



Establishing Need 4

In order to qualify for grant money, you have to establish that you need it, really need it. You have to show that you need this grant money more than anyone else does. You do this by showing, with numbers, that there is a strong demand for the programming that you are proposing.

An application has to describe the needs that the proposed project will meet. These identified needs must be consistent with the authorizing statute that makes funding available. For example, if you are trying to receive funding for a literacy program, then describing crime rates in your community is not relevant. Describing literacy rates, staffing patterns, and the absence of resources *is* relevant.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In the beginning of this section of your proposal, you want to include brief demographic information to make your community real to the reader. Providing only one short paragraph is fine, but do not use up more space than one page. This information will set a tone for the proposal and give the reader a picture of your community. Include information about location, proximity to resources, ethnic mix, income averages, geography, and any other relevant information that will not be asked for elsewhere in the grant.

Example:

Smalltown County is a rural, agricultural county made up of 17 towns, numerous hamlets, and beautiful Trout Lake. This rural county continues to grow, with a mean income of \$41K. The town of Peaceful is located in the northeast quadrant of the county at the north end of Trout Lake, an hour's drive from any major urban centers.

The town of Peaceful is the second largest in overall population in the county and has the largest population of youth ages 7–17. Of the population, 3.8% is nonwhite, 10% (190) of the 1842 families are single-parent



homes, and 30% of households are married families with children. More families in Peaceful (78%) own their homes than in any other town, with an average home value of \$75,000–\$90,000.

All Peaceful Central School buildings are located on a single 180-acre campus. There are 684 students in the Primary School (Grades K–3), 561 students in the Intermediate School (Grades 4–6), and 929 students in the combined Junior-Senior High School (Grades 7–12). This year, we are proud to have a nationally competitive computer team, 2 students who have performed at Northeastern States Vocal Competition and Carnegie Hall, and 5 athletic teams that qualified as State Scholar-Athlete Teams with a cumulative academic average of over 90%.

To start collecting demographic data, use Resources B, C, and D in the back of this book.

ESTABLISHING NEED

Establishing need means showing, with data, why this project is necessary in your school or with this particular population. You will describe your need by using local objective data and comparing it to state or national objective data. First, you have to decide which data to collect. You do this by rereading the authorizing statute for this grant program. Is this a drug prevention grant? Then you will need data on drug use rates and current prevention resources. You will want to show that your use rates are high and your resources are low. Is this a literacy grant? Then you will want to show that your reading scores and literacy levels are low and your resources for correcting the problem are scarce. You get the idea. Use the data that shows the strongest support for your project. By establishing need, you work to convince the reader that you really have a problem that needs fixing and that the only way to do that is with these grant funds.

Objective Data

It is necessary that the data you use to describe your problem be objective. This means that rather than say things like “All kids are at risk” and “Everyone’s smoking pot,” you need to provide numbers. Objective data are based on measurement, not anecdote. Sources of objective data include census data, crime data, arrest data, school-based discipline data, and student survey data. There are many more places you can find accurate information.

Avoid quoting newspaper articles, news stories, opinion polls, television shows, speakers, or group discussions. Statements that begin, “Our principal says . . . ,” “It is the belief of our parent group that . . . ,” or “The

experience of the neighboring district is . . ." are seldom followed by objective data. If you hear something compelling from any of these sources, check out the original data to see if what you heard was accurate. Chances are very good that the person reading your proposal has a firm grasp on what the current problem is in the field, or they would not have been hired to read it in the first place. If you present the problem inaccurately, the reader will notice. Make sure your data is correct and up-to-date.

Collect local data that is relevant to your project, and organize it into a chart so that it is easy to read. In Figure 4.1, a school has organized their safety and substance-abuse data into a chart. This is good baseline data, but it does not show whether there is a problem because it does not place the information in context; that is, we cannot tell if these numbers are higher or lower than local, state, or national numbers.

Comparison Data

You will notice that in Figure 4.2 there is a second set of numbers. This is called *comparison data*. Your data are meaningless without comparison data. What does it mean to say that marijuana use is at 15% in your school district? It indicates that 15% of students are smoking pot, but is that figure high or low? Better or worse than last year? If national averages are at 27%, then your rate of marijuana use is low. If state or national averages are at 9%, then your use rates are slightly elevated. If national averages are down from 34% last year, but your local marijuana use is up from 8% last year, then you are showing a trend or need.

Comparison data is also necessary when you are evaluating the effectiveness of your programming. If you are only looking at local data, and it looks like use rates are declining, that's great. But what if state and national use rates are also declining, and at a faster rate? Then your program might not be as effective as you first thought. Comparison data is critical. Your data must be presented in the big picture in order to establish a need for the program.

Target Audience

Use your data to identify the target audience for your program. Look for peaks in certain behaviors or drops in scores. Sort your data by gender, race, and grade to get a closer look at exactly which group or subgroup is most in need of program intervention. Programming should be targeted one or more years before the behavior changes are noticed in order to be effective in altering precursor behaviors or attitudes.

You can also use your data to guide your program selection and materials development. Do you find that the reading level of your target population is above or below the average? Is your target population a specific racial subgroup or socioeconomic subgroup? These details are necessary to consider when making the best decisions for programs and materials.



