

local level data collection

'KNOW YOUR PATCH' KIT



Dean Carson, Fiona Richards and Pascal Tremblay

SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM



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Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre, Southern Cross University

The ARTRC is a partnership between the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC) and Southern Cross University (SCU). The Centre was formed to undertake research and extension activities to assist in the growth of tourism industries which would contribute to sustainable communities in regional Australia. Since its inception, the Centre has undertaken numerous projects, produced various occasional papers as well as industry-relevant kits.

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CONTENTS

DO YOU SEE ANYTHING FAMILIAR IN THIS STORY?	1
INTRODUCTION	3
WHAT IS SMALL AREA TOURISM DATA?	4
IT'S NOT INFORMATION UNTIL SOMEBODY USES IT	5
USING SMALL AREA TOURISM DATA	6
DEFINING YOUR DATA NEEDS	6
DECIDING WHO YOU WANT DATA FROM	6
SOURCES OF DATA	8
ACCESSING RELEVANCE OF EXISTING DATA SOURCES	8
COLLECTING YOUR OWN DATA	12
DECIDING WHO YOU WANT DATA FROM AND HOW OFTEN	12
SMALL AREA DATA COLLECTION TOOLS	14
EVALUATING DATA COLLECTION TOOLS	14
CONTACTS THAT CAN HELP YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS	14
ADVANTAGES TO USING EXISTING COLLECTION TOOLS	15
THE DATA MANAGEMENT WHEEL AND BAD DECISIONS	17
MAKING A CASE FOR NEW SOURCES	17
DESIGNING A METHODOLOGY	17
MANAGING THE COSTS OF YOUR SMALL AREA TOURISM DATA	21
GAINING THE SUPPORT OF STAKEHOLDERS	21
ALLOWING SUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO COLLECT DATA	21
MANAGING THE RESULTS	24
FEEDING RESULTS BACK TO STAKEHOLDERS	24
LISTENING TO THE VIEWS OF OTHERS ON WHAT THE DATA MAY MEAN	24
REFERENCING THE RESULTS IN DECISION MAKING	24
STORING THE RESULTS FOR FUTURE USE	24
DOCUMENTING PROCESSES	24
PREPARATION	25
SETTING SHORT TERM, ACHIEVABLE, VISIBLE GOALS FOR YOUR PROJECT	25
TESTING YOUR DATA COLLECTION	25
READINESS CHECKLIST	28
SHORT TERM, ACHIEVABLE, VISIBLE	29
APPENDIX A: DATA CATALOGUE FORM	30
APPENDIX B: SMALL AREA TOURISM DATA COLLECTION EXAMPLES	32
APPENDIX C: MINIMUM DATA ITEMS FOR SMALL AREA DATA	37
APPENDIX D: COLLECTING DATA – MAXIMISING THE RESPONSE	43

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Data Analysis Using Ipat _____	16
Figure 2: Data Management Wheel _____	17
Figure 3: Snapshot Of Visitor Information Centre Survey Form _____	26

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Applications For Small Area Tourism Data _____	6
Table 2: Nationally Maintained Small Area Tourism Data Collections _____	9
Table 3: State Agency Maintained Small Area Tourism Data Collections _____	10
Table 4: Scope Of Possibilities For Small Area Tourism Data Collections _____	12
Table 5: Data Collection Tools _____	14
Table 6: Best Available Data (Bad) Evaluation Criteria _____	18
Table 7: Summary Of General Strengths And Weaknesses Of National, State And Locally Managed Data Collections _____	20
Table 8: Hints And Tips For Reducing Data Collection Costs _____	22
Table 9: Hints And Tips For Managing Your Results _____	24
Table 10: Data Collection Checklist _____	28
Table A1: How To Complete A Data Catalogue Form _____	30
Table B1: Examples Of Small Area Tourism Data Collections _____	32
Table C1: Minimum Data Items For Small Area Data _____	37

DO YOU SEE ANYTHING FAMILIAR IN THIS STORY?

