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DATA NEEDS OF SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES:
A CASE STUDY OF FORT WORTH, TEXAS

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ABSTRACT

There is increasing need for social service agencies and organizations to allocate resources and to plan based on objective needs assessment. This requires greater access and use of data sources. The dual objectives of this paper are to describe and analyze the increased need for data use by social welfare agencies and to present the findings of a data needs assessment study of such organizations in Fort Worth, Texas. The results of this study were used in the planning and development of a series of free data use and data use-applications workshops for social service agency representatives and in the writing of a detailed Resource Manual for agency data users.

INTRODUCTION

A great deal of concern exists and many studies are addressed to issues of sophisticated data analysis, data collection and dissemination methodologies, and computer related data problems. However, numerous data users are not technically trained and lack access to elaborate data processing mechanisms. One such significant group of users includes local service agencies and service providers. These organizations allocate millions of dollars of resources and make far-reaching resource allocation decisions, sometimes on the basis of minimal objective data use.

The researcher served the past year as a National Science Foundation Public Service Science Resident with the Planning Department of the City of Fort Worth, Texas as Host Organization. The primary objective of this residency was to assist social service agencies and community-based organizations in the interpretation and

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use of Census data and projections. The goal was to enable them to have better informed decision making in their own planning and in their input into urban public policy. An initial stage of this project was a survey of the data needs of these organizations. This paper is a result of that survey.

The dual objectives of this paper are to describe and analyze the increased need for data use by social service agencies and to present the findings of a study of data needs assessment of local service providers in Fort Worth, Texas.

INCREASED NEED FOR DATA USE

There are numerous reasons for increased interest in and emphasis on the objective use of data by local social service providers. These reasons can usefully be categorized as 1) those which are determined by national economic conditions and political strategies; 2) those which derive from the proliferation of service agencies and local organizations; 3) those reasons related to interest in and availability of the 1980 Census as a new data base; and 4) those dependent on recent thrusts in applied social sciences and the field of social work.

Current economic conditions and the political-economic policies of the Reagan Administration indicate the need for organizations to be better directed and more specific in their planning and needs analyses. Continuing stagflation in the economy has engendered at all levels an increased awareness of the importance of efficiency in resource allocation. Continued high rates of inflation coupled with declining rates of real economic growth have caused social planning decision makers to recognize the need for increased allocative efficiency. This can be furthered by resource allocation decisions which are responsive to the problems and needs of the population. These are ascertainable, at least in substantial measure, through objective processes and the use of available data bases.

Closely related to the issue of efficiency in the physical allocation of resources is the current squeeze on funding for social policies and programs. Current recessionary trends and continued inflation, together with suburban migration, have caused a decline in the tax base in many cities. The cities' solution to their fiscal plight has been to raise property tax rates and assessments and to turn to the federal government for increased grants-in-aid. The taxpayer response to greatly increased property taxes, the bastion of local revenue, was epitomized by California's Proposition 13 and its repercussions throughout the country. The generally negative reaction by citizens to increased local taxes furthered the trend for cities and local organizations to look to the federal government for funds. However, the funding squeeze has become a two-way squeeze, as the federal government reduces grants-in-aid and intergovernmental funding.

In 1974, a major study by the Center for Social Research and Development (CSR) at the University of Denver foresaw the shift toward a new federalism. This study of needs assessment research did not, however, look beyond needs assessment at specific and particular data needs of local organizations. The CSR study stated:

The federal government is developing procedures which will increase the

importance of needs assessment. For instance, special revenue sharing and general revenue sharing will emphasize local autonomy in resource allocation decisions. However, in order to be effective these decisions should be based on a community development strategy, and this strategy should in turn be based on a broad determination of need. Thus, once federal funds are no longer distributed on a categorical formula grant or on an agency-by-agency basis, but on a need for service basis, new mechanisms for establishing priorities will be required to replace the traditional allocation techniques. In addition, the increasing insistence on the development of state plans before federal funding is allocated will provide conditions under which needs assessment will be increasingly encouraged and utilized.

