The Four W’s and One H

**What**

What is your inquiry statement? Your inquiry statement can also be known as your problem frame, your preliminary research question, or your premise. In short, what question are you aiming to answer or what issue, topic, pattern, or dynamic within a system or service do you want to understand more clearly and deeply?

**Who**

Who are the people whose perspectives, roles, or angle on the research question can help illuminate that question? Who are the obvious people to talk with? Who are the people who can shed light on this issue who might be typically overlooked? Who is ready to talk? Who may be reluctant to talk and may need a lot of upfront information about why and how you are acting on this research question, before they feel comfortable talking with you?

Who has the profile or life circumstance or life situation that can help shed light on the matter at hand? Is it important to consider geography, generation (Boomers, Millenials), medical condition, newcomer status versus Veteran status, work role, gender, ethnicity, marital status, parental status, level of education, etcetera…?

**How**

How are you going to go about your qualitative research? Who will be on your qualitative research team? How will the team divvy up research responsibilities? What research methods will you use? How will you recruit? What’s your recruitment plan. How will you handle issues of consent and anonymity?

**When**

How much time will you realistically need to conduct your research? What is the sequence of your work flow? What has to come first, and then what has to come next? Can some research tasks be conducted simultaneously? What key considerations should you build into the timing of your research? For example, does weather or time of year or time of day factor into whether you and your team can interview people? People have rush times or entire weeks of their calendar blocked out due to work responsibilities, conferences, program rollouts at their work site, or community obligations.

**Where?**

Where do you need to go to do your research? Does your research effort involve a single site or multiple sites? Does it involve travel to a rural, suburban, or urban area? What opportunities and constraints do each site offer to your research effort?