

# NSAA/NASC JOINT MIDDLE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

DATA ANALYSIS  
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## What is Data Analysis?

In brief, *Data Analysis* is defined as:

- The process of looking at and summarizing data with the intent to extract useful information and develop conclusions
- A body of methods that help describe facts, detect patterns, develop expectations, and test hypotheses
- A process used in government operations
- Often displayed in the form of facts or figures; and notes averages/differences
- Used as a basis for making calculations or drawing conclusions

## **Ultimately, Data Analysis is about....**

Trying to answer the innumerable questions asked by our Legislature, citizens, and peers

Done well, it leads to:

- ▶ Better Information
- ▶ Better Decisions
- ▶ Better Government

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## **Current Uses for Data Analysis?**

**TWO EXAMPLES:**

- ▶ To respond to Legislative proposals in WA State
- ▶ To prepare ourselves for answering the plethora of questions associated with the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

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## **Legislative Proposals– An Example from WA State**

### **Fiscal Note Preparation**

- ▶ As the state Legislature introduces bills, fiscal staff in agencies are asked to determine if the bill will have a fiscal impact. If so, agency staff are required to prepare a fiscal note. In most cases, agencies have three days or less to prepare a fiscal note. Accurate, timely data analysis is needed to help the Legislature, and ultimately the Governor, decide if the bill should become law.

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## **Fiscal Note Preparation, cont.**

Following is a brief description of the data analysis done to prepare a fiscal note:

1. Review the bill to determine which state laws are being changed, added, or deleted
2. Determine if the change to law will have a fiscal impact
3. Select the appropriate tools such as expenditure and revenue reports, data from central service agency provider's websites, and contractors/vendors to ascertain the dollar value of any changes
4. Use the chart of accounts to ensure all objects of expenditure and revenue sources are reviewed for fiscal impact
5. Perform the analysis needed and prepare the fiscal note
6. Report findings to key stakeholders

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## Questions surrounding ARRA and Associated Reporting

1. What is ARRA?
2. Is it a good use of our money?
3. Will it work; how?
4. Who is accountable for tracking the results?
5. Who gets the money and how will it be used?
6. How many jobs will it create?
7. Etc.

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## Key Questions to Ask Yourself

- ▶ **Integrity** – can my data analysis results be tested for accuracy and completeness?
- ▶ **Validity** – are my conclusions computationally correct; are they sensible and true statements – can they be falsified if they are false?
- ▶ **Simplicity** – have I kept the process simple? Are my conclusions written in “Plain Talk” so others will understand?

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## Why Should We Care?

### Using ARRA as an example:

- ▶ People will make decisions or draw conclusions based on our ongoing analysis
- ▶ Analysis should demonstrate responsiveness, accountability, and results
- ▶ Results should build public confidence that we know what we are doing and will keep doing it well, quickly, and responsibly
- ▶ So we have better information,
  - ▶ To make better decisions,
  - ▶ That result in better government!!

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## More coming....

Next you will hear from *Beth Pendergrass* and *JoRay McCoy* as they share examples of data analysis from their own state, and their own experience!

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# Questions?

▶ Contact:

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Thank you!