To the extent that local autonomy, local responsibility, and program decategorization are encouraged by governmental and private organizations, the importance of locally-based needs assessment studies will increase. The combination of political beliefs and policy changes indicates that needs assessment will become a matter of increasing concern (Center for Social Research and Development, 1974, p. 6).

Even if the current trend toward decentralization and greater local autonomy of decision-making were reversed, the social services financed by the federal government are generally distributed at the local level. Thus, the level and mode of delivery require allocation determination through local data use.

A second reason for increased need for data use by local service agencies is the proliferation of local citizen groups, organizations and service agencies. Citizen participation is most prevalent and most direct at the local level, where citizen groups and community based organizations are increasingly involved in urban policy determination and decision making (Langton, 1979, p. 403). Much of this increased participation has been mandated by Congress in federal legislation and its accompanying regulations, especially in the past fifteen years since the inception of the Great Society concepts of "maximum feasible participation." Thus, public participation, as a principle of government, has been substantially accelerated through the intergovernmental grant system (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1979). In addition, increased public awareness has facilitated the desires of special interest groups and minority groups to participate more actively in decisions and actions involving their interests or neighborhoods.

While there is no doubt that individual and community needs are being met through this process, questions arise of the relationship between needs and resource allocation and of the duplication or overlapping of service provision. It is therefore necessary that needs be documented in terms of numbers of persons and their characteristics and also on an areal or locational basis, so that distribution corresponds to need and to access on the part of recipients. This, again, requires specific data use.

In an investigation of the data use and needs of local organizations for planning and program operationalization, Warren, Rose and Bergunder (1974) found

that "American cities are so structured that different sectors of interest and activity are fairly well demarcated, and in a largely similar manner from city to city, and that these various sectors are presided over by remarkably similar organizations from city to city." They further found that local organizations have their respective domains within the overall institutional structure. These domains consist of the specific goals an organization wishes to pursue and the functions it undertakes to implement its goals. A community organization's domain is also defined by its locus in the interorganizational field, including its manifest goals and its channels of access to task and maintenance resources. In the crowded interorganizational field of a metropolitan scene, there are competing claims as well as divergent goals. The greater the crowding and overlapping of community organizations, the greater the need by each for data supporting its participation.

The largest multipurpose data base available is the 1980 Census. Despite controversies surrounding possible undercounts and methodological issues, there is tremendous interest in the 1980 Census as providing an updated and, in some cases, wholly new data base. The availability of this broad data base and the new forms of access to it are generating what might be viewed as a "data technological imperative." The concept being that data availability generates its own use. There is no doubt that the availability of this tremendous data base will impact heavily on the use of data by social service agencies to update and substantiate their needs assessments and other analyses.

An additional reason for increased data use by human services providers is the thrust in applied social science research and in the field of social work to incorporate objective needs analysis and other documented studies into these fields. This relatively recent innovation is evidenced in basic texts, and in studies of community organizations. This emphasis on needs assessment generally encompasses client surveys and analyses by practitioners and social service planners, but it actually includes little on specific data availability and uses.

The above discussion assumes a perception of organizations, and in particular of social service organizations, as being rational, planning and economizing institutions, in which decisions are based on an optimum use of available information. This traditional, and perhaps largely academic, perspective of organizational decision-making is countered by an alternate theory which assumes that information has less relevance to decision-making than do organizational dynamics and pragmatic perceptions of decision-makers. In this alternate organizational theory, decisions are determined by diverse objectives, including aggrandizement or possibly stability of the organization, job maintenance, and both internal and external power structures. The study described sheds light on this theoretical issue and lends some support to the latter theory of organizational decision-making. However, it is presented in the context of an assumed view of rational, information using institutions.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In Evaluation: A Systematic Approach, a recent text for social science and social work researchers, Rossi, Freeman and Wright (1979) state, "Policymakers,

social planners, and funding organizations must have information on the nature, scope, incidence, and prevalence of the various specific deficiencies in the human condition in order to decide which programs should be initiated, supported, and continued (p. 84)."

