Data Collection Methods

Type of Meeting	Description	When It Is Best Used
Card Storming	Individuals write down ideas about a topic and report to small group; small group chooses top 4-6 ideas; all small groups work together to sort ideas into themes	Used to gather consensus on best ideas to answer a question or solve a problem. Allows individuals to share perspectives and whole group to identify themes
Deliberative Polling Process	A representative sample of participants takes a prepoll before being given more information by experts; after learning more, they are asked to take the poll again	Best used to discuss complex issues which the public knows little about. Used to determine changes in perspective with more information
Nominal Group Technique	Structured small group discussions to develop a set of priorities for action; participants share their ideas and vote or rank all ideas according to original question	Used when a group is not easily working together or generating ideas
Study Circles	Small group process where stakeholder groups meet multiple times, each meeting building off the last; all circle groups use the same process and may come together at the end	Used to engage many diverse people on an issue without all meeting at the same time
Interviews	Structured conversations conducted between a facilitator and one or multiple participants	Best used to build rapport with stakeholders, to learn individual perspectives, or to identify issues or concerns
Comment Forms	Printed or online forms used to collect input regarding preferences and concerns or to evaluate the process	Best used to provide the opportunity for less vocal participants to share their views
Surveys	A structured list of questions to obtain specific information from a particular group of people	Best used to obtain the opinions of a large group of people
Interactive Maps	Online maps used to collect location-specific information; allow participants to assign problems, unmet needs, or potential improvements to specific location	Best used in visioning or scoping phases of a project