

Guidance Note 2

STATISTICS & INFORMATION

Words that can induce people to 'switch-off' or panic at the thought of complex data and formulae required to support their case for funding. Here we provide advice and guidance on good practice on including statistics in your bid for funding, and direct you toward sources of ready information.

The focus is upon the information that is typically sought to help justify your case for funding. We can't be specific about particular data sources and indicators because the range is so vast and its content so specific to your project.

There is however one problem that is common to most project promoters - finding the right information to support the case for funding, and none more so than the need for small area (or micro area) statistics which is the subject of Statistics Guidance Note Annex 1.

So, why do you need to pay attention to statistics?

Many external funding programmes are focused on the issue of socio-economic deprivation and social need. Many more focus on other subjects such as the environment, culture, sport and so on. In so doing, they place a requirement upon applicants to play their part in tackling the problems that they perceive and to challenge applicants to prove their worth and effectiveness.

These problems are often portrayed in abstract form within the datasets compiled by a wide variety of organisations of which the Government is the most important. In short, a picture of *relative* or *absolute* need is depicted in numbers and data sets.

What is important in this context is the **information** that the data convey and in this respect you must interpret the data through statistics in support of your 'case' to the funder.

A few general observations:

The scope, nature and content of the statistically based information that you will use in support of your bid will be driven by 2 considerations:

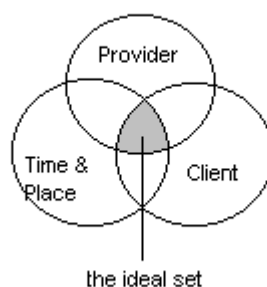
- ⌘ the nature of the activities of your project, and,
- ⌘ the requirements of the funding provider as expressed in their application form

The statistical information must help demonstrate the **NEED** for your project beyond the confines of your organisation's requirements. In this context it is important to distinguish the word 'need' from the word 'want' - what you or your organisation wish to do is of little consequence to the funding provider unless you have identified a **NEED** with which the funding provider can associate.

Spheres of information.....

There are essentially three spheres of information that you will require in most any bid for funding, and these are shown in the diagram below:

3 Spheres of Information



Provider (often referred to as the 'supply side')

This information is specific to the applicant organisation and/or its partners and will convey to the reader two things:

- # how effective you are or could be in tackling the problem to hand, and,
- # the worth or importance of your organisation both historically and currently.

Client (often referred to as the 'demand side')

This information is specific to the people or object that you intend will benefit from your project. Again, the information you deploy will convey to the reader two things:

- # that clients exist to take advantage of the activities of your project.
- # that the clients wish to take advantage of the activities that you intend to provide.

Time and Place

This information demonstrates to the reader that the problem or issue that has created the need for your project presently exists in the geographic area within which you intend to operate. You can go back in time in order to demonstrate that the problem isn't new but we would advise that you restrict yourself to 3 years and certainly do not go back more than 5 years as this will often be viewed as obsolete information.

In your bid, you should combine information from all three spheres to give a balanced view - represented as the grey shaded area in the diagram.

4 Golden rules to follow.....

Rule No.1: Keep it simple !

The person reading your bid is very unlikely to be a statistician and even less likely to be familiar with your subject area to the point that they are able to interpret complex data sets or formulae.

Provide just enough information in easily digestible chunks to support the point that you are trying to make. Try to avoid seemingly endless lists, large complex tables or algebraic formulae that make perfect sense to you but little sense to anyone else.

Rule No.2: Never pack a bid with numbers!

In any bid you must provide the reader with **INFORMATION** that supports your case for funding and not just a series of numbers (the 'data') which can often confuse or mislead the reader. Instead, you must inform the reader of the patterns and trends in the problems that your project will address and back this up with the appropriate data or statistics.

The table below illustrates the point.....

Area	Unemployment in January 2001	Unemployment Rate
Ax	17,801	19.1%
Bessington	12,399	14.7%
Thornby	18,341	20.4%

This table is very misleading and difficult to interpret beyond there being unemployment in three areas.

- # *What type of areas are these ?*
- # *Are they big or small ?*
- # *What type of unemployment is it ?*
- # *Are these levels high or low compared with other areas ?*
- # *Is the trend in unemployment up or down in these areas and is the rate high or quite moderate for the area ?*

Rule No.3: Always support your assertions with evidence

The reader of your bid may doubt your case and its supporting statistics and will always place the onus firmly on YOU to convince him/her that know what your talking about and that there is in reality a problem that warrants the attention of your project, and their money.

You do this by providing 'supported assertions' and avoiding 'unsupported assertions', usually with a reference to a reputable statistical source.

An example of an unsupported assertion is given below:
"In January 2001 there were 17,801 unemployed people in Ax ward."

An example of a supported (or 'evidenced') assertion is given below:

"In January 2001 there were 17,801 people registered as unemployed in Ax ward (Office for National Statistics, Claimant Count, February 2001)."

An unsupported assertion will often be treated with suspicion and marked down accordingly.

If you are portraying information about your own organisation you will also need to support your statements by reference to reports to your Committee or Board, results of research (published or unpublished), accounts, audits, qualifications of key staff, etc.

Rule No.4: Always relate the information and data directly to the activities of your project as expressed in the bid.

Too many bids include spurious information and data which bears no relation to the central thread of the argument or case, and more importantly, to the principal activities of your project.

This important because the project's activities generate OUTPUTS which are the means with which you intend to address the problem in hand.

