



## **ESC's DATA COLLECTION EXPERTISE**

[www.nonprofit-consultants.org](http://www.nonprofit-consultants.org)

*ESC works with nonprofit organizations to improve their effectiveness by providing affordable management consulting solutions delivered by experienced executives and professionals who donate their time and expertise.*

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING GOOD DATA**

Collecting and using good data is integral to all organizational processes. It is the basis for focusing on where you want to go, gauging how rapidly you are getting there, and knowing what needs to be done to improve.

Many organizations utilize the Logic Model to manage and improve their performance. The Logic Model thrives on good data.

Often, data needs to be collected in the form of personal interviews, focus groups and surveys.

### **GOOD DATA DOES NOT HAVE TO BE FANCY**

Useful data is often convenient and easy to obtain. Comments volunteered by clients can be invaluable. Small, unsophisticated surveys can provide great insight into a topic.

However, there are times when good data must be collected with care. The more chips riding on the outcome, the more confidence you will want to have in the validity and reliability of the data. ESC has expertise in:

- Appropriate sample sizes and response rates
- Reliable sampling plans
- Developing impartial questions that cut to the core of the issue
- Thorough analysis of responses

### **CONSULTING PROJECTS INVOLVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

Virtually all consulting projects must make liberal use of data collection and analysis.

Examples:

Strategic Planning

- Who are the customers and potential customers?
- How many are there?
- What do they want or need?

Service Program Evaluation

- What do constituents think of you?
- What needs to be improved?

New Service Development

- How are service features evaluated?
- How important are each?

In these instances, it is important to assure that the data collected is valid and reliable.



## **ESC OFFERS EXPERTISE**

ESC has consultants with 30 plus years of experience in collecting data via surveys, personal interviews and focus groups. Their experience was acquired with large organizations and survey research vendors, and is now being applied to the needs of nonprofit agencies. They are recognized professionals who work quickly and efficiently.

The research process typically follows along these lines:

- What information already exists within the organization?
- What information that bears upon the subject can be collected through secondary sources?
- What are the gaps and needs?
- What are the time and dollar constraints for collecting new data?
- Survey design, collection and analysis.

## **ESC DATA COLLECTION BIASES AND STRENGTHS**

We emphasize learning as much as possible before starting new research. There is an enormous amount of information available from associations, similar organizations in other states, and academia that is often available through the Internet. This information can be quite helpful in either answering questions or properly focusing the work to be done.

We have found that in person, individual interviews with organization constituents can be revealing in their candor and insight. Telephone interviews can be easier to arrange and sometimes they provide similar insight at a lower cost.

With a region wide network of over 25 consultants, we have the resources to conduct large scale individual interviews. We have successfully conducted over 50 interviews and analyzed and reported the results in 6 weeks.

We take great care when doing qualitative research – individual interviews, focus groups, and brainstorming sessions. For example, we invite respondents to participate based upon how expert they are – not on how random they are.

We like online research. It can be inexpensive, quick and reliable. We like it so much we have purchased Survey Crafter© software to allow us to control the whole process at no added expense to our clients. We have found that “off the shelf” online surveying packages can be limiting in their analytic capabilities – not allowing for in depth analysis of data.

We also like old fashioned methods such as paper surveys. They may provide higher quality answers and may reach more respondents. We sometimes integrate online, telephone, and mail surveys to provide higher response rates. We can do this easily using our survey software.

**We cost less and do it better!**