

# Manage Data Collection for Multiple SAMHSA Grants

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## About the Series

The **BestPractices4Data** series focuses on sharing innovations and best practices for grantees, from grantees.

In 2023, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) convened listening sessions with grantees and government project officers to learn about strategies that grantees use to optimize data collection processes. Produced by the SAMHSA Center for Financing Reform and Innovation (CFRI) contract, the series of issue briefs aims to improve efficiency in the use of grant funds by providing opportunities for grantees to learn from each other. The briefs identify best practices that help reduce costs associated with resource-intensive trial and error attempts typical of new grantees who are trying to figure out the best ways to collect data.

All SAMHSA grantees are required to collect data as a condition of their funding. Grantees sometimes refer to these as Government Performance Results Act (GPRA), National Outcome Measures (NOMs), client-level data, participant-level data, program-level data, or progress reports. The **BestPractices4Data** series brings together innovative and best practices that grantees use to address the most common and complex challenges associated with grant-required data collection activities.

Grantees can determine their data collection requirements by reading their grant's Notice of Award (NOA).

It is not uncommon for organizations to be awarded multiple grants from SAMHSA simultaneously. While receiving multiple grants is an indication of the valuable services being provided by a grantee organization, it can also create challenges. For example, grant programs from different SAMHSA Centers (e.g., Center for Mental Health Services, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, and Center for Substance Abuse Prevention) may have different data collection requirements or variation in the required client- and program-level data between grant programs. Below are some grantee best practices for managing data collection for multiple grants.

## Best Practices



Review each grant's data requirements



Based on your data requirements, plan ahead to maximize data collection



Reach out to the government project officer (GPO) of each grant



Identify a data point person or data lead



Consider hiring an outside evaluator

This issue brief considers the common challenges identified by SAMHSA grantees. It highlights innovative and practical ways that grantees address these challenges.

## Identifying Similarities and Differences Between Grant Requirements

Since the purpose of each grant program is unique, the data collection requirements are also unique. Though there are often data collection similarities within grant programs of the same category (e.g., mental health, substance abuse treatment, or substance abuse prevention), there are also many differences.

### Step 1: Review Each Grant’s Data Requirements

SAMHSA grantee data collection can include:

- **Client-level data**

Client-level data, sometimes referred to as participant-level data, “Core Client Outcome Measures,” or the “National Outcome Measures (NOMS),” refer to the data collected about individual clients. These data include information about client demographics, treatment services, and treatment outcomes. Grantees should try to collect these client-level data on all individuals whose services are funded by the SAMHSA grant.

- **Program-level data**

Program-level data, sometimes referred to as prevention activities, implementation of grant activities, or “Infrastructure Development,

Prevention, and Mental Health Promotion (IPP) indicators,” refer to information about the grantee’s organization or the SAMHSA-funded grant program. Program-level data include data about the number of individuals served during the grant period, the characteristics of the grantee organization (e.g., policies and workforce development activities), and the grantee organization’s goals.

- **Community-level data**

Community-level data refer to information about the broader community that the grantee organization serves. Some SAMHSA grants require community surveys as one component of data collection. These surveys are generally written and distributed by the grantee organization to help identify community needs and to address needs through tailored interventions.

The types of data a grantee organization is required to collect depends on the specific grant. Grantees should begin by looking at the NOA for the grant they have been awarded. One section of the NOA document describes the types of data the grantee is required to collect, and how frequently the data must be collected. Most grants do not require all of the types of data outlined in this brief.

## Example Table of Contents for a Notice of Award (NOA)

For most grants, identify which measures your organization is required to collect by reviewing the NOA Section titled: “Data Collection/Performance Measurement and Project Performance Assessment.”

I.	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION .....	7
1.	PURPOSE .....	7
2.	KEY PERSONNEL .....	8
3.	REQUIRED ACTIVITIES .....	9
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## Step 2: Compare the Data Requirements and Plan Ahead

If a grantee has multiple grants, each may require different data, which can lead to duplication of work and a significant burden to staff and clients. This is particularly true for client-level data. It is possible that to meet data requirements for multiple grants, you may have to submit more than one survey per client.

