they surveyed a little over 6,000 Maine TANF households by mailing them a survey. It included questions on why families are seeking help from TANF, the length of time they spend on the program, demographic data, employment data, and data on disabilities and different challenges that families in Maine on TANF face. Through the survey, they came up with a number of different policy recommendations to offer to enhance their program.

Now I will just quickly discuss some of the strengths and limitations. The strengths are that surveys can gather really brief, written responses, they can include both closed and open-ended questions, and they can be administered in multiple ways, written, online, orally. There is also a lot of reduction in potential bias when you are conducting a survey, as well as greater anonymity, and they can be used to measure change if you are doing a pre-test or post-test. Some of the limitations are that you cannot really probe or explore on a survey, they are really limited to what is on there. Participants need to be able to read and write and surveys require a lot of time for pre-testing to make sure that the questions are reliable and valid and that the survey is really well-designed, so it is time-consuming. Then it relies on participants' perceptions, which can be very different from reality and questions might be misunderstood. A lot of times there are lower response rates. Thinking back to the main TANF survey that I just mentioned, they sent the survey out to a little over 6,000 people but they only had a response rate of about 17 percent, so that is important to consider when you are conducting a survey.

Focus groups are forms of interviewing in which individuals who participate are brought together in a group to offer their opinions, provide reactions, suggest ideas or recommend actions. Focus groups are generally composed of about seven to ten people who are unfamiliar with each other, but they share some type of common characteristic that would be relevant. There is usually a strong facilitator who creates a supportive environment and encourages discussion. They can be conducted several times with different groups of people, just depending on the data questions you are trying to answer. I included a quick study here that you all can look at by clicking on the link if you want. Basically, it is a report that looks at the results of 15 focus groups that were conducted by Colorado Works with TANF applicants, participants, past recipients, and then I think a couple of other groups. The purposes were to just get input from them concerning their experiences on TANF and whether or not the Colorado Works program was really helping them with their self-sufficiency. In this link they also include a lot of the focus group discussion guides that they used and the data sheets that they asked each participant to fill out, so that is a good template that you can look at.

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So strengths and limitations of focus groups, as you can see here— strengths are that you can gather in-depth attitudes, beliefs and anecdotal data from a large group of people, group dynamics might generate more ideas, they can be used to focus on specific ideas learned through surveys or other methods, and it is not necessary for participants to read or write. Then you can see the limitations here that it often requires a lot of time to set up, prepare for, identify, invite participants, and then facilitate the focus group. It really requires a strong facilitator to make sure that the focus group is conducted appropriately and ensure the participation of all the different focus group members. Sometimes it can require special equipment and then the differences between groups can be difficult to analyze due to the qualitative nature of the data. Also a lot of times, participants might be less candid when they are in front of a big group of people.

Okay, so this is the last one I wanted to mention real quickly. It is mixed methods. Obviously, when possible, you would want to use a mix of all these different data collection methods to really enhance your results, which is called triangulation. It can really help validate, cross-check your results and provide a more complete assessment of the intervention that you are conducting. So if one intervention is a little weaker, it can be addressed by the strengths of another different method. This is a really great way to make your method a little more robust. I included a couple of examples here that you all can look at of the studies that used mixed methods.

So that is it for all the different data collection methods that we wanted to go into. We wanted to just quickly open up the lines to see if anyone has any questions on any of the different methods or if they wanted to share their experiences on any methods that they have conducted.

Louisa Jones, ICF International

Hi Stephanie, this is Louisa from ICF. I wanted to emphasize the importance of the making sure that you have a great facilitator, that you test that facilitator for types of questions and things that you want to ask participants to make sure that the questions are being asked in a non-biased manner, and then really thinking about the questions that you want to ask. The questions are very important because they should supplement any of your quantitative data or survey data or other types of data collection methods, so that you can really get down to some specific questions that you cannot necessarily gather by quantitative methods. So I just wanted to add that piece, we are really trying to aim for usually no more than eight to ten participants for a focus group.