EXPERIENCE

The SmallTown Local Tourism Association (LTA) made the decision to collect some data about visitors to their town in order to lobby the local council for additional funds to expand the Visitor Information Centre (VIC). The LTA decided that if they could show that better information distribution from the VIC would impact on what visitors did in the region, the council would increase its support for tourism. The idea was to collect data every month to show how visitor behaviour changed when new initiatives were introduced. In the early stages of the project, the LTA formed a committee to design a survey, which would be handed out to visitors at the VIC and at members' businesses. This was the first time SmallTown had tried to get its own visitor statistics, and the committee decided that it was an opportunity to do more than just find out about visitor behaviour. Some members of the committee wanted to find out what the popular market segments were. Other committee members were interested in patterns of expenditure. Others wanted to know where visitors came from, and where they were on their way to when they visited SmallTown. The committee also wanted to know what visitors liked and disliked about SmallTown, and how they found out about the region before they decided to visit.

So – what went wrong?

- The LTA never asked the council what information they thought would influence their funding decisions. It turned out that council wanted to know whether residents supported increased tourism services, not whether tourists demanded them.
- The committee tried to accommodate the various information requests. This resulted in a six page questionnaire.
- There were so many views as to what constituted a 'market segment' and what aspects of the town visitors could be satisfied or unsatisfied with that these questions were included as open ended questions (i.e. respondents could write whatever answer they liked against them). This made data analysis very difficult.
- The committee was determined to get a large sample so they would know the 'truth' about their visitors. Just handing surveys out to visitors resulted in a low response rate (about 20 completed forms in three weeks). The committee then looked into hiring interviewers but this was too expensive. In the end, there was not enough data to make a report to the council budget meeting.
- The Chair of the committee had some skills with Microsoft Excel and was going to do the data analysis. However, their business had a big event to run and the Chair did not have the time to enter and analyse the data. No one else wanted to do the job.
- It took five months to collect data from 60 visitors, and it required lots of time from members and staff at the VIC to encourage visitors to answer the survey and to conduct interviews. All participants agreed it was too difficult to try again.

- The committee now has a small pile of visitor surveys with potentially interesting information in them. However, the drive to present findings to council no longer exists as there is no one with the time to enter, code and analyse the data, and the rest of the LTA membership has even forgotten that a survey was conducted!

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing recognition of the importance of quality data and statistics to support decision making for regional and local tourism associations and industry groups. In fact, local government, funding agencies, investors, and clients demand solid evidence when asked to support tourism initiatives. Getting data that has local meaning has proven a challenge. In general, the state and national data sets provide information for relatively large tourism regions, while decisions are more likely to apply at local and small area levels. Many organisations have made efforts to collect their own tourism data, with varying degrees of success. Sourcing and using small area tourism data can be a challenge.

This guide leads you through a process of sourcing and applying small area tourism data. It contains three types of information –

BRIEF Provides you with some background and overview of issues related to small area tourism data.

ACTION Provides you with specific hints, tips, and strategies including some checklists for managing small area tourism data.

EXPERIENCE Includes small case studies and notable quotes from organisations like yours who have undertaken small area tourism data collections. We have tried to include good and bad experiences.

The guide commences with a brief overview of what small area tourism data are, and how it might be used by various organisations. It then provides information about the resources that already exist – small area data sets that you may or may not have used in the past, and data collection tools that have been tested and validated by others. The guide walks you through a brief checklist that will help you judge whether you need to collect your own data, and how to do so. Once you have a collection of small area data that is useful for your organisation, you must store it and protect it so that it can be used in the future either for the direct value of the data, or to help plan your next research effort. The guide closes with some strategies for preserving your corporate memory.

This guide is a living document, and the electronic version (see www.regionaltourism.com.au/ARTRC) will be updated with new material. In particular, if you have your own experiences with small area tourism data collection, you are encouraged to fill in a data catalogue form (see Appendix A) and send it back to us – you may also want to send some quotable quotes on your experience for future editions of this guide. Also feel free to send any suggestions or advice for your fellow regional researchers. Email: artrc@scu.edu.au

WHAT IS SMALL AREA TOURISM DATA?

