Peer-2-Peer

January 2024

What prevents Councils and Sub-grantees from Collecting Data?

Short list of commonly noted barriers to data collection (not listed in any ranked order).

- Legal and privacy concerns.
- Lack of standardized definitions and data collection procedures.
- Cost
- Resistance (lack of willingness to provide information).
- Adequacy of staff (knowledge) and resources.

Things you can do!

#1 Make data collection a Council priority.

Set intentional policies, procedures, and training to ensure data collection is proactive, sensitive, and gathered accurately.

Consider addressing the following in policies and procedures.

Proactive focus. Expect and require data collection activities for 5-year plan activities active during a reporting period. This includes activities taken up by Council staff and grantees or contractors.

Sensitive practices. Include an expectation for staying up to date on best practices for data collection among diverse populations (especially demographic questions). Include a frequency for reviewing the types of information people would consider "sensitive", and address methods for storing identifiable information securely.

Accuracy of data gathering methods. Adopt standardized methods across all projects and activities and consider addressing the following:

- The timing of administering surveys (i.e., are there different methods for the type of activity?).
- Standard questions and answers (the same or similar, so Council staff have similar data for reporting purposes).
- Frequency for staff to review reported information.
- Feedback on data reported by staff, grantees, or contractors.
- Frequency of inputting data into data collection systems (i.e., if data is collected independent of a broader system like Qualtrics, DD Suite, or something else, is data reviewed and entered timely to identify outliers or problems)?

Challenges before data collection and possible solutions

Challenge: Complicated Forms

Possible solutions:

- Keep language and format of surveys simple.
- Word questions, so response options are the same.
- Eliminate or reduce reverse worded questions.
- Validate surveys before using them.

Challenge: Literacy comprehension barriers

Possible solution

- Non-read response options (face expressions, colors, etc.)

Challenge: Language comprehension barriers

Possible solutions

- Hire professional translators.
- Pilot-test the survey with a variety of people to ensure the intent is understood.

Ensure Anonymity

- This almost always increases participation.

#2 Communication

Most Council staff and members know DD Councils receive money from the federal government and are required to ask people certain questions. Most Council related people understand the data helps government agencies make informed decisions.

For people who do not work with Councils regularly, they may not know why certain information is requested.

Councils should let people know how the Council will use their data, how it benefits them and how you will protect their information.

Create a "Why We Ask" document that Council staff, members, and sub-recipients (sub-grantees) can use.

Benefits:
- The document provides a way for people who help the Council implement the state plan to stay on message and communicate the same message about why data collection is happening.
- Council created documents can be written in accessible or plain language.
- The Council can control the messaging.

Sample statements you may want to consider:

"The following demographic questions are intended to help us know how members of diverse communities are engaging in our projects and activities".
"The responses will help us make decisions about our outreach, engagement, and training efforts to make sure we are effectively serving diverse people in our state/territory".

"Your name will not be made known or reported with the information you provide".

Include information about your policy on privacy.

#3 Train Staff then Train Others who help the Council Implement the 5-year plan activities.

Why train?

- To increase knowledge among staff and others who help the Council implement the plan.
- To ensure data is collected accurately and consistently. All levels of staff need training.
- Before you train, assess your data collection practices, and identify what is being done currently and what will change. (See assessment information below).
- A key part of training is to help learners gain knowledge about how to use data for decision-making. Increased knowledge shows that quality data does not end with collection—it also needs to be analyzed and used.

Assess Your Data Collection Practices
Examples of areas to assess:
Staff, grantee and/or contractor knowledge
- Do Council staff have an understanding about why data collection is needed?
- Do others who help implement the 5-year plan have an understanding about why data collection is needed?
Development of data collection instruments
- Do Council staff develop or approve data collection instruments?

- Do you rely on sub-recipients to develop their own instruments?
- Are data collection instruments reviewed for plain language, proper translation, non-read formats, etc.)?
- Are data collection instruments formatted similarly?

Alignment of federal performance measures to projects/activities
- Are data collection items reviewed to make sure the questions are consistent with required reporting?
- Are federal performance measure related questions reviewed for accuracy and applicability to the activity?

Review of collected data and feedback to collectors.
- Are there standard methods staff use to review and provide feedback to people providing data?

Input data into a database.
- Are there standard practices and procedures staff use to input data into an overall database?

Common Issues to address through training.

- **Lack of motivation** – staff and others helping the Council implement the 5-year plan might not see the connection or importance of data quality to their own work and overall Council program performance (address how the data is used and how it should not be used).

- **Lack of knowledge** – staff and others helping the Council implement the 5-year plan might not know what quality data looks like or may think their data is acceptable as is and may not know how to protect the data collected (as applicable)

- **Lack of skills** – ability to translate knowledge into the workplace.

- **Lack of appropriate data collection tools** – adequate instruments to collect data.

- **Lack of feedback mechanisms** – data collectors do not receive feedback on their data reports.

- **Low use of data -** collected data is not used much or at all.

Two Final Thoughts:

1. Honor someone's personal choice to share or not share their data.
2. Self-reported data are more acceptable than observer identified data (observer identified data can add to bias/error).

Contact and Contract Information

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