Keith Bowman, Tanana Chiefs Conference

This is Keith from Tanana Chiefs. I would interject one thing here. We use predominantly survey data, but I have learned and been educated over the last year, especially in a culturally-sensitive area such as tribal organizations, that being able to do qualitative analysis, focus groups, and in-person interviews is a good way of gathering culturally-sensitive information. We are considering doing focus groups in terms of evaluating our mentors and things moving forward so we are expanding the methods that we use.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

Thanks Keith. Are there any other sites? Are there any other coaches on the line who wanted to share? What about Hawaii? Oh, go ahead.

Nicole Bossard, ICF International

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Oh, I was just saying, this is Nicole. We work also with Tanana Chiefs. I just want to go back to an earlier point, which was that with focus groups, interviews, and observational data, sometimes folks take that as these are very informal ways to collect data and they do not have to be. The point is not that you are doing that observation or you are doing those interviews or you are conducting those focus groups. It is not just kind of a coffee table discussion, you really have a clear sense of what it is that you want to know from folks or what it is that you hope to observe, and what you hope to learn through observing folks. So that is what makes it evidence – really being able to do that kind of pre-work before you start just kind of collecting information. No matter how you are gathering this information, it is that distinction, Keith, that you have spoken of about information versus useful information, and that goes as much for the qualitative data as it does for the quantitative data. There is nothing worse than having a pile of numbers on your desk or a pile of interviews on your desk, if you do not know how to make it useful. Part of how you make it useful is having a clear sense of what exactly it is that you want to know. I just wanted to drop that in there.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

Great. I think that is a good segue into the next slide, which is Sources of Data. There are two different sources. There is existing data, which you can get from administrative data, from records, case files, people, or pictorial records. For example, things like intake interviews, your self-sufficiency plans, work plans, attendance logs, and enrollment forms. Then there is obviously new data collection, which are the purposeful, tailored strategies that you are thinking through.

This next slide I just wanted to pass over to TCC, which I think will be a great add-on to Nicole's point. Keith?

Keith Bowman, Tanana Chiefs Conference

It is collected and reported by every TANF program that is out there – all the tribal TANF programs and all the states are required to collect more than 150 fields of data on each case each month and then electronically transmit that to HHS. Now of course, as is obvious by looking at the slides, data is data. It would be very difficult to visualize what kind of information is included in that. However, if we could go to the next slide. . .

This is basically some of that data, just several fields of that data, which in this case helps us to take a look at the last 14 years of the trends of our caseloads. Our applications are the top line, caseloads are the yellow dots, and then the bars are single parent families, two-parent families and then adult not included cases. But again, this is just an illustration that there is a lot of data that is out there. Quite frankly, once we report it to the Fed, maybe a year or two later, we will find out if we met our work participation rate, but there is a wealth of information. For some of us, it is primary data. For some of you, it may be secondary data that is available and just an illustration of that.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

Okay, so this next slide goes back to those four data questions that we looked at earlier in terms of whether or not they were quantitative or qualitative. I just wanted you all to think about these questions and where the sources of data would be in your programs in order to start to think about answering these data questions. So if you all can just think about that for a minute.

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We wanted to open the lines up for this and see if Hawaii is on the line. What about LINC? Just think about these data questions and where you would get the data to answer these questions, whether or not it would be existing data that you have or if there is a new data collection method that you might use.

Tom Jakopchek, LINC Works

Well, for LINC, we are getting information in those areas from both primary and secondary sources. We collect some of that information ourselves and, obviously, we get some information in terms of credentials from community colleges as they cross-reference our individuals, participation, success, and obtainment of credentials.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

Okay, great. All right, I think we can actually skip over these last few slides so we can go ahead and just see if we have time to come back to them. We really want to turn it over to the Tanana Chiefs Conference to give Don, Keith and Anita some time to talk about their experience with data collection. It is a process that they have gone through with the help of Promising Pathways. So I am going to skip down and turn it over to you all. Don, Keith and Anita, if you want to just go ahead and talk a little bit about what is going on in your program.

Don Shircel, Tanana Chiefs Conference

Okay I'm going to have Keith lead off the discussion here, so Keith would you?