BRIEF This section introduces the concept of small area tourism data. Small area data are relevant for areas smaller than statistical tourism regions. The Australian Bureau of Statistics and Tourism Research Australia, in collaboration with the State and Territory tourism commissions, developed a geographic classification system for tourism regions. These regions sit outside the Australian Standard Geographic Classification but generally comprise of collections of Statistical Local Areas. Since being introduced in 1998, there have been substantial changes to the tourism regions classification, currently with 83 recognised tourism regions (there were approximately 210 regions in 1998). Tourism regions lie within State and Territory borders such that –

Regions do not necessarily conform to other administrative boundaries (such as health regions, Area Consultative Committee Regions, education regions, statistical subdivisions etc.) and where there is no conformity, this reduces the range of data sources, which can make reference to tourism regions. Most regions include diverse centres of tourism activity and have little homogeneity in terms of markets, product or destination development. Data addressing tourism regions is of great value for administration at State and National levels, and lesser value for campaign management at the regional level, and nominal value only for local areas (such as urban centres and localities) and individual (normally single site) enterprises.

In the tourism context, small area data reference part of a tourism region. The small area may conform to other geographical classifications (local government areas, statistical local areas, urban centres and localities, postcodes) recognised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, or it may sit outside those boundaries and be defined more properly as a collective with a loose geographical base. Local Tourism Associations, Visitor Information Centre members, and local industry groups represent three examples which may fit the latter description. Small area data may (though it need not) lack the statistical reliability of State and National data collections and so be less useful for administrative purposes at that level. However, it is more likely to reveal the differences in visitation and industry performance within a region, and has increased value for regional, local and enterprise applications.

It's Not Information until Somebody Uses It

EXPERIENCE The CoastTown Visitor Information Centre (VIC) has been enthusiastically collecting visitor numbers, postcodes, length of stay, accommodation and activities data from visitors to the Centre since 1996. The collection was set up by a volunteer in 1996, and that volunteer encouraged staff to fill in the data sheet for each visitor from out of town. By 2001, the VIC staff collected this data automatically. When asked what they did with this valuable data, the VIC Manager noted that *'we enter it into a spreadsheet at the end of every month. We then have to tell council and our members how many visitors we have had. The other information isn't really used, but sometimes we'll comment at a staff meeting that we seem to be getting more visitors from Sydney or that a certain attraction is getting more requests than usual.'* The VIC produces no reports on the data they collect, and they don't have a system for sharing the results with operators (*'no member has ever asked to see the data'*).

Quotables:

..... I have the feeling that the industry does not collect enough data. One main reason is a lack of time, which again is related to costs. However, often it just does not seem relevant to them.... (Tourism & Economic Development Manager)

.... The industry can never know enough. But even if somebody knows something this is not equal to implementing this knowledge. (Tourism Manager)

USING SMALL AREA TOURISM DATA

Defining Your Data Needs

Deciding Who You Want Data From

BRIEF Carson, Taylor and Richards (2003) reported on the uses of small area tourism data by local government. In the process of conducting that research, the researchers interviewed and reviewed statements from regional tourism organisation managers, local tourism association and industry group representatives, Visitor Information Centre managers, and individual enterprises. What generally emerged from the Carson, Taylor and Richard's research, and is reinforced in the interviews conducted in this current research, is that stakeholders perceive a high utility for small area tourism data but their lack of experience with such data makes it difficult for them to describe specific applications. The lack of ability to identify specific applications while still recognising the importance of small area data are one of the key barriers to establishing and sustaining collections. Some important applications have emerged in the research, however, and they differ between organisations.

Table 1 summarises the key applications for small area tourism data for regional tourism organisations and local tourism associations, local government, Visitor Information Centres, industry associations, and enterprises. Additional applications may exist for State and Federal agencies.

Table 1: Applications for Small Area Tourism Data

Organisation	Application Specific Undertaking
Regional and local tourism associations	Evidence to encourage participation by operators: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluating collaborative marketing campaigns• Profiling the local tourism industry• Marketing planning• Describing current market segments• Strategic planning• Assessing the economic, environmental and social value of tourism
Local government	Reporting to Council to support budget applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism employment• Tourism industry profile• Tourism contribution to Local Government income• Tourism use of local infrastructure• Social impacts of tourism Managing Visitor Information Centres: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• VIC impact on tourism yield• Evaluating effectiveness of information management Evidence to encourage participation by operators: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluating collaborative marketing campaigns• Profiling the local tourism industry

Organisation	Application Specific Undertaking
Visitor Information Centres	See above
Industry associations	Membership management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector profiling Lobbying and strategic planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector exposure to risk factors • Jurisdictional variations in performance • Benchmarking
Enterprises	Business planning and performance monitoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitor analysis • Market analysis • Cost structures benchmarking • Exposure to risk factors • Event evaluation • Human resource analysis

The applications described in Table 1 are broad areas of enquiry for which it would be difficult to devise a single data collection. Rather, these applications might normally require data from a range of sources (including internal data and intuition based on anecdotal evidence). It is only where data from existing sources is inadequate for specific undertakings within the application area that new data are required.

