Strong Evidence

A guide to supporting your grant application with strong evidence

When applying for grant funding, it is important to make sure your application is supported with strong evidence. Strong evidence can help to:

- demonstrate your capabilities
- demonstrate your linkages within a community
- emphasise the scale or importance of an issue
- strengthen an argument for a service by demonstrating its past performance, and
- illustrate how the service is accepted or received by intended recipients.

There are different types of evidence you can collect or use to effectively support your application.

Using evidence to support your application

The Application Form requires applicants to demonstrate suitability for funding against selection criteria. The criteria will be specific to the grant funding round you wish to apply for, however this may include being asked to demonstrate:

- your understanding of the need for the funded Activity in the chosen community/ communities
- how the implementation of your proposal will achieve the Activity objectives for all stakeholders, including value for money and existing linkages within the service area
- your experience in effectively developing, delivering, managing and monitoring activities to achieve the Activity objectives for all stakeholders
- your organisation's capacity and your staff capability (experience and qualifications) to deliver the Activity's objectives in the chosen community/communities, and
- a service delivery model that includes effective partnerships, linkages and referral pathways that directly contribute to the Activity outcomes.

In your response to the selection criteria, you should be providing evidence to support your claims.

The Community Grants Hub website includes support for developing and submitting an application, including a fact sheet that gives some guidance on what makes a good grant application.

Types of evidence

When writing an application and preparing evidence, organisations should keep in mind that there are five basic categories of evidence – quantitative evidence, qualitative evidence, evaluations, expert evidence and anecdotal evidence. The table below discusses each of these types of evidence.

Evidence type	Examples of this type of evidence
Quantitative evidence is numerical. It can be counted or measured objectively.	It would be appropriate to include quantitative evidence about, for example, the number of people in target groups that require the service you would provide or about your organisation's financial capabilities.
Qualitative evidence is less numerical. It describes or explains, or even tells a story.	It would be appropriate to include qualitative evidence about, for example, the strategies your organisation has in place to ensure on going assessment of delivery of services against outcomes or about the methods your organisation employs to undertake needs analysis or engage with the community when planning or providing services.
Evaluations provide quantitative and qualitative information on the effectiveness of current services or programs.	Applications should include evaluation style evidence on the previous and current outcomes achieved by current/similar services and programs.
Expert evidence is based on research and expert opinions.	Applicants can use expert evidence to supplement and strengthen other forms of evidence.
Anecdotal evidence is based on opinion.	In a person-centred system the opinions of people are very valuable inputs into the planning process, particularly when developing new ideas. Special care should be taken to ensure that a diverse sample of opinions is sought and, wherever possible, opinions should be researched systematically through qualitative research. Anecdotal evidence **should not be used on its own** as evidence but may be considered as supporting evidence.

Sources of evidence

It is possible to collect evidence in many ways and you should consider drawing on a range of evidence sources to support your organisation's case for funding.

Applicants might consider the following potential sources of **quantitative evidence**:

- data from your own records and experiences as a service provider (eg annual reports or surveys)
- data available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (eg census data or crime statistics), and
- program or service evaluations, reports released by research bodies, government departments, or not-for-profit organisations.

Applicants might consider the following potential sources of **qualitative evidence**:

- needs analyses or expert advice
- interviews – conducted by your own organisation or another – with clients or subject experts, with a focus on benefits of proposed services to the local community
- content from broadcast or social media, and
- public meetings and fora.

Where applicants draw on external sources, it is not necessary to attach these sources to your application but make it clear where the assessors can check these sources if required.

Using evidence effectively

Once you have collected evidence, you will have to communicate it effectively. To do so, applicants should consider the following tips and examples of where evidence is being presented less and more effectively.

Tip	Example of evidence being presented less effectively	Example of evidence being presented more effectively
Be clear and concise: Use clear and concise language to express your evidence. This will help produce a logical and professional application.	The bushfires in 2006 were really damaging, as were those in 2009, and there have been even more since then, which definitely highlights that emergency management is really important.	The 13 incidences of bushfires rated at a critical level by Emergency Management Australia since 2006 demonstrates the importance of effective emergency management.
Be accurate: Avoid emotive language. The most persuasive applications state	The issue of (name specific issue) is destroying our	In a series of 20 interviews conducted by our organisation, 16 individuals

Tip	Example of evidence being presented less effectively	Example of evidence being presented more effectively
their evidence objectively and dispassionately.	community.	identified (name specific issue) as a major challenge for our community.
Be relevant: Ensuring your evidence is clearly relevant is just as important as expressing your evidence in clear language.	In our organisation we have 15 staff members.	In our organisation we have 15 staff members, two of whom are dedicated full time to the delivery of (this service). Of the staff, another three are trained to also deliver (this service) in case there are times when the full time staff are not available.
Remain current: Old evidence is less persuasive than new. Use the most up-to-date evidence you can find and, if you do use older evidence, explain why.	Between 1991 and 1996, the target population for our service grew by 23 per cent.	Between 2007 and 2012, the target population for our service grew by 12 per cent (ABS 2012).
Attribute your evidence: Your evidence will be more persuasive if, whenever you use it in your application, you attribute it clearly. This includes both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Remember to cite data as well as ideas and direct quotes from interviews, surveys and media.	Experts recognise that the service our organisation provides is an integral component of care for our target population.	Smith (2011) argues that the service our organisation provides is an integral component of care for our target population.
Use both qualitative and quantitative evidence: Both offer distinct advantages. Quantitative evidence provides breadth, and can be used to compare large numbers, however, qualitative evidence is often deeper and richer. For this reason, it is best to use a combination of both.	People we spoke to are often really stressed because they don't know who can help.	In a survey of 30 people conducted by our organisation, 56% of people who faced (name specific issue) reported the lack of awareness of available support as their most immediate need. Assistance to apply for support was the second highest response.