Keith Bowman, Tanana Chiefs Conference

I will try and go very quickly. Back to Stephanie's question, the bottom question was how did our program lead to greater self-sufficiency? That is one which is our goal and what we read into was we had to answer that question. If you go on to the next slide, you are going to see, first, a copy of a survey instrument. We chose to gather new data to answer that question.

The next slide should show the first page. We are sort of experiencing some technical difficulties. We have lost our overhead right now but I am trying to go with it. Okay, you can see now on this slide, we used a survey, we used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. You see some open-ended questions and some closed. We can go back to this for referral if you want to ask questions about the instrument later on. But this instrument we designed to answer that question. How was our program leading toward self-sufficiency? Go to the next slide.

We have an iterative cycle here at Tanana Chiefs Conference. No matter what data we collect, we go through a cycle to determine how to collect it, do we have it, do we need to go out and get it? And these next few slides will explain the cycle and will explain each step in the cycle so you understand exactly what we go through to determine what we need to gather and then gather it. Go to the next slide.

Here is our cycle. We look at any existing data that is out there and, if we can, we turn it into useful information. You saw an example of that earlier in the presentation where we took the Federal TANF data, which was data but was not really useful, and we converted it into useful data. Then we look at the data and say, "Based on what we see here, is there any more information that we need or are there questions that we

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have to ask?" If not, then we are done. But if so, then we go on to the data collection process and say, "What are the questions we want to answer when we gather new data?" We do this before we design the survey or anything and we do this to avoid being a fishing expedition of just gathering all kinds of data. Then we determine who we are going to talk to, to get this information. We have to do those two steps before we even start thinking about any kind of survey, which is the third step of designing an instrument. And then after we design an instrument, we use it to gather data and you will see a key step here of asking the question during the iterative process, "Is it working?" If no, then we have to go back and review the instrument or the survey, change it to find out if it works and then go gather more data. If yes, then we finish the data gathering process, but we do not finish our process. We then have to take that data that is now existing data and turn it into useful information, so we go through the cycle again. This is a brief description of our cycle. The next few slides will show an example of each one as we move through the process with our Subsidized Employment Program with Promising Pathways. We can go onto the next slide.

Here is an example. You have seen this and so we will go back to it. This is the existing data that we had, and if you go to the next slide this is how we converted it into useful information. But then directors and management looked at that and said, "We have more questions here." The little red pop-up bubble said, "What happened to these people in conjunction with our Subsidized Employment Program? We have drops and we have rises, but where are they now?" And so we had to decide that we have to gather new data. So if you go on to the next slide...

We said, before we even started the survey, thank you to Promising Pathways with helping us with this process. We said what questions do we have to answer before we start a survey, what do we want to know before we even start on the survey? We determined where are you now, how did our program help you, and how can we improve the program? Those are the core questions we wanted to answer before we even started actually designing the survey. Later on, we can go back to the survey instrument itself and you can see all of those questions directly correlate with answering one or several of these questions. We took the next step which was B, which says, "Who are we going to talk to? Do we want to talk to everyone who was in our Subsidized Employment Program? Do we want to talk to only females, males, whatever?" We determined that we wanted to talk to only those participants who were no longer on our TANF rolls as of six months following the program and 18 months following the program. So you can go on to the next slide.

We hit the A and B steps and then we finally could go ahead and design the survey. We could not until we started, and this is sometimes a challenging process, and we thank Promising Pathways for helping us understand. You design the survey, but you design the survey based on those A and B steps. If you have a question and you just cannot say what it is going to answer, you remove the question. It makes the survey a lot easier on the participants. We went through a several week process of designing questions, rewording questions, making them culturally sensitive, and finally we came up with what we thought was a good survey and then we began using the instrument to gather data. We used our tribal members and our mentors and we chose a specific method called phone interview because we did not want to just mail things out. We know the phone has a higher response rate than mail. We went ahead and had our tribal members call, but this is where the critical step came in of asking, "Is it working?" During the process, interviewers came up with this question really – we get silence from our respondents when answering, or after doing so many surveys, people are not using these codes. Here is an example where you can see on the left side, on the bottom, are the codes that we had for a certain question in 2011. After we did surveys for all of our participants, we found out that, for example, I believe that the number three, "Directions on work," nobody answered that question, but a lot of people were saying the stress associated with a job or a program or our home really were barriers to our employment. So when we did the new survey, we included that as a code rather than what we thought they would answer. So this is where it is key to ask, "Is the instrument

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working,” in the process and change it so you can get not just data, but useful data. If you want to go on to the next slide.

