

Investigating and writing about need

Note: *This factsheet provides further guidance to that in “Explaining the difference your project makes”, available on our website.*

The evidence you will consider in planning your project and in explaining it to potential funders can come from a number of sources:

1. Your own research or consultation

This is likely to involve talking to the people with direct experience of the need and those who might be in the group you want to benefit from the project. To do this, you could decide to prepare a questionnaire or interview guide and select a number of people to take part in individual interviews or group discussions. You could also decide to distribute survey questionnaires more widely by leaving them at key locations or using local organisations and contacts.

In setting up interviews or discussions, try to ensure, as far as possible, that your research sample or consultation group is representative of those you wish to benefit. This may involve offering practical help and encouragement to people who will not come forward of their own accord.

2. The experience and knowledge of people in your group

If there is direct or indirect experience of the need in the group applying for the grant, this can provide useful evidence. Such evidence can demonstrate the strength of your commitment. A well-chosen individual example can also help to illustrate the problem (but you must seek the permission of the individual/s concerned).

3. Recent relevant research

You may decide to back up your own evidence with results from other research, particularly if you are planning a larger project. Many local, regional and national organisations and groups have done research to substantiate need or decide on the direction of their work. For national organisations and many local ones, you can go to their website and see if they have relevant research publications. In the case of smaller groups, there may be important data but no published report.

Organisations that carry out or sponsor social research include:

- Government departments (and specialist units within a department)
- Regional Government Offices
- Social Exclusion Unit (SEU)
- Local authorities and regional and national local authority associations
- Specialist voluntary organisations
- Local community groups
- Charitable foundations and trusts
- University departments with specialist research centres.

Discuss your research with other people you know who work in the same area, as they may know of relevant research

4. Statistics

It may be important to include a small number of key statistics about the general population in your area or the particular group of people you want to benefit. Useful sources include:

- 2001 Census (including statistics for local areas) at www.statistics.gov.uk
- Other Government statistical publications on specialist topics
- Local authorities (including their official statistics for central government)
- Local and regional strategy documents (such as those from local partnerships, health authorities and voluntary organisations).

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