Action Step 4: Gather Data

Action Step 4 is data-collection and begins the assessment phase, during which information is collected from individual sites. Sites are the locations within each sector your team will visit to collect data. At each site, the information gathered will provide answers to the *CHANGE* items listed in each module. For example, sites within the Community-At-Large Sector could be county government, news media, restaurants, grocery stores, or the health department in your community. Remember that your team will observe and document multiple sites when completing the Community-At-Large Sector because items cut across community-wide indicators, including walkability, food access, and tobacco use and exposure, which cannot be assessed by using only one site. For example, when answering questions around physical activity for your defined community, you may need to observe and document more than one park, neighborhood street, sidewalk network, or bike route to understand community walkability or bikeability, which are not limited to one location but are within the geographic boundaries of your identified community. However, with the other four sectors, your team will collect data specific to that one particular location, such as a single work site or health care facility. The relationship between sectors, sites, and modules will be explored in greater detail in this action step. The *CHANGE* tool is not designed to grade communities on their progress, but rather to assist you in making decisions about where change is needed and taking the steps necessary to reach out to those individuals and organizations (including your community team) that can help you to make an impact.

Tip! Review the *CHANGE* Sector Excel Files for inspiration on questions to ask during interviews. However, do not print out the document and ask contacts to complete it. *CHANGE* is designed to be a dialogue in which questions are asked, feedback is generated, and notes are taken to document the process. It is not designed as a self-report assessment or a tool that individuals should fill out for their own sites.

At this action step, use a mixture of two or more data-collection methods at each site, for example, focus groups and walkability audits. Table 1 lists the advantages and disadvantages of various data-gathering methods. This is not a comprehensive list, but rather a sample of methods you can use. Richer data enable a more effective action plan, so take this step slowly to ensure the data needed to make decisions are available.

Perhaps your community has already gathered data for another purpose? To determine if that information can be leveraged for the *CHANGE* process, consider the following:

- How old are the data? If data are 6 months old or newer, they can be used. If not, it is time to gather new data.
- Do you have all the information?
- Is the information relevant?

- Can you use the data in the existing format?
- Do you need more data?
- Does anyone on your team have experience with analyzing data?

Table 1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Data Collection Methods

Method	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages
Observation [6]	Data collection method that allows you to use the phenomenon around you to gather clues and generate conclusions about specific locales or experiences. One example is to stand on a street corner to observe or watch the ease or difficulty with which pedestrians can cross a busy street. Windshield surveys are also a form of direct observation — making visual observations of a neighborhood or community while driving — literally "looking through the windshield"	▪ Relatively inexpensive ▪ Efficient ▪ Can be conducted on foot	▪ Provide only an overview of community ▪ Require closer observation to identify previously unrecognized assets/ issues
Photovoice [7]	Combines photography with grassroots social action; subjects represent their community or point of view by taking photographs; attempts to bring perspectives of those "who lead lives that are different from those traditionally in control of the means for imaging the world" into the policy-making process	▪ Provides a method for describing the community from the viewpoint of those who live there as opposed to those who govern it ▪ Enables people to record their community's strengths and concerns ▪ Promotes critical dialogue and knowledge about community issues through large and small group discussions of photographs	▪ Analysis of photographs can be complex due to the volume of information ▪ Requires photo release form, particularly if individuals appear in the photographs ▪ Can be expensive to develop photos
Walkability Audit [8]	Designed to broadly assess pedestrian facilities, destinations, and surroundings along and near a walking route and identify improvements to make the route more attractive and useful to pedestrians	▪ Unbiased examination of the walking environment ▪ Can also be performed at different stages of development, including planning and designing, construction, and on completed or established facilities/walking environments	▪ Inexperience in conducting walkability audits ▪ Can be time-consuming