We have gone through the data process. We went through and we used existing data, we looked at it, we added some more questions, we designed the data survey instrument, we gathered and now we have this data again. We cannot stop though because without information, the data is useless. This is an example of the data we gathered from our survey. It is no good until we go to the next step, which you will see on the next slide.

We have converted that data to useful information. We have taken a question that says, “Where are you now,” we have coded it, and we have said here is where our participants are now. Only when we have done this have we succeeded in gathering the data and making the data useful. You will see it is iterative – if you remember our cycle, we went through the whole cycle and we came back and took the data and turned it into useful information again. This is our Subsidized Employment Program. It is an example of how we took a survey, we used existing data, we had more questions, we designed our own data gathering tool with the help of Promising Pathways, we went through the whole iterative process, then went back, turned that data to useful information and got some good, helpful stuff out of it. Next slide.

Now this is an example of another way where we have taken what I call secondary data. We do, in our Subsidized Employment Program every year, we show, we gather data and we generate check requests for employers. We go ahead and say, “Okay, how many hours did you work?” We are going to generate a check request and send it off to employers during the Subsidized Employment process. This is data. Now if you go to the next slide.

This is where we have taken it and we have converted it. This is the same data that is in there for generating the check requests, but then we are saying for our tribal representatives, we are saying here is how much we are spending in your village, in your location, based on data that we already had just to generate check requests and get money to people. So you can take data that you have to gather for administrative processes, and I believe that Stephanie spoke about that, and do it. So this is an example of another way where you can take data that you are already gathering for another source and turn it into useful information. And if you go on to the last slide.

This is what we have found are some key addressing areas that if you are going to gather data, you need to consider. First of all, recognition that quality data gathering is a requirement and without that iterative process, you can go through and you can do a survey, you can do a focus group, you can do observations, but if you do not get out the quality data at the end, you cannot do much more with it. So evaluating your instrument during the process is key. The next thing we learned was the decision makers have to determine what the questions are we want answered before we even begin to write a survey or gather data, so that you have a chance to answer their questions. You should not even go in and begin doing a survey until the decision makers have said, “This is what we want to get out of it.” The third thing is to make the resources available, including time, funds, infrastructure, and personnel, to be able to gather the data, to house, and to analyze the data. It is not free. And finally, knowing that the data gathering process is just the first step, that unless you take that data and you convert it into useful information, you have done nothing more than add additional work with no output. You have to understand that the data gathering is only the first step towards useful information. And in this regard, I am going to pass it on because this is what we learned. It took a lot of learning with a lot of help from a lot of people at Promising Pathways and this is what we are going to exercise no matter which way, which instrument we go with in the months ahead for data gathering.

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Don Shircel, Tanana Chiefs Conference

This is Don. I might also add that that interface between program and information systems (IS) is extremely important. Here at Tanana Chiefs, we do have an IS Department but having that expertise and those skill sets immediately available for programmers really adds to an environment where there is an actual cycle in which we are able to work together to tease out best approaches and then to be able to accurately interpret the information that we get from our data. So having an IS person onboard and having direct access to the individual is the only way that I can see that we would have been successful in our efforts, primarily because the IS Department and IS staff are basically busy doing the technical things of the systems themselves and this requires a lot more of an interactive cycle.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

Okay, thank you so much, Keith and Don, for sharing that information. So really quickly, before we go to questions, we wanted to just go back to a couple other slides. I think we are going to skip over some of the slides that were included on considerations for determining a method, when to collect data, and tips for the design and administration of instruments, and just make sure that we provide those to you in the PowerPoint that will be sent out after the Webinar.

