

# Information for Grant Writers and Data Users

Sara Woods

Associate Dean

UNO College of Public Affairs

402-554-3914

[swoods@unomaha.edu](mailto:swoods@unomaha.edu)

# Statistical Information for Grant Writing

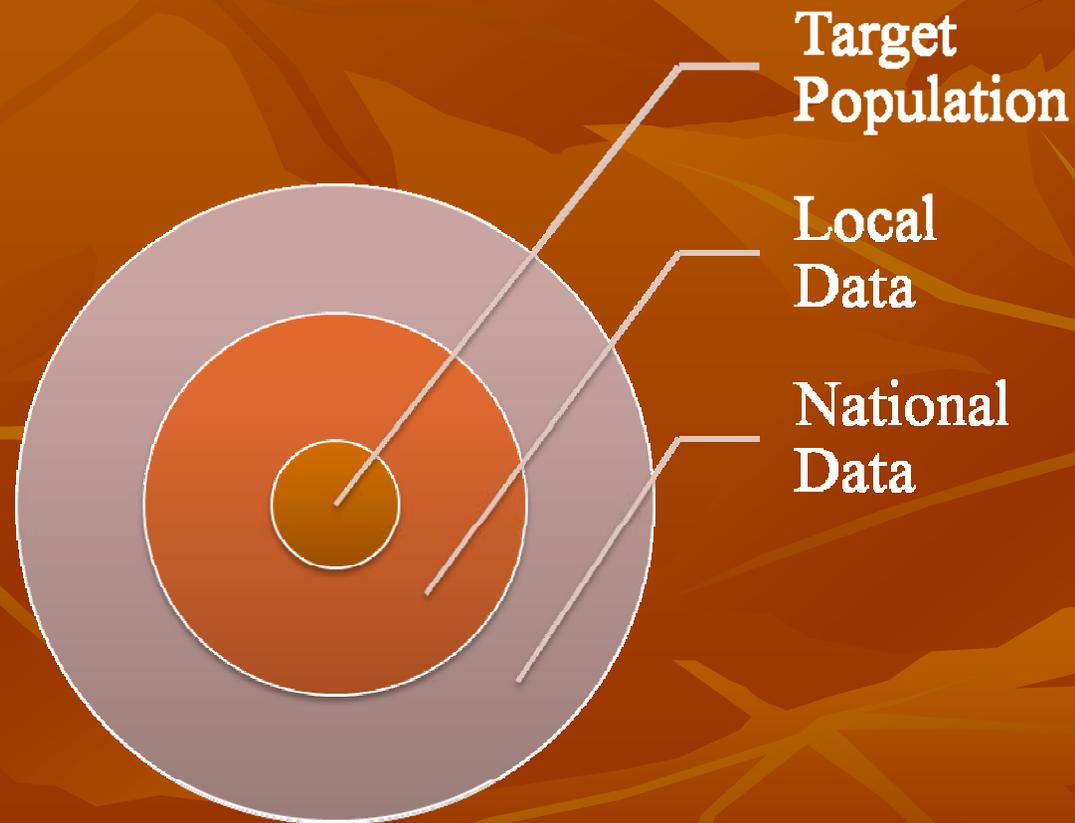
- Data drives key elements of grant applications
  - Describes target population and community
  - Helps substantiate problems facing target population and justifies need for project
  - Establishes a baseline
  - Assists in program planning and design
  - Critical for formation and utilization of measurable objectives: who, what, where, when and why of proposed project
  - Essential for process and impact evaluation
  - Used in dissemination and communication of outcomes

# Good Data in Grant Applications...

- Comes from a reliable and identified source
- Doesn't overwhelm
- Is presented clearly
- Is relevant to the need you have identified
- Is drawn from or closely related to your target population
- Tells a story – more than just a series of numbers
- Is presented in both narrative and graphic form
- Can be from a balance of external and internal sources