Method	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages
Focus Groups [9,10]	Involve gathering information and opinions from a small group of people (8 to 10 per group). These group discussions often provide insights that might not emerge in interviews	▪ Can assess body language ▪ Observers can be present without distracting participants ▪ If videotaped, can share with others who couldn't attend ▪ Have participants' undivided attention	▪ Responders lose anonymity ▪ Higher travel expenses when multiple locales are used ▪ Logistical challenge in rural areas or small towns
Postal Survey [11,12]	Mailing self-completion questionnaires to a targeted group of people. (e.g., a client's customers or people living in a certain area)	▪ Relatively inexpensive ▪ Less potential for people to give answers they assume the interviewer wants to hear ▪ No interviewer training required	▪ Suitable only for short and straightforward surveys ▪ Data collection takes a long time ▪ Relatively low response rates ▪ Moderate literacy level required
Telephone Survey [12]	Collection of data from a sample population using a standardized questionnaire by telephone	▪ Minimizes missing data ▪ Can use open-ended questions and more complex interviewing schedules ▪ Can record reasons and characteristics of nonconsenters ▪ Quick and inexpensive ▪ Does not require a high level of literacy	▪ Can be hard to prevent consultation with/ interference from others ▪ Need to keep questions few and short ▪ Unable to ask questions requiring visual cues ▪ Some likelihood of socially desirable responses
Face-to-face Survey [13,14]	A face-to-face survey is a telephone survey without the telephone. The interviewer physically travels to the respondent's location to conduct a personal interview	▪ Allows flexibility in number and style of questions ▪ Minimizes missing data ▪ Allows physical measurements & direct observations ▪ Minimizes literacy level issues	▪ High likelihood of socially desirable responses ▪ Can be hard to prevent consultation with or interference from others ▪ Very expensive, especially if respondents are widespread geographically ▪ Time-consuming
Web-based Surveys [13]	A group of potential respondents is invited to participate in completing a web-based survey, and their responses are submitted electronically via the Internet	▪ Can be relatively inexpensive ▪ Relatively quick method of data-collection ▪ Minimizes social desirability biases	▪ High set-up costs ▪ Useful only for relatively large-scale surveys ▪ High level of literacy and basic computer skills required ▪ Requires access to good hardware, programming, and support services ▪ No information on non-respondents ▪ Best suited to pre-coded questions

Tip! Make sure to use the same methods (e.g., survey, focus group) from one year to the next so that you have consistent data to analyze. You can expand on the methods from one year to the next, but be sure to maintain the ones from previous years.

Brainstorm sites for each sector as well as people (or key informants) in the community who can assist you in completing the *CHANGE* tool by providing appropriate insight, knowledge, or documentation. Figure 7 provides more detail on the connections between sectors and sites. Community team members can then reach out and contact people from the community (e.g., school superintendent, school principal, business leaders, mayor, city planners, police chief, hospital administrator, faith leaders, or daycare owners) who should have access to the desired information or can point them in the right direction. You can use existing data sources, such as U.S. Census, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), and Chronic Disease Indicators (CDI) to capture community information where possible. These sources capture and utilize nation-wide data to reflect demographic data updated on an annual basis. BRFSS data is especially helpful as they can be splintered to show state, county, and metropolitan area data. These are examples of the only sources of data older than 6 months that are acceptable to use. However, pay attention to the frequency with which the data are collected. The next set of data from the U.S. Census, for example, will be available in 2010; BRFSS alternates asking questions on certain key indicators (e.g., physical activity, nutrition) each year. As such, it is suggested that your team review a 2-year range of data to ensure a complete set of data. Remember that these sources do not provide policy, systems, and environmental change strategies, but rather a snapshot of the types of needs located in a given community. For example, CDI data may indicate that the prevalence of childhood obesity is higher in one county compared to a neighboring one. Using that data, your community team may begin to devise strategies on how to address that evidence-based need. State or nation-wide data paint a bigger picture of what is happening and can be used as a comparison for the rich, community-level data you generate using *CHANGE*. The data from these sources can be used in conjunction with the original data you collect from sites to gain a more comprehensive picture of the community needs. This strategic dialogue around identifying priorities can drive the creation of your Community Action Plan.

Tip! For additional datasets go to the following web sites: U.S. Census–*www.census.gov*; BRFSS–*www.cdc.gov/BRFSS*; NHANES–*http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm;* Chronic Disease Indicators–*http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/cdi/*.

