Tip Sheet: What are Data?

Charity Insights Canada Project (CICP)
Community Education Centre (CEC): https://carleton.ca/cicp-pcpob/cec/

What Are Data?
- Facts or values that can be measured, described, or observed.
- Includes numbers, text, images, and stories.
- Data help organizations make informed decisions.

Types of Data
- Quantitative: Numerical data such as participation rates, costs, and demographics.
- Qualitative: Non-numerical insights such as interviews, observations, and photos.

Why Data Matters
- Supports evidence-based decisions by showing what is working and what needs attention.
- Helps track progress and evaluate programs to improve services over time.
- Builds trust with funders and communities by demonstrating transparency and results.
- Strengthens fundraising by clearly showing the impact of your work.

Common Nonprofit Data Types
- Administrative: Budgets, expenses, salaries.
- Programmatic: Activities, outputs, participant data.
- Impact: Long-term outcomes and organizational effectiveness

From Data to Wisdom (DIKW Pyramid)
- Data: Raw facts.
- Information: Organized data.
- Knowledge: Insights applied to decisions.
- Wisdom: Learned understanding guiding future action.

Ethical Considerations
- Treat data with care because it represents real people and their experiences.
- Protect privacy by collecting only what you need and storing it safely.
- Ensure consent and be transparent about how data will be used.
- Consider ethics at every stage from planning to sharing results.

Correlation vs. Causation
- Correlation: Two things happen together.
- Causation: One directly impacts the other.