Quotables:

.... Our local tourism association offered us a very useful database containing mailing addresses for bus tour operators that I could really need for my business. However, I would like to see it being updated on a regular basis. I also need more general information to extend my relations with bus tour operators... (Tour operator)

.... I work with school groups. Therefore, I need to know about how I can get schools involved and why my guests come. Even though I already collect data on my guests, additional information would be really handy.... (Accommodation provider and tour operator)

ACTION Be very clear about what questions you want to answer, and how you would use the answers if you had them. Too often organisations collect data just because it *might* be interesting – this wastes time and money. If your information needs are similar to those listed in Table 1, the tools referenced in this guide will be a useful starting point.

SOURCES OF DATA

Accessing Relevance of Existing Data Sources

BRIEF The following section details some of the more readily available sources of small area tourism data in Australia. It pays to become familiar with what data are available and where it comes from. Many times, organisations undertake expensive data collections to find that the answers they were after could have been answered by existing data sets.

A small number of data sets are collected specifically to assist the tourism industry. They are usually collected by Government agencies (such as Tourism Australia or the Australian Bureau of Statistics at national level, or State Tourism Organisations), consultants or market research agencies (data sets are managed by Roy Morgan, Access Economics and similar companies). However, some of the more interesting data sets are not specifically designed for tourism, and may be a little harder to obtain. For example, the Sensis Yellow Pages Directories provide information about tourism businesses and various demographic databases can be used to describe tourism's impact on the local community (particularly in terms of employment).

Apart from formal data collections conducted for the purposes of statistical analysis, many organisations produce what is known as administrative data sets. These are collections, which are maintained for important direct business purposes but which may also be useful for research purposes. Membership databases are clear examples of relevant administrative data collections.

Data that already exists is known as secondary data. If appropriate data do not already exist, organisations may collect it themselves. This is known as primary data. Primary data tends to be more relevant to specific research questions but is usually far more expensive to collect and maintain than secondary data.

Quotable:

... I am currently doing research through my website.... Online polls enable me to grasp an understanding on people's interests and the reason why they come to our town. Because of the polls I also find out more about my customers expectations and where they are from..... thanks to the data I could exactly target the advertising for my business and get a picture about the response rate through resulting website hits.....(Catering business owner)

ACTION Visit www.decipher.biz to find out about existing tourism data from more than 120 organisations. **Tip** - always check whether secondary data are available to answer your questions. You'll save time and money.

EXPERIENCE Examples of small area tourism data collections, which are maintained nationally are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Nationally maintained small area tourism data collections

Collection	Agency	Overview
Survey of Tourist Accommodation	Australian Bureau of Statistics www.abs.gov.au www.decipher.biz	Quarterly census of accommodation establishments (of 15 rooms or more). Available for Statistical Local Areas (which usually align with local government areas or town boundaries) with sufficient accommodation stock to preserve confidentiality of respondents. Available in various forms since 1975. Has occasional coverage of other accommodation such as caravan parks, holiday units, and hostels.
Yellow Pages Directories	Sensis www.yellowpages.com.au www.decipher.biz	A directory of all the businesses listed in the Yellow Pages. The collection includes keywords for business type, and businesses can be listed under multiple business types. Data are available about individual businesses. Individual business details can be obtained through the Yellow Pages web site, while aggregate information specifically about tourism related businesses is only available on Decipher.
Accommodation database	AAA Tourism accommodationguide.com.au	Consolidated database of operators who are members of each State motoring association. Details are available for individual operators. Operators are classified according to location, business type, and star rating.
Australian Tourism Data Warehouse	Australian Tourism Data Warehouse Pty Ltd www.australia.com and product websites for each State Tourism Organisation www.decipher.biz	Central storage facility for tourism product and destination information from all Australian States and Territories. Information is available about individual operators. Operators are classified according to location, business type, and star rating. Aggregated summaries are available through Decipher.
Census of Population and Housing	Australian Bureau of Statistics www.abs.gov.au www.decipher.biz	The Census collects information at Collection District level (usually two or three streets) about residents. Its relevance to tourism is in its recording of details about people's occupations. Several industry sectors are specifically concerned with tourism. TTF Australia produces an 'employment atlas' derived from Census employment figures for each