# Good Data: Where to Focus

- Focus on finding data as close to your target population as possible, move outward



# National/State Level Data

- **Can help you tell your story**
  - Provides a geographical or chronological perspective
  - Substantiates seriousness of problem, provides comparative standard
- **Data generally easier to get on a national level, may be best you can get to substantiate problem**
- **State data becoming increasingly accessible via the web; often includes county-level data for comparison**
- **Should come from reliable sources with statistically sound practices**
- **Beware of bias from special interests**

# Making national data relevant to your proposal

- Is your problem one that is affecting the entire nation? If so, may be helpful to cite national data about the problem/issue...”The Partnership for a Drug Free America reported in 2005 that 10% of all American teenagers between 12-15 have tried inhalants at least once..”
- Be sure to make national data locally relevant...”In Any County, Nebraska, a similar survey in 2006 indicated more than 20% of our teens between the ages of 12 and 15 have used inhalants at least once. This twice the national average for this age group.”

# National Data Sources

- Numerous federal resources: Try [firstgov.gov](http://firstgov.gov) for access to federal research links
- On-line data bases (Lexis-Nexis, EBSCO Host) through your local public or university library
- General Internet searches can help you locate great data: Google it!
  - Look for national plans, blue ribbon panel recommendations, reports by reputable special interest orgs
- Search major newspapers via the Internet: try [kidon.com](http://kidon.com)
  - Follow up directly with data sources that are cited
- Census Bureau, of course!

# State Data Resources

- Center for Public Affairs Research
- Nebraska Data Book
- State departments, including
  - HHS
  - Education
  - Economic Development
- Voices for Children Annual Report

# Local Data

- Biggest difficulty is finding it
- Data collected at national level may have originated at the local or county level
- May not exist, be outdated, or be impossible to access
- Develop a network to help you seek out sources
- Seek local reports, e.g., United Way Human Care profile, to find sources of data

# Local Data Sources

- Police Departments, State Crime Commission
- County Health Department, State Dept of HHS
- Kids Count
- Chamber of Commerce
- Newspapers
- Schools
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
- State Data Center Affiliates (census)
- Local surveys conducted by chambers of commerce, United Ways, local universities, private or non profit organizations

# Organizational (Primary) Data

- Make collection and analysis of data and/or intake a priority for your organization; use your findings to develop/modify/eliminate programs
- Assists in development of need statements
- Sets baseline to measure impact
- Can be expensive, time consuming to collect
- Software available to help you track and analyze outcomes (IPASS, ASSIST, CASS), or can be developed in-house

# Organizational Data: Basic Items to Collect

- Number of clients/hours served/for what reasons
- Attendance records
- Number of clients turned down due to lack of openings
- Number of referrals, calls for service
- Outputs: books checked out, # programs offered, etc.
- Outcomes: Test results, self-reports, asset inventories, grades
- Anecdotal data: stories, testimonials

# Surveys

- Can be used to document local extent of problem, potential causes, solutions among your target population
- Can be powerful tool in grant writing but requires advance planning
- Can sometimes be the best way to document impact, but data is still subjective and somewhat unreliable
- Be sure to plan and use surveys effectively and efficiently, otherwise may end up being a lot of work without a lot of good information

# Types of Surveys

- Mail surveys have low return rate but are less obtrusive
- Phone surveys have better response rate but can be obtrusive, time consuming and costly
- Online surveys: convenient, relatively good returns, but samples can be skewed
- Can distribute surveys at meetings, forums, other gathering places; using incentives helps increase participation, but may not be a representative sample

# Design of Surveys

- Design questions that can be analyzed easily
  - Use Likert scale rather than open ended questions - “rate on a scale of 1 -5”
  - Use limited choice (“pick your top five”) or rankings from list of potential answers you provide, but consider leaving space for write-in answers
  - Open ended questions can produce helpful insights, but they involve extra work in organizing, analyzing , so use judiciously
- Keep surveys short; you want people to finish them
- Collect background data only if appropriate: age, ethnicity, income
- Test it out first to iron out bugs

