1. **What types of quality checks can be used across program sites?**

A number of things can be done. Compare data from different program sites to look for anomalies—anything out of the ordinary, from the amount missing data to averages that are much higher or lower than other sites. Try to determine if differences are due to actual differences in program operation or are attributable to problems with data collection. If possible, have someone from one site collect data for a short period of time for another site. This might bring to light misunderstandings in how data were collected. Also, randomly pull original files to check how data were entered into the database to see if there are common data entry errors.

2. **When giving a pre and post test to measure knowledge gained from a program, is it imperative to have the students identified individually (with ID #s) or is it okay to just say the percentage of total questions that were correct at pre test vs. post test for the whole group? (This is for a basic level evaluation)**

You are able to compare the percent of total questions correct at pre-test and post-test to demonstrate change only if the same youth tested at both points. If any dropped out or were added through the course of the program, you cannot compare pre- and post-test scores aggregately without excluding those youth, since different groups participated in testing at each time point.
3. **Participant identification for pre and post testing raises questions of IRB. Okay to do aggregate data analysis and leave out the identifier?**

You should not drop all identifying information from pre- and post-tests unless you have the exact same number of tests from both time periods, and are certain that the same youth have participated in test-taking at both points. Otherwise, you would be unable to use averages to demonstrate change in the group between the pre- and post-test. For example, if you have a group of 10 kids take a pre-test, but only 8 take the post-test, you need a way to drop the correct (2) pre-tests from the pre-test average (see the response to question #2).

Also, remember that you can have an “identifier” and still maintain confidentiality. For example, assign an ID number to records, and keep a separate list in a secure location that helps you identify the youth should you need to. The youth’s identity is kept confidential in that it would not be apparent which ID number represented which youth, but you can assure your reporting audience that you have the ability to link pre- and post-test data. Another option is to ask the participant to create an identifier that would only allow you to link data but not tell you (or anyone else) who the person is. For example, as the child to create an identifier that comprises the number corresponding to the day of their birth, first two letters of the name of his/her first pet or stuffed animal, and the color of his/her bedroom. Try to pick questions that the child will be unlikely to forget or unlikely to change between the pre- and post-test.

Most programs will probably not need IRB approval to collect and analyze performance measurement data, since this does not meet the definition of “research.” You should check with your granting agency or a local university for more information on IRB issues.

4. **How do you motivate staff to diligently complete your data collection documents?**

One way to motivate staff regarding data collection is to explain the ways in which staff members benefit from high-quality data. If data are used as a foundation for program improvement, they must be accurate—otherwise, any changes could be unnecessary or actually work against staff’s ability to accomplish the program’s goals.

Also, work with staff to develop data collection tools and a database that are user-friendly—seek feedback from program staff responsible for recording this information, and keep the task as simple and efficient as possible.

Finally, share results with staff regularly.
5. **We have an electronic record system. Most needed data is in or could be in system. We end up repeating efforts, making separate lists of same information, etc. How can we database administrators convey the importance of linking data together in records system and not creating multiple Excel spreadsheets?**

Emphasize the need to work smarter, not harder! There is no need to increase data-related workload by having data entered in multiple places. Also, merging between data sources increases the likelihood of recording error. Keeping the process as simple and efficient as possible will increase the quality of the information you are collecting, and be less frustrating for staff or an outside evaluator tasked with analyzing the data. Consider providing an example of the number of times a particular item is entered and calculate the time that could be saved by only entering the data one time.

This may also be a training issue. Many users (and even researchers) are familiar with spreadsheet and statistical analysis software, but not with databases and linked tables. Providing access to the database and teaching users how to obtain the data they need might ease your workload in the long run.

6. **Pre-test and post-test studies are considered quasi-experimental according to Kazdin. Why use this type of measure for funding sources?**

It is possible to use pre- and post-tests with an experimental design—assignment to a treatment or control group is random, and the pre-test and post-test changes can be compared to see if the treatment group differs from the control group. Pre- and post-testing can also be done for a treatment group and a comparison group (a group that did not receive the intervention, but individuals were not randomly assigned to this group. A comparison group would simply consist of people who are similar to those in the treatment group such as students in another school, who didn’t receive a particular intervention). Use of a comparison group with pre- and post-testing is considered a quasi-experimental design.

Often, an experiment with random assignment to a treatment and control group is not carried out due to ethical or legal concerns, resource constraints or other issues that make random assignment undesirable. For example, with a brand new program you may not want to invest resources into doing an experimental design until you have some evidence from a pre-post study that the program looks effective. Or, a program may have already been evaluated with an experimental design and you simply want to ensure that changes are taking place as expected because the program has already been demonstrated to be effective. You may not have a control or comparison group, but should collect program data on your participants for performance measurement. Pre-test and post-test comparisons are a great way to demonstrate change in your target population. Note, however, that pre-post studies do not typically permit you to know for sure that the program itself was responsible for the changes.
7. If you’re using percents and numbers, I assume that with this you want consistency in your reporting? Or is that more situational?

It is situational and up to your discretion, but it is more transparent to provide raw numbers in a discussion of percents. You should *always* include raw numbers in tables that provide percents.

8. How can you identify the effect that having a dynamic leader may have on a program as a key to its success as opposed to the program itself. Are there measures one could use?

This is an interesting research question. Consider the ways you think leadership qualities affect the program—is the leader directly affecting youth participating in the program, or affecting service delivery by improving staff attitudes? You may be able to measure the impact of leadership qualities that way. You also need a way to measure and quantify the leadership characteristics you think are having an impact (in this case, “dynamic”).