

**TIP SHEET: Needs assessment**

**GRANT CALL: MATCHING GRANTS FOR INNOVATIVE SERVICES**

**IN ZAMBIA PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

**Why is it important to conduct a user needs assessment?**

The aim of the needs assessment is to show that the project to be funded by the grant is really needed by the target group. The user needs assessment provides evidence to support your project objectives.

**What kinds of evidence can demonstrate “need”?**

Evidence of "user needs" can be pre-existing or it can be gathered especially for the project proposal.

Acceptable evidence can be provided in various ways including, the following:

* Finding and interpreting statistical evidence.
* Interviews with users, non-users or stakeholders [e.g. youth, community leaders]
* Focus groups [see the guideline on running focus groups, below] with users, non users or stakeholders [including relevant community organizations]
* Surveys of users, non users or stakeholders
* Anecdotal evidence/ hearsay/impressions
* Evidence of limitations on existing services [e.g. poor opening hours if the project will extend opening hours; reaching the community if the new project will be mobile].
* Pointing to success of similar services elsewhere ["benchmarking"]. – Web statistics [if an existing web service is to be improved] – Observation of users' behaviour.

**What about quality of evidence?**

Please provide the best quality of evidence you can with the time and resources available to you. For example, if you decide to do a survey, think carefully about the questions, and be sure they are relevant. But we do not expect you to do a very large survey for this application.

**Whose need should be demonstrated?**

Evidence of user needs should be about the target group[s] that the project aims to reach and serve.

Your project may aim to serve the community in general (a mixed group of people), or a particular group, for example defined by -

* Gender, or
* Family income level, or
* Ethnicity, or
* Language, or
* Employed/unemployed, or
* Skills and knowledge [e.g. literacy/numeracy or computer literacy], or
* Physically disability, or
* Objective-orientation – for example, girls who need encouragement to stay in school; youth who want to pursue careers in digital technology.

The users your project aims to help could be defined by multiple characteristics, for example:

* Women from an ethnic minority community who want to participate in local community decision-making processes.

**Where can the evidence come from?**

Evidence of "need" could come directly from the target group to be served or it could be more indirect or circumstantial. Possible sources of evidence include one or more of the following:

* Users of a related service [e.g. existing library users]
* Non-users of libraries
* Members of the specifically targeted group/s
* Stakeholders related to the targeted groups, who can speak on their behalf [e.g.

teachers, parents, social workers, relevant organizations]

* Political or financial stakeholders/ funders
* Other librarians who have implemented similar projects
* Authoritative statements about policy priorities of local, regional or national government [e.g. the regional chairman says “Our top priority this year is to ensure that all young school leavers can use the internet for research and communication.”]
* Known facts or statistics such as those found in a community profile [e.g. many schoolchildren and little provision for them after school].