

## Collecting Data: Forms, Reports and Questionnaires

In order for grassroots groups to create reports such as walk lists, foundation profiles and member voting practices that information has to be in the database. Data collection and entry is a fundamental step to creating an effective database. In your database assessment process you will want to gather all the forms and reports you currently use to inform your work, and in the database planning process identify what additional data you need to gather to use in your organizing work. *Remember: The information/data you are retrieve from a database is only as good as the information you input.*

### Forms

In your assessment it is important to gather all of the data tracking forms you currently use and to identify what forms you will need to gather data for future databases. Form examples include: *Membership Forms, Training Sign-in Sheets, Event Sign-up Lists, Fundraising Campaigns Contact Sheets, Volunteer Applications and Board Member Profile Forms.*

### Reports

Reports are constantly created at grassroots organizations. Collect all of the reports that you are required to produce for funders, sponsors, etc and identify those that you will need in the future. Report examples include: *Program Evaluations, Leadership Building Progress Reports, Attendance Reports, and Constituent Comments Sheets.*

### Informal Data Collection

Data collection happens all of the time. When staff interact with members, or an event occurs folks have a sense of how it went, who was there and its overall success. Therefore are there informal methods that staff currently uses to collect and store information about members and events? It is very helpful to collect examples from staff to assess how it has been done and to plan strategies to capture important information in a more structured manner as to be usable by others. Informal collection examples include: *Note Cards, Microsoft Word files, a Personal Notebook, Daily Planners, Individually Created Spreadsheets.*

### List Enhancement

A list enhancement project takes the membership lists of groups, matches them with public state voter files, and returns the lists to the groups "enhanced" with new data. Often groups receive the following information for each registered voter on their membership list: age, gender, phone number, congressional and state legislative districts, county, voting precinct, how many other participating organizations they belong to, political party affiliation and frequency of voting. There are many ways this information can be used to better meet your organization's goals.

**There are numerous methods to gather information for your database to use in organizing. Key questions to consider:**

- Who/what do you need information about? (Members, Reporters, Funders)
- What information/data do you want to track about them? (Basic contact, Beat covered, Giving levels)
- How are you going to collect that data? (Forms, Reports, Informal collection)