We did want to briefly mention just some free online data collection tools that are available to you all. Survey Monkey is one of them. I am sure most, if not all, of you have heard of Survey Monkey before. The web link is here for you, but it is a free tool, and with the free version, you can design a survey from a number of different templates, you can get a link to your survey that you can send out to participants over a website or email, and you can set a lot of preferences for your survey, like the response cutoff dates and manage the results of your survey. Another free tool that is available online is called Poll Everywhere and that is actually a great tool that you can use to gather live responses in different venues like conferences, for giving a presentation in a classroom, and even via print. It is free if you have less than 40 people taking the poll. You can ask any questions and the audience can answer just using their cell phone or a web browser and then the responses are displayed for you. So it is a really neat, free tool that anyone can utilize. So we just wanted to mention those. There are a number of other free online tools but we just provided those two for you.

Okay, I think that is it for the presentation. We just wanted to open the floor up for questions, comments, or feedback from any of the participants on the line. The lines should be un-muted so anyone can come in if you have any questions of kind of what we talked about in the beginning or if you have any questions of TCC as well.

Mack Storrs, ICF International

Yes, hi, this is Mack Storrs. I wanted to ask Keith a question on why they made the decision to only survey those that had stayed off of the rolls. I was struck that in Hawaii, I see the group that we had the least information on were actually the ones that stayed on the rolls. We were struggling to try to come up with data collection methods to find out why the program was not succeeding for those clients or who had returned to the rolls, and then we actually had more information on those that had left the roll. I assume after you interviewed them, you had much more information on those that had left as well.

Don Shircel, Tanana Chiefs Conference

Promising Pathways: Data Collection Methods

Yes, this is Don, and I think that one of our objectives was to see if what we were doing in our investments of time, energy and resources was basically producing the outcomes that we were looking for. Just because someone was off the rolls does not necessarily mean that they were off the rolls because they reached a higher level of self-sufficiency, and that is the real question that we were looking at. I mean they could have moved out to another service area, there are many reasons why they would not be appearing on the rolls, and so that is why we focused on that particular set of individuals who, along with the other 39 percent of people, actually participated in a full range of intensive services that we were providing. So one, it was to identify whether or not there were successful outcomes. All we knew is that they were not on the graph. They did not come back, they were not on our rolls and so that is where we were headed at. I appreciate your question though because it does bring to mind some very quick questions that I would have and a real interest in taking a look at those who did return to the rolls. Good point.

Anita Taylor, Tanana Chiefs Conference

To add to that, we also have knowledge that the state here was also doing their own research through the University of Anchorage's ISER (Institute of Social and Economic Research), so it was actually polling out those same questions as to why people were reaching their 60 months on the TANF program. The state, looking at the areas in which they were serving, has now included where they are also going to be researching those questions by interview process with tribal. Also, that is just one thing to let you know is what is everybody else doing out there, what are questions being already asked in that area, so currently that is being done.

Keith Bowman, Tanana Chiefs Conference

I will just interject that as the data guy, that was the decision makers' process. Once they had asked the questions and then we had to design the instrument. That is where management may take the role before the data guys even get involved. So that is why Don and Anita answered the decision makers why we chose the certain sample path that we did.

Don Shircel, Tanana Chiefs Conference

Again, remember that a part of our focus was really on seeing what impact the people who participated in Subsidized Employment experienced and what positive outcomes were a part of that impact for that group that left the rolls. I am not sure if we are answering your question.

Mack Storrs, ICF International

Oh yes, no, you have answered the question. Thank you so much.

Stephanie Barr, ICF International

Are there any other questions? Questions from LINC or Kentucky or any of the other sites? Comments? Any comments from Nicole?

Nicole Bossard, ICF International

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Yes, thank you. No, I am just kidding. All right, I actually was thinking though, down in the last piece that you were just talking about there, as Keith was kind of going through the slides, it really struck me that once we start getting into the realm of data collection, the importance of having an organizational culture that really does appreciate data. Because, Keith, one of the things that you said a few times that really kind of flipped my ears there a little bit was this idea that, hey, this does take a lot of time from start to finish of each stage. So you have to have an organizational culture that really is committed to this and getting quality data and understanding that you cannot just kind of shove somebody in an expanded broom closet somewhere and expect to get really good data about your program. So I do not know TCC, but I would love for you all to elaborate on the culture of evidence that is appreciating evidence that you have there. I would love to hear LINC also speak about that. I don't know if anyone from SEE Hawaii wants to speak about that, but just kind of the importance of having a concept that really not only appreciates data, but then, of course, in that appreciation, uses it in ways for the functioning of the organization.

