



Store assessments are an essential component in building awareness and documenting tobacco industry activity in your community. These questions will guide you in executing an effective store assessment campaign.

1 What data do you want to collect?

Determine what data is most important to you and what survey form you will use. Do you want to measure how many stores sell flavored tobacco? What is the average price of a pack of cigarettes? Do stores near schools have more marketing than stores without a school nearby? There are survey forms available to use like the **Standardized Tobacco Assessment for Retail Settings (STARS)** form, which was designed for practitioners to inform state and local tobacco control policies pertaining to the point of sale. **fSTARS** is a version of that survey form that focuses on flavored tobacco products, developed by Counter Tools and the Truth Initiative.

Counter Tools can help you create a custom survey form. We will discuss how each question is related to your research or policy goals.

2 How do you want to collect your data?

You can collect data on paper or online using a survey form. Collecting on paper requires you to do data entry later on, while using a mobile device allows you to complete this process while online.

Counter Tools can program survey forms into the Store Audit Center and/or POST, our web-based data collection and management tools. Through these sites, data collected using a survey form can be organized, stored, and analyzed.

3 What stores do you want to assess?

Think about your goals. Do you want to target certain stores (like pharmacies or chains) or stores in a certain area (like a city council district or zip code)? Perhaps you want a more general look at the consumer environment by collecting data in ALL stores (a census) or by taking a representative sample of stores.

Counter Tools can assist you with creating appropriate store sampling lists.

4 Who will collect the data?

If your stakeholders weren't already involved in Steps 1-3, it's time to recruit some data collectors! This is a great project for a coalition and an engaging way for youth to see how the tobacco industry is targeting them.

5 How do I assess a store?

It's time to collect the data! Flip this sheet over for tips on what to do once you're at a store.



6 What does your data show?

Your research goals will provide the basis for how you analyze your data. You may want to look at specific tobacco products, or compare your data with other data sources like demographics.

- Counter Tools can help clean your data and provide descriptive and statistical analysis to answer relevant questions for your community.

7 How will you share your data?

Educate your community by communicating your findings and having data collectors tell stories about what they experienced.

- Counter Tools can help you develop reports, fact sheets, and infographics to share with your community and decision makers.

DATA COLLECTION TIPS

- 1-2 people per team (have one as the “spotter” and the other as the recorder)
- Visit stores during regular hours, and in daylight
- If the store is busy, wait a few minutes before going inside
- Be courteous to store employees, stockers, and other shoppers
- Avoid standing in front of any area (e.g., the checkout counter) for a long period of time
- Try to be inconspicuous when looking at ads
- Do not pick up or handle any tobacco products
- Consider making a small purchase like gum, mints, or a bottle of water
- Expect a completion rate of about 90%
- Use the sample script below when asking for permission to survey a store

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Hello, my name is _____. I am working on a project where we are measuring the kinds of products that are sold and marketed in our community's stores.

Would you mind if I looked around? It will only take a few minutes and I will not get in the way of your customers.

