

FINDING AND USING DATA FOR “FUNDABLE” GRANT PROPOSALS

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WHAT MAKES A GRANT PROPOSAL “FUNDABLE”?

Fundable proposals have three main components. They:

- 1) Demonstrate a clear and compelling need for funding;
- 2) Offer a viable solution to address the need; and
- 3) Instill confidence in the funder that the proposing agency has the experience, qualifications and capacity to implement the proposed solution effectively.

GOOD DATA IS ESSENTIAL TO SUPPORTING ALL ESSENTIAL PROPOSAL ELEMENTS

- More reliable than other types of evidence (e.g., anecdotal)
- Strong data “typically” do not lie or mislead
- Oftentimes provide standards for comparison
- Tends to be local, but state, regional and national data can sometimes tell the story
- Always tell a story

STRENGTHENING ALIGNMENT

Strong data will foster a clear vision that permeates the entire proposal:

Need → Objectives → Activities → Evaluation

USING DATA TO DEMONSTRATE NEED

Data that are compelling can be used within our “Need” sections to:

- Describe the situation(s) affecting the target population/area
- Highlight disparities between the target population/area and other populations/areas
- Inform the selection of strategies to be implemented with proposed grant funding
- Provide a clear context for understanding the data
- Establish a baseline, which is essential for creating alignment throughout the proposal
- Are from verifiable, relevant, reliable sources

VISUALS HIGHLIGHT KEY DATA

Use charts, tables, graphs and other visuals to draw readers' attention to compelling data and to tell the story:

Table 2: Median Income, Unemployment and Poverty Rates

	Median Household Income	Unemployment Rate	Poverty Rate
Target Area	\$38,838	4.2%	16.5%
Douglas County	\$51,989	5.1%	12.6%
Nebraska	\$49,693	4.0%	10.8%
United States	\$52,029	6.4%	13.2%

Source: 2008 American Community Survey Data



TEXT EFFECTS AND KEY DATA

Use italics, underlining, bold type to highlight important statistics. But use these appropriately *and sparingly* so that the key data are not trivialized or lost amongst too many pieces of data.

Poverty within the target school has risen steadily over the past five years. Since 2005, the percentage of XX school students who qualify for free and reduced lunch has risen from 30% to 62%, a rate that has more than doubled over this timeframe.

STRATEGIES FOR PRESENTING DATA EFFECTIVELY

A Few Suggestions:

- Use headers or other cues, as appropriate, to categorize data and need statements
- Make sure the data are supporting the need
- Provide a frame of reference to ensure the data make sense
- Use keywords to elevate key pieces of data (oftentimes, these are used in conjunction with underlining, italics, bold type)
- Explain what the data mean for the reader
- Anticipate reader bias

“Things get done only if the data we gather can inform and inspire those in a position to make difference.”

— [Mike Schmoker, *Results*](#)

COMMON SOURCES OF GRANT DATA

- U.S. Census Bureau
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- State Health and Human Services Reports
- Nebraska Department of Education State of the Schools Report
- Commissioned Studies and Research Reports (e.g., Battelle Report)
- Research and Best Practices Available through Federal Funding Agencies
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Protective Factor Surveys
- UNO State Data Center

COMMON SOURCES OF GRANT DATA

- Newspapers
- Pew Research and Large Nonprofits
- Advocacy Organizations
- Annual Agency Reports
- Google Searches using targeted keywords



STRATEGIES TO FIND *THE* DATA

- 1) Know the Census Bureau and its products
- 2) Define the target population and/or target geography
- 3) Get creative with keywords, grouping terms, using synonyms, different engines, etc.
- 4) Network with organizations that also serve the targeted areas and populations

WHEN THE DATA DO NOT EXIST

- Customized “condition” surveys (organization- or program- specific)
 - Will serve to provide baselines, inform program design and development, etc.
- Pre-tests to assess skills or knowledge and post-tests to measure gains
- Focus groups to obtain qualitative data
- Leveraging other available data (for similar groups but in other locations) and/or ancillary data

SURVEYS

Surveys should be customized to generate the information necessary for a needs statement (keep in mind opportunities to provide comparisons)

- A program/organization that provides job training, for instance, would want to identify relevant indicators of need:

- Wages

- Satisfaction

- Employment status

- Benefits

PRE- AND POST-TESTS

- Pre- and Posts-tests are wonderful in that they not only show a need but they also confirm the effectiveness of the strategy/intervention
 - Should be designed to generate quantifiable, measurable results
 - May be administered to a larger group to provide both a control and a test group
 - Keep it simple – but be sure to collect the information you need and in a format that is useful

BE PROACTIVE

A proactive organizational strategy for collecting data on its programs and services may include:

- * Number of participants served, units/services delivered, etc.
- * Impacts associated with these services
- * Needs surveys (as appropriate)
- * Demand for services (inquiries, waiting lists)
- * Longitudinal data
- * Anecdotal information

“The goal is to turn data into information, and information into insight.”

- Carly Fiorina, former executive, president, and chair of Hewlett-Packard Co.

WE CAN DO IT.... WE HAVE BEFORE

- The viable solution should be presented with data in order to provide the funder with a quantifiable estimate of return on its social investment
 - Evidence of success
 - Locally (past results)
 - What positive impacts have participants experienced?
 - On a national level (adopting a successful strategy)

RESTATE BASELINES

Incorporate baseline and outcome data into management plans, evaluation plans, logic models when it is possible. It serves as a reminder of the need and it serves as a frame of reference for objectives, activities, etc.

Activity	Timeline	Personnel	Outcome
Provide GED Training to 1,000 area youth each year of the project.	9/1 to 10/31 annually	Project Coordinator	Increase the percentage of youth in target area who possess a GED or higher from 85% to 88% by 12/31/2015.

PAST RESULTS INSTILL CONFIDENCE

- Cite past results of your organization
 - Track record with program, similar programs, or in serving the target population/area
 - Numbers served
 - Impact
 - Perceptions
 - Dollars managed
- These will collectively provide the reader with confidence in your abilities to effectively coordinate and manage the proposed grant

DATA IS A PROGRAM MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- Increasing emphasis on the importance of evaluation
- Internal versus External Evaluation
- Is necessary for continuous project improvement
- Supports sustainability
- Makes the case for scaling and/or replication

FIVE FINAL TIPS FOR USING DATA

- 1) Restate key data and statistics throughout the proposal to strengthen alignment
- 2) As possible, design objectives around measures where baselines currently exist
- 3) Be proactive, have a plan, and seek ideal data initially and early
- 4) Dig into the data to determine the conditions of specific populations, including minorities within the target area/population
- 5) Adapt to make the data tell the story (and don't be surprised if the data change the story)

“To write it, it took three months; to conceive it three minutes; to collect the data in it all my life.”

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

QUESTIONS?