# Gap Analysis

- Identifies what services exist /do not exist in the target area
- Can substantiate need for your proposed program; demonstrates non-duplication
- Requires input from range of stakeholders
  - Surveys
  - Phone/personal interviews
  - Focus groups and public forums

# Best Practices Surveys

- Identify what other agencies/ communities are doing to address your kind of problem
  - Demonstrates expertise, awareness of best practices
  - Can help identify performance measures and benchmarks
  - Research-based practices are often required by federal funders
- Internet searches can be very helpful:
  - Look at related federal departments, most have best practices publications on a variety of subjects
  - Be aware of biased reports
    - Should be evaluated and validated by third party evaluator, endorsed nationally, published

# Other Data Considerations

- Privacy issues: what info can you release without invasion of privacy?
- Political issues: identifying a problem isn't always politically popular
- Access issues: sometimes the data you need simply is not available or cannot be released.

# Identifying Your Target Population

- Make sure your funder understands who your programs/organizations serve
- May need to access organizational records, local data
- Census data can shine accurate light on your target community's composition
- May need to describe your community if it is likely that the funder is not familiar with it.

# Use Census Data to Describe Your Target Population

- Population: household, gender, race, marital status
- Housing (units in structure, rooms, ownership/rent, value)
- Social Characteristics (sample): place of birth, education, ancestry, language spoken in home, veteran status, disability, fertility
- Economic Characteristics (sample): labor force, place of work, year last worked, occupation, income
- Depth of data you can collect may be limited by geography to ensure privacy

# Presenting Data in a Proposal

- Your data should tell a story: provide a comparison if possible
  - over time (1970, 1980, 1990, 2000)
    - demonstrates emerging issues affecting your population
    - beware of changes in census tract boundaries
  - compare subset data to larger group
    - state to national data
    - city/town to county or state
    - census tract to city or county
    - ethnic groups, age groups

# Presenting Data in a Proposal

- Try to counteract data that may work against you with data that may work for you.
  - **Low employment rates but high poverty rates**
- Don't make unsubstantiated assertions
  - **connecting one set of data with another**
  - **providing assertions without facts**
- Communicate your data's limitations, if any
- Don't limit data to one type (i.e, Census)
- Cite your sources

# Presenting Data in a Proposal

The type of data you provide depends on your application

- provide data that is relevant to your proposal
- reflect funder priorities
- provide data that underscores need for your program
- if you are serving a small population, provide census tract information if possible
- Provide both percentages and numbers:  
“According to the 2000 Census, 3000 families – roughly 15% of all families in our county – were living below the poverty line in 2000.”