They further emphasize that the goals of a social intervention program explicitly or implicitly define a social problem and its attendant target population. However, this statement is frequently so general that it is not sufficient to develop precise estimates of the size and distribution of the target population. What is needed is an objective definition of the target population and, for many programs, its location, which provides specific criteria to enable program designers to determine its size as well as a clearly defined unit of analysis. Thus, the first issue to be addressed in the planning phase of a social intervention is: what is the nature, extent, and location of the specific target population to which the program is addressed?

The systematic response to this question constitutes a Needs Assessment, which is the process of verification and mapping out of the extent and location of a problem and its population. The objective of Needs Assessment is to verify that a problem exists to such an extent that an intervention program is warranted. Needs Assessment can also provide valuable information beyond problem-oriented data. In addition to gathering and analyzing data, it is "the process of interpreting that data so that it will have a maximum impact on the resource allocation and planning process (Center for Social Research and Development, 1974, p. 13)." It is important that the Needs Assessment be defined by the potential users. Definition of the scope, focus and content of the research by the potential consumers, usually the practitioners, is a necessary requisite for the findings to have maximum impact on their concerns.

Many human service workers are not able to take advantage of available social science knowledge or data resources (Rothman, Erlick, and Teresa, 1976). While the practitioner needs information, it is often either not readily accessible or the work time to search out the data is lacking. Potential data consumers among social intervention practitioners may also feel some compulsion to generate program-specific primary data, usually an arduous and expensive task. In contrast, analysis of existing social data may be sufficient to meet most needs and has great advantage of economy (Babbie, 1973).

The second goal of this paper is to analyze the need for data by social service agencies. The following section presents the findings of a study of the data needs of local agencies in Fort Worth, Texas.

DATA NEEDS OF LOCAL SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

A Data Needs Assessment survey form was developed to determine the data needs of local social service agencies. This survey form was mailed to 121 service agencies and community organizations in Fort Worth, Texas. Fifty responses, or 41 percent, were received, including two letters indicating organizations which are not currently operating. In addition, five were returned as undeliverable and attempts to locate

these organizations were not successful. Thus, forty-eight usable responses were received, a return rate of 41 percent of the surveys potentially distributed. Table 1 lists these respondents, classified by the organization's major service area. This grouping is employed in analyzing several of the responses.

(TABLE 1)

The major use of data by local service providers is in the process of needs assessment for planning purposes. Therefore, the first three survey questions concerned planning and the planning period. Responses to question one, "What is the length of the planning period for your organization?" are presented in Table 2. The purpose of this question was to determine local agency requirements for data projections for longer range planning in addition to current data. The responses show that one year is the dominant planning period. Twenty-nine respondents, or 60 percent, employ a planning period of one year. A fourth of these indicated that they also use a five-year goals planning period and others employ two- or three-year plans with their annual plan.

(TABLE 2)

Table 3 presents responses to question two, "What determines the planning period for your organization?" The purpose of this question was to determine whether planning, and its attendant data requirements, is generated by the service agency internally and locally or by an external agency such as federal grant-in-aid regulations, United Way, or the City of Fort Worth. The responses reveal that the planning period, and therefore planning data requirements, are largely determined by external funding sources, federal regulations, and City Planning. Nearly one-third of respondents indicated that their planning is tied to United Way planning; the same number indicated that federal regulations determine their planning period; and over one-third indicated that other sources of funding determine their planning period; just under one-fourth indicated that their boards made this determination. Since many agencies listed multiple responses, the total is greater than 100 percent.