Spurious information takes the reader away from the point that you were trying to make, causes frustration, and most damagingly could induce the reader to doubt your competence.

A handy tip is to list for each Output the link between it and the case you are constructing in support of your project, and then the information pertinent to that link, for example.

- ⌘ Output
- ⌘ Case (link)
- ⌘ Information
- ⌘ Training sessions for older unemployed people
- ⌘ Training is needed for re-skilling to better suit candidates for modern jobs.
- ⌘ Evidence of skills gap or shortage in the local area.

Include only the information that is pertinent to the point that you are making as you introduce your case to the reader. Try to restrict each point to a discrete paragraph and marshal your information and data to support that point, and only that point.

- ⌘ **NEVER** include data (figures) that the reader is free to interpret because they could reach a conclusion that is quite the opposite of that which you had originally intended.
- ⌘ **ALWAYS** lead the reader to the conclusion that you want them to reach based upon the information and evidence that you give in the bid.

Types of data and information

There are essentially two types of data:

- ⌘ **Quantitative data:** measured data; e.g. counts, rankings, indices etc.
- ⌘ **Qualitative data:** unmeasured data; quotes, anecdotal evidence, subjective assessments of experts, subjective scores etc.

In connection with these there are Nominal data, Ordinal data, Ratio data, Interval data, indices, formulae, statistical methodologies and techniques etc. and the web-site below contain definitions and further explanation on these subjects:

www.cas.lancs.ac.uk/glossary_v1.1/basicdef.html

Quantitative and Qualitative data should be used to reinforce each other in your case for funding support. Interpreting this in the context of the 3 spheres noted above.

Provider information

You should demonstrate that your organisation is in full command of the issues and problems and has an intimate knowledge of the clients' needs.

The type of **quantitative** data that you may call upon could include:

- # Counts of clients who used your services over a given period including numbers of clients falling into specific categories, such as the elderly.
- # Recorded outcomes of the use of these services, such as qualifications gained
- # The impact on other agencies with an interest in your clients expressed in financial value (e.g. for "every £1 spent on our activities saves the Health Service £x in reduced referrals")

and so forth.....

You can then reinforce this information with **qualitative** information that examines the effects of these services upon the clients, including:

- # Clients' perceptions upon joining and completing the activities that you provided (as gleaned from interviews that you undertook with the clients at the appropriate time).
- # Improvements in the outlook of clients upon the completion of your activities.
- # Recommendations and commendations for your organisation from outside agencies
- # Special qualifications of key staff in relation to the project activities

and so forth

Client information

You should also demonstrate that clients exist to take advantage of your activities, service, product etc. and that they wish to take advantage of what you are offering.

The type of **quantitative** information that you could refer to could include:

- # Numbers of clients who have taken advantage of similar services elsewhere
- # Expressions of interest shown by potential clients in the local area as revealed by your market research
- # Rates of incidence of the malady that you are addressing, e.g. unemployment rates, levels of pollution etc.

The type of **qualitative** information that you could deploy to support this information could include;

- # Client recommendations of the service (e.g. expressions of satisfaction)
- # Symptoms of malaise, decay or deficiency expressed orally or in writing by interested individuals, parties or organisations.

and so forth.....

Time and Place information

Your activities must be delivered some where and at some time. You will need to convince the reader that there is a good reason for doing so in the place and time that you have specified in your application.

The type of **quantitative** information that you could draw upon to convince the reader could include:

- # A Gap in the provision locally
- # A Shortage of the provision (relative or absolute) locally
- # The incidence of the problem locally as measured in recent research, analyses etc. (e.g. an unemployment rate).

The type of **qualitative** information that you could draw upon to reinforce the quantitative information could include:

- # Lack of similar organisations to your own undertaking such work such as that proposed in the bid
- # Expressions of support for the type of activities that you are proposing.
- # Assessment of 'experts' in the field of study regarding the extent of the problem locally
- # Assessment of 'experts' in the field of study regarding the extent of the problem recently with trends over time.

Preparatory research

Implied in the foregoing paragraphs is the notion that long before your bid has been submitted you should have researched the need for your project, the likely chances of success in terms of your organisation's ability to deliver the activities, and the chances of a positive reception to the results and impacts of these activities.

Secondary data (such as unemployment counts, employment counts, sports activity levels and so forth) is generally readily available from sources such as the Government, local authorities, Learning and Skills Councils etc.

Primary data is much more difficult to come by because this is the data that you have to collect and collate. But this is the data that often makes the difference with the funding providers. Such data (quantitative and qualitative) is often obtained from local studies, interviews, analysis of your organisation's operations, effectiveness etc.

It will take your organisation much more time to collect, collate and analyse primary data than it does to access the secondary data because the latter has already been collected and collated for you.

And lastly,

Try to map out the case that you will deploy in support of the activities that you are proposing, then search of the information to support your points. Approaching a statistician within your organisation 2 days before the bid is due to be submitted and stating "*I need information that I could use in support of my bid*" is not likely to be productive.

In an ideal world, you'll have posed the relevant question weeks before, explored the points that you'll be making in your case, and then sought the information that will be required for them with the assistance of your statistician.

The motto is therefore "*think ahead, prepare, and research...*"

Related pages.....

Small Area Statistics (Guidance Note 2 Annex 1) – getting over the problem

Sources of Information (Guidance Note 2 Annex 2) – where to go or ready sources of information and data

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