Four Sources of Data

- **Existing data**: Data on your community available from websites, reports, and other sources.
- **Observation data**: Data collected through direct observation of the community or of individual behavior and systematic note-taking by observers.
- **Interview data**: In-person, systematic interviews of people affected by the change such as local business owners.
- **Survey data**: Data collected from a large number of people that represent the community of interest.

Collected Data Should Be:

**Objective**
- *Objective data* does not depend on the perceptions or opinions of the researcher gathering the data.
- Existing data is nearly always objective data. Observations must be without judgment to remain objective.
- Interviews or opinions of community members from surveys are objective data, if researcher’s questions are not asked in a way to guide respondent to a certain response.

**Local**
- *Local data* derives from the community that is the focus of the advocacy effort.
- Elected officials are persuaded by data from their community or even their district.
- If local data is not available or is too difficult to collect, try to find data from a similar city or neighboring city of similar size.

**Representative**
- *Representative data* is designed to represent the entire community that is the focus or target of the advocacy or policy change effort.
- Researchers sample a community because of the difficulty in getting data from everyone. The sample should be random.
- Random sample: everyone has an equal chance of being included.