(TABLE 3)

Question three analyzed the allocation of planning effort of local social service agencies. Respondents were asked to allocate their planning efforts between: 1) reaction to a current need or crisis; 2) planning primarily through the budgeting process; 3) informal needs assessment from meetings and observations; 4) and more formal needs assessment through studies or surveys. Responses to question three are presented in Table 4, showing the number of social service agencies by the percentage of their planning effort allocated to different types of agency planning approaches. Their responses indicate that seventeen agencies, or thirty-five percent of the respondents, spent 50 percent or more of their planning effort on crisis reaction; thirteen agencies, or twenty-seven percent, did 50 percent or more of their planning primarily through their budgeting process; fifteen agencies, or thirty-one percent, stated that they did 50 percent or more of their planning through informal needs assessment, such as meetings, observations, etc.

Only two agencies spent half or more of their planning efforts on more formal needs assessment, with an additional organization stating that 60 percent of its planning effort was through "staff-board analysis." In fact, twenty-nine agencies, or sixty percent, spent 10 percent or less of their planning efforts on formal needs assessment of any sort; and a total of thirty-nine, or eight-one percent, spent one-quarter or less of their planning effort on such analyses.

(TABLE 4)

The major pattern of planning described in Table 4 is the low amount of planning effort devoted by local service agencies to needs assessment or to objectively specifying and delineating their target populations. Reaction to a current need or crisis is, in fact, not a planning process so much as the result of a lack of operational organization planning. Local human service agencies revealed their need for more structured planning to more effectively achieve their goals and service their target population.

One major objective of the survey described, in addition to obtaining needed information to plan Data Use Workshops, was to call the agencies' conscious attention to their planning methodologies and to their possible need for increased information use in decision making. The researcher concluded that this important objective was attained both by the high response rate to the survey and by later agency response to the workshops presented, which are discussed below in the concluding section.

Table 5 presents the prioritized responses to the question "What subject items of data will be most important and useful to your organization?" The items listed are the block-level data available in the 1980 Census. More agencies, over half of all respondents, indicated that their top priority data need is for specific age group population breakdowns than for any other data. As expected, agencies primarily oriented toward youth and the elderly are most interested in age group classifications of the population. This is also the case for organizations characterized as multipurpose, many of which have programs to service specific age groups. Thus, population distribution by age groups is particularly useful data for local service agencies. It would be even more functional mapped, or by geographic location.

(TABLE 5)

General population data was indicated as the second most needed data, and income level data was given third priority. In particular, numerous organizations requested income level maps by neighborhood, census tract or block to depict poverty pockets and income distribution by location in the city. Therefore, an income distribution map would be another helpful data tool to provide local service agencies. The fourth data subject item in order of importance to local agencies is an ethnic distribution of the population by sex. Here again, a mapping of the ethnic distribution of the population in the city would be a most helpful tool. While interest by a limited number of agencies was expressed in the composition of households and housing data, there was little need expressed for data on sex, size of household, marital status, or education level. In sum, respondents indicated clear concepts of

their data needs and their priorities of data subjects between available 1980 census data items.

Respondents were asked to rank the geographical areas for which they need data, because census data, as well as other local data sources, are presented on a geographical basis and many local service agencies have a geographically defined base. Nineteen respondents, or 40 percent of the total, indicated areal preferences for data but did not prioritize their preferences. Twenty-nine respondents ranked the areas for which they need data. As depicted in Table 6, the major geographical areas of interest are Tarrant County and the Fort Worth Urbanized Area, indicating that numerous local agencies serve target populations and plan on an area-wide basis. The data areas of next greatest interest were neighborhoods, Fort Worth Central City, and Planning Sectors, an area defined for planning purposes by the City of Fort Worth Planning Department.

(TABLE 6)

The agencies classified as Senior Citizens-oriented requested data at the county level, which reflects their ties to the County United Way Agency. The youth organizations did not present a clear preference. The multipurpose organizations expressed a need for data at the county and census tract level. Those agencies oriented to low-income groups need data at the neighborhood, county and sector levels. Both health and single interest groups are interested in data at the county or urbanized area levels. Neighborhood organizations requested data for neighborhoods and planning sectors, which is clearly consistent with their interests.