Yvette Lamb, ICF International

And Nicole, I think we have Dorcas Place on the line as well so if you would like to kind of pipe in on that as well, that would be good.

Nicole Bossard, ICF International

Oh great, great, thank you, welcome Dorcas Place.

Tom Jakopchek, LINC Works

As far as LINC goes, we would definitely concur with that. That very much lines up. It is not only recognizing the value of that, but also just its impact in making decisions for the program in terms of any directions we need to take as a management group or how just to better serve the participants. So it is absolutely critical to value that so I understand it is important.

Don Shircel, Tanana Chiefs Conference

This is Don at Tanana Chiefs. I think that the importance of that interface is not only from a program perspective and even the collection of data, it is a range of an audience and different audiences that programs really need to articulate with. When Keith was describing the slide that indicated how much of that particular subsidized employment program in 2010 and 2011 actually was part of our ARRA Program – so the whole emphasis of that program was to stimulate economies and it was very important for us, not only to get program information on how successful were clients doing, but really to get information out to policymakers, tribal leadership, and community leadership, as far as how the program itself was impacting their individual village-based economies. The evidence is something that is part of an interaction not only at the program level or our methods to measure outcomes, but also other types of impact that programs have that are outside of the arena of the services themselves.

Yvette Lamb, ICF International

Anyone else want to comment? Any other questions?

Nicole Bossard, ICF International

This is Nicole, I will hold my comments. Keith, go ahead.

Keith Bowman, Tanana Chiefs Conference

I have a question for the other groups that are on: Hawaii, LINC, Dorcas and whoever else is here. In our process, we have a data gathering process and we have an analysis process, which is taking the data, analyzing and looking at it, and making questions. If you can go back to our slide – the one with the circle that has the iterative process. I do not know whether you have that capability. It was way back at the beginning of our presentation, it would be the third slide in. We have three dark blue areas, which are taking existing data, turning it into useful information, those first three on the left. I would like to find out – there is data gathering and data storing, which is an IS area, then there is the analysis and understanding, and tweaking and manipulation. Where in the other organizations does that data analysis and management and interpretation lie? Does that make sense? Where does that role lie within your organizations? Is it a specific person? Is it in the program area? Is it in the data IS area? Is it just somebody? Do you know what I am saying? Or do you interact with other departments within the state or whatever to get it done?

Nicole Bossard, ICF International

And you are talking about the meaning-making process, right? Getting it from an, okay, here is the stuff to here is what it means. Is that what you are saying, Keith? Am I following?

Keith Bowman, Tanana Chiefs Conference

Exactly. The data-to-information conversation process.

Tom Jakopchek, LINC Works

I can speak for LINC on this. Because our TANF program is called LINCWorks and LINC is kind of a parent company, if you will, to it and so within LINC, we actually have a data team that serves exactly that purpose of facilitating the data gathering, but that also works to turn it into information to help them make decisions. So we do that not only for this program, but also for all the initiatives that we do. We are large enough to have a group dedicated to the creation of information, if you will. That is how we do that, so we have dedicated individuals that do that.

Nicole Bossard, ICF International

That is great. Yes, that is great.

Yvette Lamb, ICF International

Okay, I do not think that we can connect with the other sites. They may not be connected by phone. So Keith, that may be the one response you have. But what we can do is send that – make that part of the survey or the feedback that we are going to get after the event and so we will include that and share that information back with you guys as well. We will actually – we could probably even put the diagram in there and say, “How do you do steps one, two and three in your organization?” Would that be helpful to get that feedback, Keith?

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Keith Bowman, Tanana Chiefs Conference:

You do not really need to. It is really helpful for us, at least from the LINCWorks perspective. I appreciate you giving me the feedback to know that they see that the data analysis realm is within their IS department and that they hire people specifically with the skill set for analyzing data rather than system people for just storing the data. I do not want to ask for more work.

