

Gathering credible evidence

Definition	Compiling information that stakeholders perceive as trustworthy and relevant for answering their questions. Such evidence can be experimental or observational, qualitative or quantitative, or it can include a mixture of methods. Adequate data might be available and easily accessed, or it might need to be defined and new data collected. Whether a body of evidence is credible to stakeholders might depend on such factors as how the questions were posed, sources of information, conditions of data collection, reliability of measurement, validity of interpretations, and quality control procedures.
Role	Enhances the evaluation's utility and accuracy; guides the scope and selection of information and gives priority to the most defensible information sources; promotes the collection of valid, reliable, and systematic information that is the foundation of any effective evaluation.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choosing indicators that meaningfully address evaluation questions;• Describing fully the attributes of information sources and the rationale for their selection;• Establishing clear procedures and training staff to collect high-quality information;• Monitoring periodically the quality of information obtained and taking practical steps to improve quality;• Estimating in advance the amount of information required or establishing criteria for deciding when to stop collecting data in situations where an iterative or evolving process is used; and• Safeguarding the confidentiality of information and information sources.

Adapted from Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. Program evaluation standards: how to assess evaluations of educational programs. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994.