There was surprisingly little interest expressed for data at the block level. Many major organizational decisions, particularly those involving location of facilities and social overhead capital investment must be tied to a specific location related to the geographical dispersion of clients or consumers. This was evidenced, as indicated above, by the interest revealed in obtaining poverty or income level maps. A dominant approach to this problem would be through Census data at the smallest areal division, or block. Thus, some inconsistency appears between subject item data needs and geographical areas of data needs indicated by the respondents. This may reveal either an actual lack of need for very small area analysis or a lack of realization of the usefulness of such analysis.

The Census Data Needs Assessment survey also asked local service agencies what specific forms of aid would best satisfy their data needs. When asked in what form data can actually be used, the overwhelming response was that thirty-six respondents, or 75 percent, want printed Census reports as their primary data resource. While nine agencies want special tabulations first, an additional twenty-five respondents view special tabulations as their second-ranked preference. As a third alternative, eight, or 17 percent, indicated that summary computer tape files would be useful. This low level of response to computer tape files is important, because the City is currently planning the development of a central data base, which will be a computerized summary tape file. Thus, the City of Fort Worth will need to facilitate access to its data base, if it is to be useful to most local service agencies.

Responses to the question, "What types of assistance with Census data would be most helpful and useful to your organization?", were mixed. Fifteen respondents indicated first preference for a Resource Manual; ten indicated top preference for the provision of special tables and data charts; and eight preferred a workshop. Most respondents who preferred specific tables developed for their agency wanted data projections as second preference. Viewed overall, responses to this question indicated local agencies' desire for staff training and learning to use data sources in-house. Over half of respondents requested a Resource Manual on the interpretation and use of Census data or a general workshop on this topic or special training sessions. The need and desire by local organizations to upgrade their data use is clearly shown.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the tight money environment of the 1980's, social service agencies need to engage in more objective and specific needs assessment and resource allocation planning. For this, they require greater access and use of data sources. The results of a data needs assessment of local agencies as final users in Fort Worth, Texas evidence an awareness of agency needs and their data use limitations. The survey results have important implications for the data needs and problems of social service agencies. The study demonstrates agencies' need for longer range planning than the dominant planning period of one year and the need to determine their planning period more in relation to agency objectives, rather than solely by policies of external funding sources and federal regulations. The study also highlighted the need for increased structured planning by most local social service agencies, to reduce their accustomed dependence on crisis reaction as an allocating mechanism or on planning primarily through the budgeting process. This aspect of the survey implies the recognition by agencies of their needs to enhance their planning and analysis.

This research also demonstrates that social service agency personnel have at least a recognition of their data needs in terms of subject items of data needed, of geographical areas of data needed, and of the forms in which they can make best use of data and other information. Numerous of the agencies reveal considerably more than this and indicate clear recognition of their data use needs, strengths, and weaknesses. In addition, they are most responsive to attempts to expand their data accessibility and use, as evidenced by the high return rate of the survey and the careful responses elicited. Thus, this study appears to lend some credence to both of the theories of organization decision making discussed above. While this analysis reveals that a large proportion of the social service agencies studied do make decisions and plans on the basis of much less than optimum utilization of data and information, it also indicates that they are aware of this and are open to increasing their data use and decision making skills.

The results of this study were used by the investigator in the development of a series of two day long data use workshops and data use-applications workshops for social service agency representatives in Fort Worth, Texas, and in the writing of a detailed Resource Manual for agency data users. These workshops, which were free to participants, were funded under the auspices of the City of Fort Worth Planning

Department and the Science for Citizens Directorate of the National Science Foundation. Agency response to these workshops was almost overwhelming, such that a ceiling had to be placed on the number of participants and the series of workshops was repeated for a second maximum capacity group. More than 125 agency representatives attended the workshops, receiving an extensive Resource Manual for workshop agenda use and for future reference.