Figure 4.1. School-Based Interventions

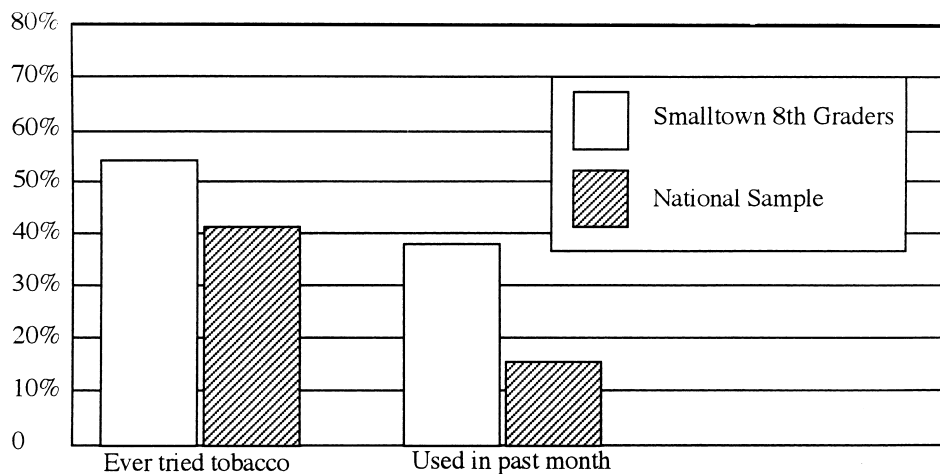
	<i>Grade</i>		
	7	8	9
<i>Incidents September 1999 to May 2000</i>	7	8	9
Incidents of victimization*	8	9	4
Incidents of physical fighting	16	14	6
Incidents of verbal fighting**	35	35	35
Incidents of student weapon-carrying	1	1	2
Received in-school detention/suspension for ATOD (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs) policy infractions	4	4	10
Referred for in-house substance abuse screening	4	4	9
Received in-school suspension for violent behavior (fighting, threats, harassment, pushing/shoving)	6	10	5
Received out-of-school suspension for violent behavior	9	2	3
Superintendent's hearing resulting in long-term suspension or alternative placement outside of school (for ATOD or safety-related issues only)	1	0	3
	N:186	N:183	N:179

NOTE:

* Estimated levels of victimization 3 times higher than reported numbers;

** Estimate

Figure 4.2. Tobacco Use Behaviors Among 8th Graders
Smalltown School District 2000



SOURCE: *American Drug and Alcohol Survey*. Administered to Smalltown School District October 1996, October 2000. *Monitoring the Future Study*, 2000. December 13, 2000. University of Michigan.

One school, for example, discovered that tobacco use peaked in the 9th–10th grades. They also found that there was not a strong tobacco prevention component in their middle school health program in Grades 7–8. A closer look at the data indicated that the tobacco use problem at the high school involved significantly more female students. They used this objective data to select an age-appropriate tobacco prevention program for their middle school, but also reviewed programs to find one that dealt specifically with young women and their smoking behaviors.

Data Presentation

A chart with comparison data and a narrative is the clearest way to present your data. Describe your interpretation of your data. What conclusions can you accurately draw? Stay objective. Be logical. Do not overdramatize the situation in your community as hopeless. Present accurate and up-to-date data, and in your narrative provide hope that your proposed program will make a difference.

Example:

Though 27% of our students are currently riding with intoxicated drivers, more than twice the national average, we are confident that Program X will reduce those numbers as it has in other schools where it has been implemented with fidelity.

Needs data will become the baseline data for the development of your evaluation plan later in this proposal. These needs data are also the foundation for writing your project objectives.



EXISTING RESOURCES

A discussion of existing resources can be a part of the needs section of your proposal or a part of the section on commitment and capacity. After looking at the needs of your population, assess which services currently exist to meet those needs and which services are missing: In short, identify the gaps. You want to show that the current services and resources are not adequate to meet the needs of your target population—and that is why you need this grant money.

When you are describing the existing resources in your community, remember to explain briefly any history your community or school has had with this type of programming. Provide information on what kinds of training or experience your staff currently has in this area. Providing training or hiring staff with more experience may become a budget issue, so the funder will want to know. What strengths separate your school from other schools that might be applying for these funds?

Collaboration is important to many funders. Do you currently work with local agencies or other service providers? Are they involved in writing this proposal? What is the collaboration history? What will their role be if you receive funding? Show that you are already working with other agencies and services to address this problem.

Finally, explain why this project should take place in your school. Why should they pick your school over the others? You may want to write a few sentences about ease of travel or unusual geographic characteristics; things that make you “average” and so make your project replicable in mainstream America; special resources, such as the financial support of a local business; or proximity to urban areas or other resources that might exist in your school or community.

The checklist at the end of this chapter reviews the same things that the reader’s Technical Review Form would review. If you can answer *yes* to each of these items, then you will receive high marks from the readers as they read and score the Needs portion of your proposal. If you answer *no* to any of these items, take the time to go back and fix things before moving forward.



ESTABLISHING NEED

Checklist

- Used objective, accurate, and current data to identify needs.
- Identified needs are supported by the authorizing statute.
- Specific documentation of data is offered by the applicant as a demonstration of need.
- Target population for the project has been identified.
- Identified needs are directly related to the target population for the proposed project.
- Needs identified are not too many or too few for the planned time frame or project resources.
- Identified needs are well defined rather than generic or anecdotal.
- Program design and selection of materials are based on identified needs.
- Services that currently exist to meet needs have been identified.
- This site has been shown to be the best place for this program.

