



# Observing Where the Rubber Meets the Road

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#### What are Mystery Shopping and Ride-Alongs?

- Observational Data Collection Methods
- Type of Qualitative Inquiry





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#### When are Observational Methods Most Useful?

- Retail Products
- Mid-stream incentive
- Examples:
  - Energy Trust of Oregon Products Program
  - Northwest Energy
     Efficiency Alliance
     Consumer Electronics
     Television Initiative

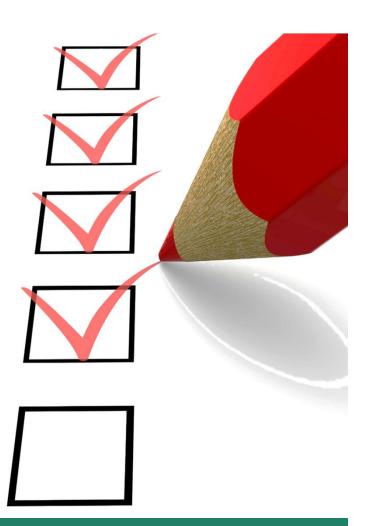




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### What are the 'Best Practices' for Direct Observation Methods?

- Decide sampling strategy: purposive vs. representative sample
- Standardized but flexible guide
- Observer Training



#### Why use observational methods in evaluations?

- Discrepancies in implementation
  - → Unanticipated findings





#### Why use observational methods in evaluations?

- Program design breakdowns
  - → Actionable recommendations





#### Why use observational methods in evaluations?

- Unique perspective
  - → Alternative to other methods





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#### Conclusions



Direct observations add value but are underutilized in process evaluations



Useful in mid-stream evaluations



Having a sound methodology will improve results

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**Thank You!** 

**Questions?** 

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