This research has several broader implications for the problems of social service agencies and the populations they serve. The increased availability and use of geographic-based small area data can aid local agencies to structure their decision-making with the support of objective data. It can also increase the visibility of targeted subpopulations and thereby increase their access to local decision makers. The overall objective of human service agencies is to allocate resources according to the assessed needs of the community. This goal can be substantially furthered by increasing the data accessibility and use of local agencies. One national policy move in this direction is the current development and expansion of state data centers. A second widespread approach is the trend of cities to develop and implement their own data bases. However, for numerous local agencies to readily access these data sources, non-technical channels of access and ongoing data-use training for social service users are needed.

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TABLE 1

RESPONDENT SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES CLASSIFIED BY MAJOR SERVICE AREA

SENIOR CITIZEN

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Riverside Senior Citizens Center | 4. Tarrant County Area Agency on Aging |
| 2. RSVP of Tarrant County | 5. Meals on Wheels, Inc. of Tarrant Cnty |
| 3. Senior Citizens Center, Inc. | |

YOUTH

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 6. Catholic Education Center | 10. Parenting Guidance Center |
| 7. Community of Hope Lutheran Church | 11. Texas DHR-Child Protective Service |
| 8. Forth Worth Girls Club | 12. YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth |
| 9. Fort Worth OIC | |

MULTI-PURPOSE

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 13. American G.I. Forum | 18. Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce |
| 14. Bethlehem Community Center | 19. Mexican American Chamber of Commerce |
| 15. Catholic Charities | 20. Texas Department of Human Resources |
| 16. Englewood Community Center | 21. United Community Centers, Inc. |
| 17. Family and Individual Services | 22. United Way of Metropolitan Tarrant Cnty |

LOW INCOME

- | | |
|--|---|
| 23. Assoc. of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) | 28. Near Southside Neighborhood Development Corp., Inc. |
| 24. Baptist Good Will Center | 29. Neighborhood Housing Services of Fort Worth, Inc. |
| 25. Community Action Agency | 30. Northside Inter-Church Agency, Inc. |
| 26. Fuerza de los Barrios | 31. The Salvation Army |
| 27. Near Southeast Resource Center | |

HEALTH AND HANDICAPPED

- | | |
|--|--|
| 32. Assoc. for Retarded Citizens of Fort Worth | 35. North Central Texas Home Health Agency, Inc. |
| 33. Bridge Association, Inc. | 36. The Society of Crippled Children and Adults |
| 34. Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth | |

SINGLE INTEREST

- | | |
|--|---|
| 37. American Indian Center of Fort Worth | 39. Texas Heritage, Inc. |
| 38. Sojourner Truth Players, Inc. | 40. Women's Haven of Tarrant County, Inc. |

NEIGHBORHOOD

- | | |
|---|---|
| 41. Arlington Heights Neighborhood Assoc. | 45. North Fort Worth CNR |
| 42. Camp Bowie Improvement Assoc. | 46. Ryan Place Improvement Association |
| 43. Fairmount Association | 47. SEARCH (South Area Churches) Assoc. |
| 44. Mistletoe Heights Association | 48. Southside Area Ministries |

TABLE 2. Length of Planning Period of Social Service Agencies, Fort Worth, Texas 1981:
Number of Respondents Classified by Major Service Area of Agency, N=48

Planning Period # Years	Type of Organization										Total Responses ¹	Percent of Respondents ²
	Senior	Youth	Multi- Purpose	Low Income	Health and Handi- capped	Single Interest	Neighborhood	Day-to-day As needed Four-year Fifteen months	Other ³	Day-to-day As needed Four-year Fifteen months		
1	3	6	6	3	3	2	6				29	60
2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1				7	15
3	2		1	1							4	8
5		2	4	3	2	2					13	27
10		1									1	2
other ³												
Day-to-day			1			1					1	2
As needed							1				2	4
Four-year				1							1	2
Fifteen months				1							1	2

¹ Since some organizations list 2 planning periods, usually 1 and 5 years, the total is larger than N.

