

The **Source** is where (or in whom) the information you're looking for 'lives.' The latest update on a Mayor's scandal (the information) may be found in the 'newspaper article' (where the information lives). Or the average income of families in your community (the information), can be found in the US Census (the place where the information lives).

WHERE do you go to learn about....?

- Public and government records (about a politician's background)
- Newspaper article (about your town)
- Students (about school experience)
- Your grandfather/grandmother (about your family's history)



The **Tool** is the 'instrument' you use to extract the needed information from the Source. Research tools can be tangible things, like the 'tools' we often think of, like shovels for gardening: questionnaire forms, a computer, and even Google (search engine), are all common research tools. But in research, certain 'techniques' specifically designed to get information, like observations or interviews, are also considered as tools for research. People-to-people techniques like these are often more relaxing, and can convey nuances better than surveys or 'numbers.'

WHAT do I use to learn about....?

Tangible tools:

- Pen and paper
- Survey forms
- Computer
- Tape recorder, mic
- Service intake forms

Techniques:

- Observations (about how treatment of non-English speaking, vs. English-speaking customers)
- Interviews
- Community Mapping

The **Methods** lays out 'the Way' for your research. It's the set of procedures that will get you the information you're after. If your source is your elder and your tool is an interview, then you should determine when you'll meet, how many times, etc., in advance. But aside from the logistics, you should develop a concrete outline of your questions...and which ones you want her/him to go in-depth, which ones not, and so on. Your research methodology is about spelling out all this stuff based on what information you're looking for, and what you want to use that information to accomplish.

HOW do I want to learn about.....from.....?

- Conduct one-on-one interviews with 50 elders
- File a public records request on a company's stake in a development project
- Door-knock in your neighborhood and map out who lives there
- Conduct 100 surveys with nannies using puppet shows in the park

Picking each and any of these elements of research requires considering your organization's resources, honing in on what information will strengthen your campaign and get you to your goal, and considering your relationship and proximity to your audience. And remember – there are many sources, and many ways and tools to get at that information, so add on to this list and be creative. We're just putting a few out there for starters!!

The 6 STAGES of a RESEARCH PROJECT

The SOURCE, TOOLS and METHOD greatly influence your chances of the outcomes turning out the way you intended.

Let's take a moment to fill in each of the elements starting with the 1) articulation of the larger goals & objectives, 2) assessment of capacity & resources and information needed - only then, you have the CONTEXT IN MIND to consider the 3 elements that make up the research project *that works for you!*