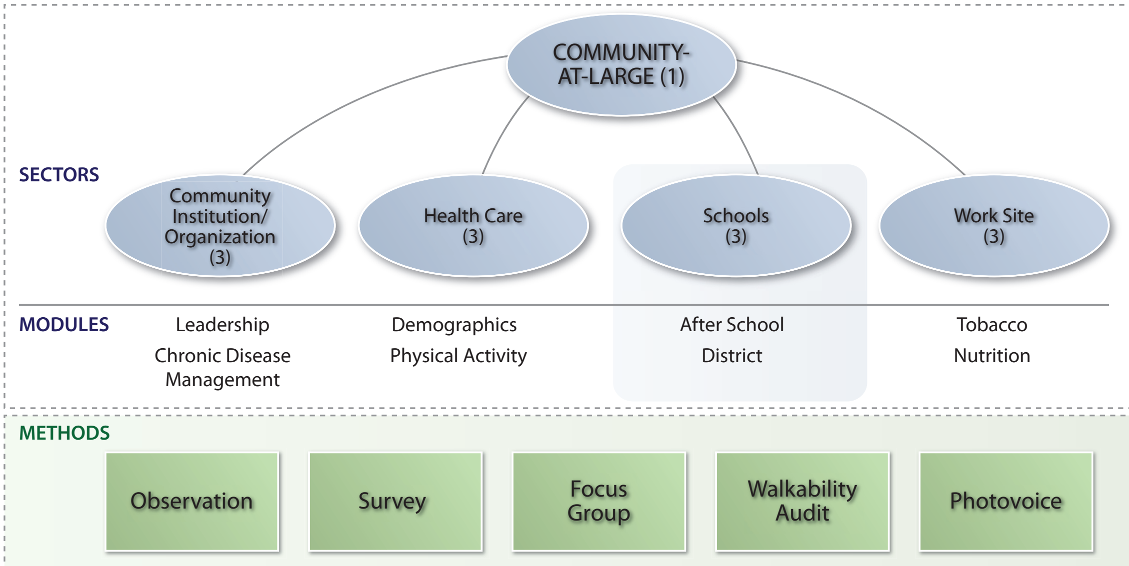
You are encouraged to use a variety of data-gathering methods to access and collect information for each site. Data come in many forms; varying data-collection methods provides a more comprehensive assessment of your community. For example, direct observation enables you to better understand the environment in which people interact and to see the things others may not be aware of. It may also produce useful information that may not be apparent from your other data-collection methods, such as a key informant interview or focus group. This type of data-collection allows you, the observer, to choose a location or event and watch what is happening. Coupling or grouping multiple methods can help to fill in gaps. For example, photographs of walkable streets or congested intersections unfriendly to pedestrians may supplement the feedback from an independent survey. The goal is to reflect the voices of the community through a diverse set of data-collection methods and to mobilize support by demonstrating a detailed, thorough method of data-collection. Finally, keep a comprehensive file of all sources of information, key contacts, and data to review at a later date or to share with coalition members. The file can be in multiple forms—notebooks or bound volumes, facilitator guides, field notes, meeting minutes, or an electronic data file. The purpose of cataloguing all the data files is to ensure that everything your team collects can be accessed and used.

Tip! Be sure to choose a variety of sites within your sector to show the breadth of work being done in your community. Some schools, for example, may be on the brink of passing a physical activity policy, while others have not yet begun to consider the need. A diversity of policy implementation enhances your data-gathering process. If you only choose sites that are excelling it is more challenging to identify gaps and needs for your Community Action Plan.

We suggest that you gather data from at least 13 sites. While this may seem daunting, consider there are only five sectors in the tool. Complete one site for the Community-At-Large Sector. Complete a minimum of three sites each for the other four sectors (i.e., Community Institution/Organization, Health Care, School, and Work Site). The more sites completed, the greater the capacity of your team to understand the intricacies of the community. Having more sites can be beneficial to your team as it shows a breadth and depth of data generated. Every community has different assets and needs, so do as much as possible with the time and resources available.

Figure 7 shows the relationship among the sectors, modules, and data-collection methods. Start with defining the community, whether that is a county, city, or geographic area. Given the boundaries of the community, the other four sectors will fall within those boundaries. For example, if your community is defined as two adjoining zip codes within a county, the Community Institution/Organization, Health Care, School, and Work Site Sectors are completed by selecting sites within that geographic designation. Then, define the sites within each and the methods your team will use to collect the data.

Figure 7. Framework for Completing *CHANGE*



Once you have data that fully represent your community, identify areas for improvement within your Community Action Plan. Specific individuals who have the information will vary depending on the size of the organization. Use the community team members to access businesses or organizations with which you are less familiar. Sometimes it may be challenging to choose sites. The Sector Participant List, found in Appendix B, helps to identify key sites and the individuals to contact.

Action Step 5: Review Data Gathered

Action Step 5 is to review the data. Before you enter data into the *CHANGE* Sector Excel Files, review the data collected for each site to gain consensus on how to rate each item. Teams are discouraged from averaging ratings. The team should discuss the data, share what each person found, and identify evidence to support the team's rating. Refer back to Action Step 2 when your team devised a decision-making strategy. Some examples are the Delphi method, simple voting tactics, or a discussion among members that indicates all or most are in agreement. Choose a method based on your team's preference but you are encouraged to use that same method consistently throughout the process. This is the exciting part! Yet it also represents the hard work needed prior to entering data into the tool. Gather with your community team (in a board room, at a park, or at the local coffee shop) to brainstorm about what was heard in town hall meetings, observed during walkability audits, and garnered from existing data sources. There may be a pile of information in front of the group: pictures from the walkability audit, responses from a survey e-mailed to school staff, notes from an interview with the CEO of the local hospital. Establish consensus on what these data mean in terms of the parameters of the *CHANGE* tool. Be sure to record comments in the *CHANGE* Sector Excel file for every single response, to document why the decision was made. Make sure the information