Information for Grant Writers and Data Users

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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 or misrepresent
- 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 2010 that 10% of all American teenagers between the ages of 12-15 have tried inhalants at least once in the past year”

- Be sure to make national data locally relevant…”In Any County, Nebraska, a similar survey in 2010 indicated more than 20% of our teens between the ages of 12 and 15 have used inhalants at least once in the past year. This twice the national average for this age group.”
National Data Sources

- Numerous federal resources: Try firstgov.gov for access to federal research links
- On-line data bases through your local public or university library (session follows on library resources)
- 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
  - Follow up directly with data sources that are cited
- Census Bureau, of course!
State Data Resources

- Center for Public Affairs Research and Affiliates
- State departments, including
  - HHS Statistics and Research
  - Education: State Report Card
  - Economic Development
- Voices for Children Annual Report
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
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 (go to the source)
- Schools
- CPAR/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 (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 Products to Describe Your Target Population

- Population: household, gender, race, ethnicity, marital status
- Housing (units in structure, rooms, ownership/rent, value)
- Social Characteristics: 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
    - 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
    - Socioeconomic 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 2010 Census, 3,000 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, indicate source

- Ask third party to read and interpret charts

- Use charts to convey most important information - should be directly related to purpose of the proposal

- Don’t waste reader’s time with charts that are superfluous, hard to read, or take them on a different “logical journey”
Figure 6: Nebraska Health Uninsured Rates by Educational Attainment, 2008

Source: 2008 American Community Survey PUMS files.
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?