

Lawrence Research Initiative Glossary

Researchers have developed a special language that they use to describe research. We have defined the research terms we used in the Lawrence Mayor's Health Task Force Research Initiative documents. These are also terms you might hear when talking to researchers or reading their proposals.

Analysis: Researchers analyze data to get research results. For example, you might use a survey to ask 100 people their age, whether they were male or female, and whether they had a flu shot last year. The answers the 100 people gave you would be your data. Your analysis could tell you what percent of people got a flu shot. You might also analyze the data to see whether men or women were more likely to get a flu shot. You could also see if older or younger people were more likely to get a flu shot.

Collaboration: Researchers usually collaborate with others. A true collaboration provides benefits to everyone included. Collaboration typically involves planning together, sharing resources, and managing resources together. Collaboration is best when all groups understand each other's point of view, communicate openly, and trust each other.

Community: A community is a group of people who have something in common. You might be a member of a variety of communities. As a resident of your city you are part of the 'Lawrence community.' Some neighborhoods in Lawrence might also be considered 'communities.' Communities may also result from a shared interest or practice, like a community of soccer players or the Catholic community. People who share a race or ethnicity might also make a community, such as the 'Latino community' or the 'African-American community.'

Data: Information or evidence of any kind that is written down or recorded. In research, data is analyzed to draw conclusions. Examples of data include answers to survey questions, blood samples, counts of how many people use the emergency room, or recordings of focus group discussions.

Data analysis: The process of breaking data down into smaller parts to pull out useful information and draw conclusions.

Database: A collection of data that can be easily accessed and analyzed. Databases are usually stored on computers.

Data-collection plan: A written plan describing exactly how the researchers will collect information. The plan usually describes who collects the information, when, where, and how.

Dissemination: Dissemination is another word for spreading the news about how a research project was done and what was discovered. The purpose of dissemination is to make sure that research is useful to many people, not just the ones who did the project. People might use information that is disseminated to make decisions, plan policy changes, or take action. When a research project is planned it is important to think about how the results will be disseminated to the people who are most likely to benefit from it.

Human Subjects: A "human subject" is a living individual about whom an investigator obtains either: data through interaction or intervention with the individual, or identifiable private information. People who volunteer to participate in a scientific study, also known as human participants, study participants or human volunteers.

Hypothesis: When researchers plan a project they usually have a hypothesis they want to test. In community research, a hypothesis often predicts how or why a program will cause a result. For example, a researcher may want to test the hypothesis that providing tutors to students with low grades will improve their test scores. The data collected through research can be used to test hypotheses. To be a research hypothesis a statement must be clear enough that it can be tested. For example, "TV news is more interesting than comedies" is not a hypothesis, but "Most Americans think that TV news is more interesting than comedies" is a hypothesis.

Informed Consent: Researchers need informed consent from people before they can include them in their research. After a researcher has explained the purpose, type of information being

collected, and way information will be used the person can then freely choose to be in the research study. If after the explanation, the person freely chooses to be in the research study they have given informed consent. Informed consent is usually recorded on a signed document, but occasionally it is a verbal agreement.

Instrument (Data Collection Instrument): Researchers often call the ways they collect data “instruments.” What they mean is anything they use to collect and organize information such as surveys, intake forms, attendance records, or tests. Instruments may be written for a project or instruments from a past project may be used. Instruments from past projects are often used when the researcher wants to compare results from different projects.

Intervention: A word for any program that tries to make a change, such as improving heart health, decreasing hospitalizations from falls, or increasing the skills of hospital interpreters.

IRB (Institutional Review Board) or Human Subjects Committee: Most research projects need to be reviewed by an IRB. An IRB is a committee made up of researchers and community representatives who make sure that research projects will not hurt anyone. Universities and many hospitals have IRBs.

Peer Review: Researchers often seek to publish the results of their work in “peer reviewed journals.” A researcher will write an article describing some part of a research project and send it to a journal. Other researchers then make comments about the article. If the other researchers think the work is good, the work gets published. Researchers at universities need to publish articles in peer reviewed journals to get promotions.

Protocol: A protocol is the action plan for a research project. A protocol should tell what the project will do, how many people will be in it, who is eligible to participate, what interventions they will be given, what tests or surveys they will be asked to do and how often, and what information will be gathered.

Research: To understand researchers it is important to think about what research really is. At the most basic level research is the search for knowledge. The knowledge gained from research

can help us to understand and solve problems. There are many ways to do research. You can do research in a library or on the Internet to learn specific information about the world. But research is not limited to looking up information that is already available. In fact, research can help discover new information and create new knowledge.

Often the information we need to address problems we care about is not known. Over the years researchers have developed ways of collecting information to answer questions. When research is done well, the results can provide powerful evidence to prove that problems exist and to make positive changes

When researchers try to answer questions about peoples' health or behaviors they often need "research participants," people who are willing to answer questions, provide access to their medical or school records, or have physical exams. Only people who want to should participate in research, nobody should ever be pressured, forced, or tricked into participating. Some research, such as medical research testing a new treatment or community research testing an educational program, might directly benefit the person who participates in the research. However, often research does not directly benefit the individual, but provides information to answer questions about the community and inform programs and policies that the individual may benefit from in the future. Participating in research can be satisfying, because you contribute to knowledge.

Research Design: A research design is the overall plan for a research project. Research designs tell what data will be gathered, from whom, how and when, and how the data will be analyzed.

Web glossaries of research terms:

http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/evaluation_manual/glossary.html

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/glossary/index.htm>

<http://www.athabascau.ca/policy/research/preambleanddefinitions.htm>

http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/irb/irb_glossary.htm

dir.niehs.nih.gov/diroisd/ocr/irb/irb_definitions.html

www.umich.edu/~newsinfo/Releases/2001/Aug01/glossary.html