Collection	Agency	Overview
		Statistical Local Area in Australia. This atlas is available on Decipher.
Australian Business Register	Australian Taxation Office www.ato.gov.au	Datasets from the Business Register are available to government users. Public data (which can be released) can summarise the number of businesses of various types in specific locations. Business Register data are currently not available through Decipher.

EXPERIENCE Here are some examples of State level small area tourism data collections and who maintains them, shown in Table 3.

Table 3: State agency maintained small area tourism data collections

Collection	Agency	Overview
Regional Tourism Activity Monitor (RTAM)	Tourism Queensland www.tq.com.au www.decipher.biz	The Regional Tourism Activity Monitor (RTAM) is a voluntary business survey managed by Tourism Queensland. It aims to deliver timely, reliable data on the health of the tourism industry and provides regional and competitive set information back to industry participants and stakeholders. The RTAM program currently collects data from various industry sectors including hotels/ motels/ resorts/ serviced apartments, flats and holiday units, cottages/ bed and breakfasts/ farm and home stays, boats, backpackers, caravan parks and tours and attractions. Approximately 20 areas have RTAM surveys running on a regular basis.
Standard Visitor Survey	Tourism Queensland www.tq.com.au www.decipher.biz	Tourism Queensland helps local tourism associations conduct visitor surveys which include questions about motivations to visit, length of stay, activities performed, and expenditure. More than 20 areas have implemented Standard Visitor Surveys, however few have collected the data more than once.
Northern Territory Travel Monitor (NTTM)	Tourism NT www.tourism.nt.gov.au	Includes three component data sets. The first is a monthly

		occupancy survey of accommodation businesses. The second is an annual survey of 4000 visitors at commercial accommodation establishments. The third is an annual survey of 3000 households to provide data on people staying with friends and relatives or other non-commercial accommodation. The latter two data sets include visitor expenditure, behaviour, and demographic data. Data are available for four sub-regions.
Tasmanian Visitor Survey	Tourism Tasmania www.tourism.tas.gov.au	A sample of approximately 2% of visitors departing Tasmania is recruited for face to face and self-completed surveys. Data covers expenditure, behaviour and demographics. Data are available for 40 sub-regions.

Quotables:

... there are always people out there that give you data and statistics... (Accommodation provider)

... as a Visitor Information Centre we have got good access to information and statistics from our Regional Tourism Organisation and Tourism New South Wales.... However we have not yet used this service... (Visitor Information Centre Manager)

COLLECTING YOUR OWN DATA

Deciding Who You Want Data From and How Often

BRIEF Many organisations have attempted to collect and manage their own small area tourism data. As the case study at the front of the guide indicates, there have been varying levels of success! The most successful small area data sets are very clear as to their purpose, and also have clear statements on what the data are about, who it is collected from, who it is collected by or through, what instrument is used, and how often the data are collected. The combination of these factors gives a sense of the scope of possibilities for your small area data collection (see Table 4).

Table 4: Scope of possibilities for small area tourism data collections

About	Visitors (generally) Specific markets (such as drive tourists, cultural tourists, people attending a specific event...) Businesses (generally) Specific sectors (tour operators, attractions, B&B operators...)
Collected from	Visitors Businesses Residents (as with surveys about Visiting Friends and Relatives markets, for example)
Collected through	Gateways (airports, bus stations ...) Intercept points (main street, waterfront, other common pedestrian areas) Attractions (including events) Operators Visitor Information Centres Web sites Evaluation forms/ competitions in publications Customer databases (where use of them complies with Privacy Act provisions)
Instrument	Face to face survey Self completed survey form Electronic guestbook/ survey Telephone survey Photographs and other observational techniques Unstructured or semi-structured interviews
How often	Ongoing (such as postcode counts at Visitor Information Centres) Once off (as for an event evaluation) Specific time intervals (monthly, quarterly, annually) At specific non-repeating points in time (to compare high season with low season, for example) Irregularly ('every three to five years' or 'every time we launch a new campaign')

Quotable:

.... Using our visitor counts we can work out best times to operate and trial different times, yet we haven't reached the maximum number....apart from that, without having this data at our disposal we couldn't work out staff rosters. It just saves us cost and time... (Regional tour operator).

