

Tips for Selecting the Data to Share

Charts and graphs are great ways to show your data. You don't have to be a graphic artist or use fancy programs to create visuals that communicate what you found in the data. These simple guidelines can help you create useful visuals.

1. **Select information that helps your group take action.** There is plenty of data to look at, the question is what data do you want or need to shine a light on at this time with the people you have invited?
2. **Include disconfirming data.** The anomalies or data that seems quite different from the rest, may hold important information for you to consider. Be careful not to trim out what you prefer not to deal with, just because it is different.
3. **Offer data that raises question for your group.** Wrestling and debating the information being offered and being challenged to discover the knowledge that leads to informed action, need not be easy or straight-forward.
4. **Select the right amount of data for the time you have.** Offering more data than you have time to reflect on and discuss, will lead to frustration and confusion. Worse yet, you will not have enough for informed action – which is the point of the gathering.
5. **Determine the range of your data comparison.** Do you need to see the last 6 months, 6 years, or 6 cycles? Looking at the past # of years may not show much but reflecting on what happens each month over the past # of years (or each day for # of weeks) may be important. What time frame will shine a light on the right data to inform action? What cross-section does the group need to see?