Some grantees take the following approach to help streamline their approach to data collection:

1. Compare the surveys. Identify where they overlap, and where they are different. When surveys overlap, use the information collected during the first survey to fill in the same information on the second survey.
2. Conduct client interviews when services are being provided, instead of scheduling a separate appointment solely for data collection. This reduces the number of times a client will have to travel.
3. Pre-populate surveys to the greatest extent possible before clients come in for their services. Be sure to only pre-populate information that is unchanging. For example, some grantees use information gathered during the baseline interview to populate followup surveys.

## Step 3: Reach Out to GPO of Each Grant

Grantees may have a separate GPO for each of their grants. GPOs are the grantee's primary point of contact with SAMHSA. They are the experts for the grants that they oversee, and a vital and informative resource for grantees. They can provide support with data collection concerns, grant requirement changes, timelines, and more. Grantees should contact each of their GPOs early and often to ensure compliance with all grant requirements.

Grantees with multiple grants should inform all GPOs about all their grants. This allows a GPO to tailor their help and advice to the specific grantee needs. GPOs can also help grantees by:

1. Connecting grantees with other organizations that have a similar combination of grants, and similar data requirements.
2. Identifying specific data tools and resources that are best suited to the grantee organization.
3. Helping grantees identify overlapping data requirements between grants.



## Step 4: Organize Your Data Collection Efforts

Managing multiple grants can be complicated. Grantees find that planning ahead and determining how best to organize data collection efforts is an important step. Each organization needs to consider how data collection may impact their organization. They need to account for organizational resources, their capacity, the number of grants awarded, and the data requirements of each of those grants. Here are some ways that grantees have organized their data collection efforts.



### Identify a data point person/data lead

- > **What does this mean?** One person within an organization becomes the data expert for the organization's grants. This person oversees data timelines, creates and implements data protocols, identifies overlaps between grant data requirements, and ensures compliance with grant reporting requirements.
- > **Pros:** The grantee organization cultivates an internal data expert who can answer questions and serve as a point person for all grant-related information. This person can delegate work to reduce duplication. They can manage overlapping data requirements to streamline processes across different grants.
- > **Cons:** With multiple grants, this may be complicated and time intensive; it may be too much for one person.

### Assign individuals to specific grants

- > **What does this mean?** One person, or a team of individuals, is designated as the data expert for each grant.
- > **Pros:** Workloads remain manageable, and individuals cultivate in-depth knowledge of the grant data requirements.
- > **Cons:** Individuals may not be experts in a particular type of data (client-level, program-level, etc.), and duplication of work may occur.

### Assign individuals to specific types of data

- > **What does this mean?** One person, or a team of individuals, becomes an expert on a specific type of data across multiple grants.
- > **Pros:** Workloads remain manageable, and individuals cultivate in-depth knowledge of a particular type of data that they are working on.
- > **Cons:** Individuals may not have background and expertise in specific types of data collection best practices, and duplication and redundancy in data collection may not be avoided.

### Hire an outside evaluator

- > **What does this mean?** An organization can outsource their data requirements by hiring an outside evaluator. An outside evaluator can collect data, report data to SAMHSA's Performance Accountability and Reporting System (SPARS), create data protocols, track data, identify overlap between grant data requirements, create forms for data tools, and more.
- > **Pros:** Reduces the burden on clinical and administrative staff. The organization has access to an expert in data, data management, data analysis, and (potentially) grant-required data specifically.
- > **Cons:** Can be expensive; not all evaluators have the same level of expertise; requires additional policies to ensure data confidentiality; could be a barrier to knowledge sharing, skills development within the agency, and relationship building with clients.

### Additional Resources

[SAMHSA Center for Financing Reform & Innovation \(CFRI\)](#)

[SAMHSA's Grants Management](#)