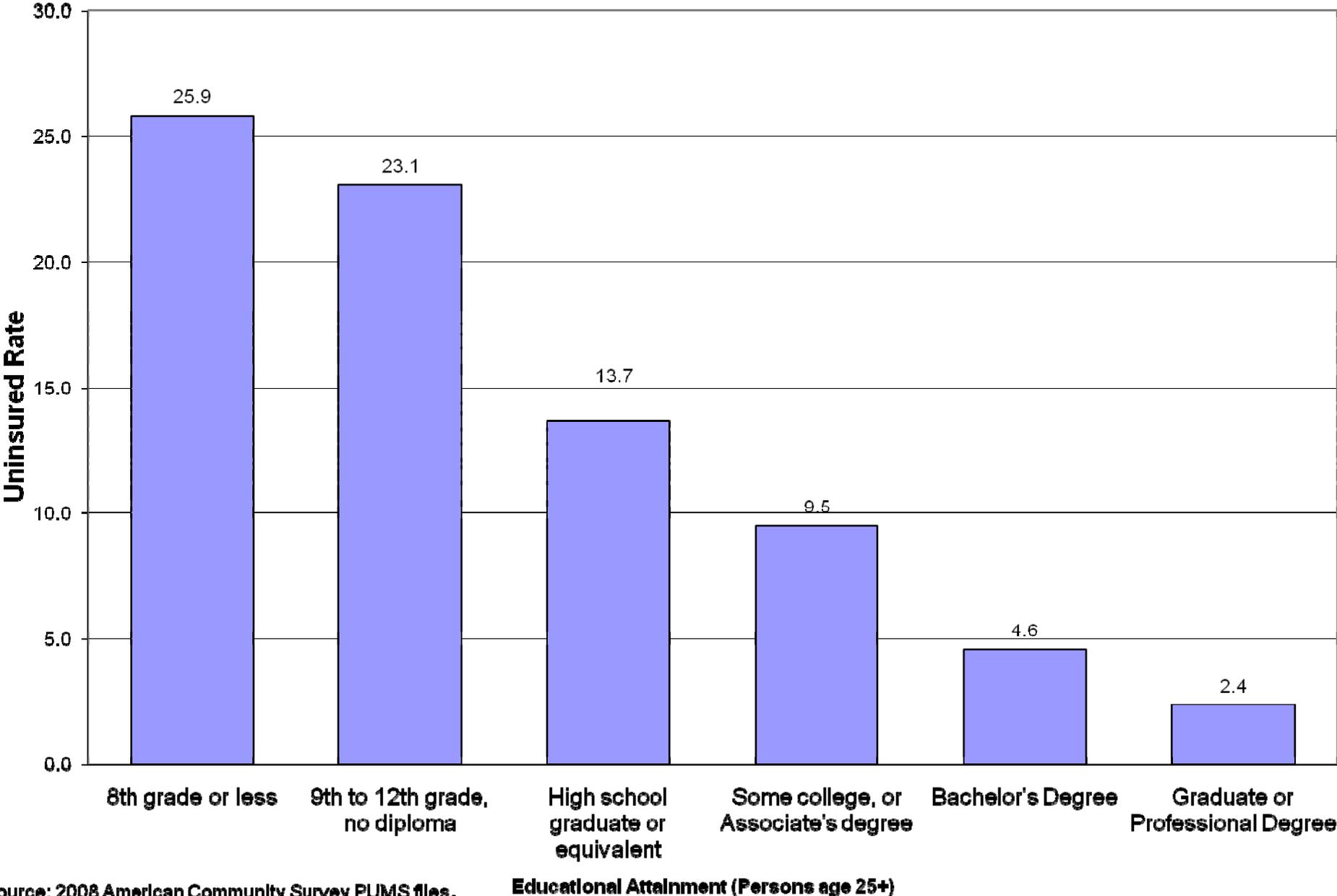
# Presenting Data in a Grant Proposal: Charts and Graphs

- Make sure charts/graphs are reproducible in black and white
- Consider best use of limited space
- While chart/graph should be self explanatory, include reference to it in the narrative and why it is relevant: “the chart on the following page illustrates increases in the Hispanic population in our county over the past 20 years.”

# Presenting Data in a Grant Proposal: Charts and Graphs

- Keep it simple -
  - easy to read and understand at a glance
  - remember your reviewer(s) may not have a lot of time to study your charts/graphs
- Label charts, X and Y axis
- Ask third party to read and interpret charts
- Use charts to convey most important information
  - should be directly related to purpose of the proposal

**Figure 6: Nebraska Health Uninsured Rates by Educational Attainment, 2008**



Source: 2008 American Community Survey PUMS files.

# Descriptive Text

- Figure 6 demonstrates that Nebraskans with lower levels of educational attainment are far more likely to be uninsured than Nebraskans with college degrees.

# Other thoughts

- Have someone outside of your organization read your proposal to make sure all components, including data and charts, make sense
- Don't misstate data
- Think like a funder: what would you want to know about project, target population, outcomes



**Questions?**

Sara Woods, UNO College of Public Affairs