Yvette Lamb, ICF International

You will not be adding more work on our end but what we wanted to do is if there are no other questions. Yes, Nicole?

Nicole Bossard, ICF International

I was wondering though, in response to that, I do not know if Mary is on or if you feel comfortable talking about how Dorcas Place kind of – what that (unclear) looks like for them. It might be interesting.

Yvette Lamb, ICF International

Okay, I can speak very briefly about Dorcas Place. Mary is not on the line but Mack is on the line and (inaudible) if he wants to talk anything about Hawaii. But Dorcas Place has their own dedicated staff, a small staff but still dedicated, with great skills that do both data collection, both primary and secondary data collection, as well as their own internal analysis. What we learned through the Promising Pathways Initiative was, in fact, that they are beginning to kind of – they value data, but they are beginning to understand how they can translate that data into actionable kinds of information. I think Keith pointed that out very, very emphatically in his presentation. We have lots of information but how do we turn it into actionable data? How do we turn it into pieces that help us make decisions? I think we have seen in Dorcas Place, they are pulling it together, not only what they are collecting, but how what they collect has value within the various programmatic areas that they are working through. But a lot of the capacity that they have for doing that is an internal capacity.

Mack Storrs, ICF International

Thank you. This is Mack. I can just speak briefly for Hawaii. I think one of the values of the whole process was that SEE Hawaii Work is actually run by a contractor and as part of the contract, the state requires a lot of data to be provided. It is the analyst that is assigned to that contract that is supposed to do the analysis, but they often have too much work, so turning it into useful data I think was a key thing. We found that the state reported data was not happening. Goodwill, in order to operate the program, captured additional information that was not required by the state and did their own analysis for their own program improvement but that information was not shared with the state. So I think now they are planning to share the information amongst each other and have assigned an additional analyst so they can actually do the analysis and turn it into useful information. Clearly, one of the pieces of information they did not have was the return on investment sort of model and that is at least on their schedule as the next step.

Catherine Scardino, SEE Hawaii Work

Hi everyone. Can everyone hear me? This is Catherine from Hawaii. Hi Mack. Thank you for sharing that information.

As far as the structure of our department, we actually do have designated a specific office that does research and we work closely – we meaning the program office – with our research staff. Our research staff actually receives files with raw data and so we work in collaboration with them to pull or develop reports. And we have just started a new initiative to gather data in regards to subsidized employment and education because we want to see how we can incorporate, for example, vocational education and subsidized employment. So it is in infancy right now and we are just receiving the data and it has been transferred to our research staff. So it is now a matter of sitting down and working through it, but we do have designated staff to analyze the data with us.

Nicole Bossard, ICF International

Oh, that is great.

Yvette Lamb, ICF International

Thanks, Catherine, good. All right, we are now coming to the end of this opportunity for us to interact. I want to thank all of our participants for coming on board and sharing their information. I particularly want to thank TCC, Don and Anita and Keith. You guys were fantastic. And I want to give a special commendation to Stephanie Barr for pulling this all together and helping us make sure that we follow through on some technical assistance to the sites that we identified as particularly unique and things that people wanted to know more about. Promising Pathways is a learning laboratory. I know you guys have heard me say that on a number of occasions, so not only do we want to share information among ourselves, we also want you to give feedback to us on how this webinar process, providing technical assistance in this way worked for you. So with that as an endpoint, you are going to hear from Rebecca Fairchild over the next day or so with an email, collecting your feedback on what your perceptions are of the information that you received, the interaction that we have had via conversation and discussion, the polls that we have given, and we want to also have you tell us whether this works for you as a technical assistance delivery mechanism. Your comments are very, very important to us so please respond as quickly and as fully as you feel comfortable doing. Again, I want to thank everyone. I want to make sure that the regional offices know that we appreciate your listening in and participating and if you all could fill out the feedback form as well, that would be helpful to us to have your perspective as well. We are anticipating one other webinar sometime in late September or early October so be on the lookout for that. Again, thank you so very much for participating today and thanks to all our presenters.