SMALL AREA DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Evaluating Data Collection Tools

Contacts that Can Help You Through the Process

ACTION Once you have made the decision to collect your own data, you should check to see who else might have had similar data needs, and whether the approaches they used suit your circumstances.

There are also some generic data collection tools available. Some of these require that you subscribe to or purchase a data collection kit, while others simply provide the collection instrument with no back up support. Resist the temptation to start every data collection exercise from scratch. There is a range of tools available from existing data collections, which you may be able to adapt readily to your purpose and save time and money. Check out the following tools and see whether you can use them for your purposes.

Table 5: Data collection tools

Tool	IPAT – Industry Performance Analyser for Tourism
Agency	Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre, SCU
About	Business performance
From	Operators
Through	Operators
Instrument	Web based survey form
How often	Monthly, quarterly or annually
Further information	www.regionaltourism.com.au/ipat/
Tool	Encore – Event Evaluation Kit
Agency	Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre
About	Economic impact of events and festivals
From	Visitors to events
Through	Visitors
Instrument	Intercept surveys at events
How often	Irregular
Further information	www.crctourism.com.au
Tool	VICkit – Monitoring Visitor Information Centre Impact on Yield
Agency	Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre
About	Influence of Visitor Information Centres on tourist behaviour
From	Visitors to VICs
Through	Visitor Information Centres
Instrument	Self completed survey
How often	Irregular
Further information	www.crctourism.com.au
Tool	Destination Based Surveys
Agency	Tourism Research Australia
About	Visitors to local areas

From	Visitors
Through	Accommodation, gateways, attractions
Instrument	Intercept surveys
How often	Irregular
Further information	www.btr.gov.au
Tool	Market Segmentation Survey
Agency	Tourism Research Australia
About	Leisure travel segments
From	Visitors
Through	Visitors
Instrument	Intercept surveys
How often	Irregular
Further information	www.tourism.australia.com
Tool	Printed Brochure/ Touring Guide Evaluation Survey
Agency	Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre
About	Users of touring guides and brochures
From	Visitors
Through	Touring guides/ brochure
Instrument	Feedback or recoup forms
How often	Irregular
Further information	www.regionaltourism.com.au

