



### Checklist for Formulating and Refining Data Collection Questions

Given the complexity of data collection and reporting, state and local education agencies increasingly are developing and adopting data strategies to clarify and maximize the purpose of their education data and effectively collect those data. Design is the process of formulating the primary purpose(s) for the data collection and developing and describing a plan for conducting the collection. An effective design produces accurate and useful information, promotes timely and efficient data collection, and provides methods for resolving both expected and unexpected problems that may arise during data collection and analysis.

The following checklist can be used to craft appropriate data collection questions:

- ✓ Ensure that the questions that drive the collection have the potential to address the data needs.
- ✓ Ensure that an individual question does not raise another question, or set of questions, that must be resolved before the current question can be answered.
- ✓ Ensure that the questions driving the collection do not make inaccurate assumptions.
- ✓ Ensure that questions do not pose an incorrect dichotomy (for example, make sure that the possible alternative answers are truly different).
- ✓ Ensure that questions or collection processes have the same meaning across for all data providers.

For more best practices and additional checklists on data collection and reporting, see the *Forum Guide to Strategies for Education Data Collection and Reporting (SEDCAR)* ([https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2021013.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2021013.asp)).