Analyzing data to summarize it and look for patterns is an important part of every evaluation. The right analysis approach helps us understand and interpret our findings, and ultimately use them to guide program and policy improvement.

Key steps to data analyses planning include:

1. Develop evaluation questions
2. Decide what data will be analyzed, how and when
3. Decide who is responsible for conducting the analysis
4. Choose method to analyze data (descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, content analysis)
5. Pilot test measurement tools and analysis
6. Consider reporting mechanisms

Tips for Data Analysis

In developing a data analysis plan, consider the following tips:

- Leave enough time and resources for analysis.
- Identify the appropriate statistics for each key question – get consultation if needed.
- Don't use the word "significant" to describe the findings unless they've been tested and found to be true either statistically or clinically.
- Keep the analysis simple.

Conducting Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis is to enter, clean and organize the data collected. See the previous section on *data integrity* for steps on how to enter and clean the data.

Defining the Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the "who" or the "what" that's being analyzed. The unit of analysis could be an individual client, a group, or even an entire program.

It's important to note, however, that the unit of analysis is not the same as the unit of observation. For instance, data from a client survey can be recorded for each individual client (i.e., the unit of observation), but clients could also be grouped by municipality and compare Brampton clients to Mississauga clients, thus creating a new unit of analysis (i.e., groups of clients).

Data Analysis Plan-Template

Evaluation Question	Data Collection Method	Data to be analyzed	Type of analysis	Needed Resources	Person Responsible	Timelines