Using Data to Inform and Persuade

Effective grant writers know their job is to establish common understanding and persuade funders to join in your cause. Funders know they are partners and are interested in how their resources can bring a better life for people. Tell the story of the people and communities, and how your work creates a path to a better life.

Know Your Audience
1. Find the "hook" that is the motivating link between the funders' interests and your work.
2. Consider their perspective/view
   a. Beginner – new to the concepts and your work
   b. Professional – understands your work in-depth and may be an authority themselves
   c. Executive – limited time to understand the consequence of the situation and to consider the outlook you envision.
3. Select data that is credible and use it factually; do not edit or reframe your sources.
4. Correlate the data you use to the story you want to tell.

Connect a Compelling Story with Your Audience Interests
- Give people what they want - introduce the lead character (protagonist) – who has the problem
- Reduce clutter – succinctly state the biggest challenge faced by your protagonist
- Tell the personal story in the context of how they fit into a group (think on at least two levels)
  1. Individuals whose lives will benefit from your work
  2. Positive community implications, when the individuals succeed
  3. (optional) Result for your organization, that will provide additional benefits going forward
- Begin with the end in mind – use data that enhances the story and leads to a clear conclusion

Find Relevant Data to Support Your Story
Grants will nearly always include a Needs Assessment section in which the funder is seeking to understand the people in your story and the situation or environment they are in. Use of **Demographic Data** allows you to share relevant attributes in a concise way. Specifically consider including information such as age, gender, household status, geographic location, income level – factors that are relevant to the need at hand and why you are proposing the project. Support demographics with implications about **Scope** (how much of something) and **Intensity** (frequency, pace/rate) adds detail and understanding. Base decision on the data you include on what is most important to the project. You are setting the stage about your project need, not writing a term paper.

Let data quickly answer the "So What?" in reviewers' minds: What will be the positive **impact** if you are funded to do this project? For example, because of _____; right now people are unable to _____; your support will _____; in order that_____.

Citable Information Sources are Readily Accessible
- Government records and reports, e.g. State and Federal Departments
- Foundations and academic research organizations, e.g. "Research and Resources" on web sites
- Relevant field research and practice presented in professional journals
- Your client quotes and local experience

Helpful Links
U.S. Census Bureau	https://www.census.gov/
Government's Open Data	https://www.data.gov/
Federal Reserve Economic Data	https://fred.stlouisfed.org/