² Due to rounding and multiple responses, total will not equal 100 percent.

³ Categories listed by respondents.

TABLE 3. Determination of Planning Period of Social Service Agencies, Fort Worth, Texas 1981
 Number of Responses Classified by Major Service Area of Agency, N=48

Determinants of Planning Period	Type of Organization							Total Responses	Percent of Respondents
	Senior Youth Purpose	Multi-Purpose	Low Income	Handicapped	Single Interest	Neighborhood	Health and		
Tied to United Way Planning	2	3	6	1	1	1	15	31	
Federal Regulations	3	3	2	3	1	2	15	31	
Tied to Fort City Planning	1	1	2	2	1	1	11	23	
Other Source of Funding	2	3	3	2	2	2	17	35	
Other: ³ State, Private Foundations	2						2	4	
Board Schedules and Direction Based on Budget Year		1	2	3	2		11	23	
As Needed				1			2	4	
State Law		1	10		1		12	25	
Clients			1				1	2	

¹ Since some organizations list two or more determinants, the total is larger than N.
² Due to rounding and multiple responses, total will not equal 100%.
³ Categories listed by respondents.

TABLE 4. Allocation of Planning Effort of Social Service Agencies, Fort Worth, Texas, 1981:
 Number of Responses by Percentage of Planning Effort Allocated, N = 48

Allocation of Planning Effort	Number of Responses by Percentage of Planning Effort ¹																
	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	33%	35%	40%	45%	50%	60%	70%	75%	90%	100%
Reaction to a current need or crisis	7	2	5	1	2	7	1	4	-	1	1	14	1	-	1	1	-
Planning by budgeting	15	1	3	-	2	6	3	3	-	2	-	10	1	1	-	-	1
Informal needs assessment by meetings, observation	5	1	5	4	7	5	-	5	1	-	-	11	1	-	1	-	2
More formal needs assessment by studies, surveys	17	4	8	2	2	6	2	4	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Other: ²																	
Staff-Board		1									1						
Priority setting						1							1				

¹ Percentage categories listed were determined by responses.
² Categories specified by respondents.

TABLE 5. Subject Item Data Needs of Social Service Agencies in Order of Priority, N=48

Subject Item	Number of Respondents Ranking				Percent of Respondents Ranking		
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	1st-4th
Population	10	10	7	4	21	21	65
Age Groups	18	7	2	3	38	15	63
Sex	1	3	0	0	2	6	8
Ethnic Distribution	3	6	10	6	6	13	52
Size of Household	0	2	1	7	0	4	21
Composition of Household	1	2	4	4	2	4	23
Marital Status	1	1	1	0	2	2	6
Housing	3	1	4	3	6	2	23
Educational Level	0	2	3	2	0	4	15
Income Level	5	7	8	4	10	15	50

TABLE 6. Geographical Areas of Data Needs of Social Service Agencies In Order of Priority, N=48

Geographic Area	Number of Respondents Ranking				% of Respondents	
	1st	2nd	3rd	X*	Ranking	Indicating
					1st-3rd	Usefulness
Tarrant County	7	4	1	13	25	52
Fort Worth Urbanized Area	4	7	2	11	27	50
Fort Worth Central City	0	6	2	11	17	40
Census Tract	3	1	2	6	13	25
Census Block Group	0	2	2	4	8	17
Block(s)	0	1	1	4	4	13
Neighborhood	7	0	2	11	19	42
Planning Sector	2	4	1	10	15	35
Regional Analysis Area	1	1	2	3	4	15
Traffic Survey Zone	0	1	0	1	2	4

*Indicates respondents checked this item, but did not rank responses.

29 respondents, or 40%, indicated but did not prioritize the geographic areas of data needs.