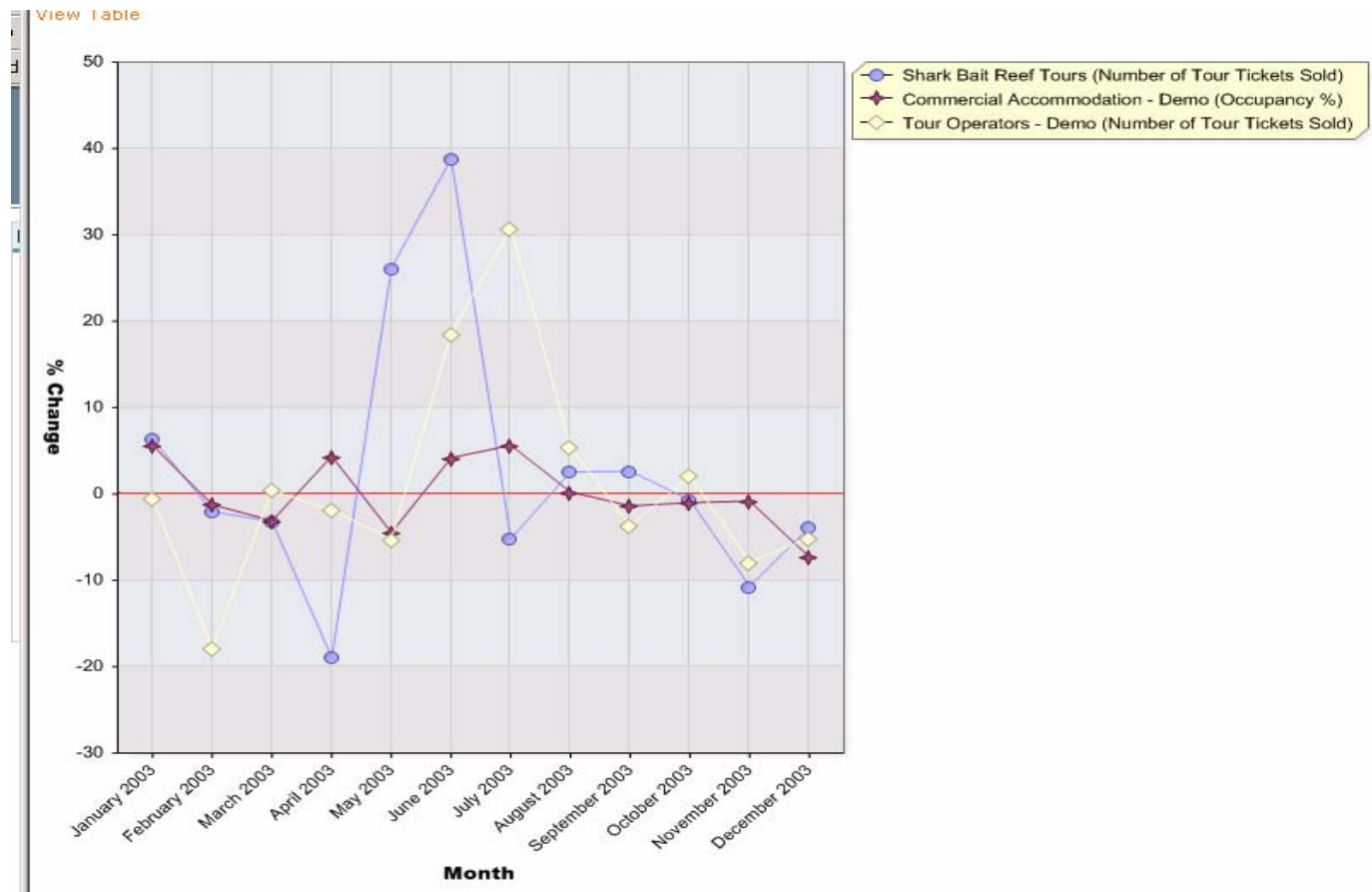
Advantages to Using Existing Collection Tools

EXPERIENCE

The Industry Performance Analyser for Tourism (IPAT) was designed in collaboration with Australian Capital Tourism Corporation on behalf of the National Capital Attractions Association (NCAA). The NCAA had collected basic business performance data (number of visitors) for two years, and was looking to streamline the collection process. In doing so, it was recognised that other sectors (accommodation and tour operators) were interested in a simple tourism 'monitor' that would provide quick reports on performance each month. Different sectors could see how they were performing compared with each other (see Figure 1). Operators could also choose to share their individual data with other operators. They could also add specific questions to the survey form from time to time (e.g., there was interest in monitoring tourism employment over the period of a single year). IPAT addressed these issues through a web based data collection system. At the end of each month, IPAT sends an email to each operator asking them to click on a link to a web page where they answer three questions. Once they have answered the questions, they can immediately view their own results, showing how their performance had changed over the previous month, over the same month last year, and for the year to date versus the previous year. Once three operators in a sector have entered data, operators could compare their own performance with all businesses in their sector. They can also compare their sector with other sectors. Figure 1 shows a comparison of

performance over a twelve month period in an imaginary region for an individual business (Shark Bait Reef Tours), their sector (tour operators) and against occupancy percentages for the accommodation sector. The data can be viewed as a graph or a table.

Figure 1: Data analysis using IPAT



The Research Manager for Australian Capital Tourism Corporation is happy with the way IPAT works for her organisation, and for the operators who contribute. *'From our point of view, it means we have an immediate indicator of how the industry is travelling without having to make dozens of phone calls and conduct our own analysis. The industry is also happy to be involved as they get a better sense of who's performing well and who's struggling and what the impact of various initiatives might be. The data aren't statistically reliable but we use it as an indicator. If something serious appears to be going on, we then know its worth investing in more research. Most importantly, we didn't have to reinvent the wheel, and our operators could see how IPAT worked before deciding whether it was worth their investment.'*

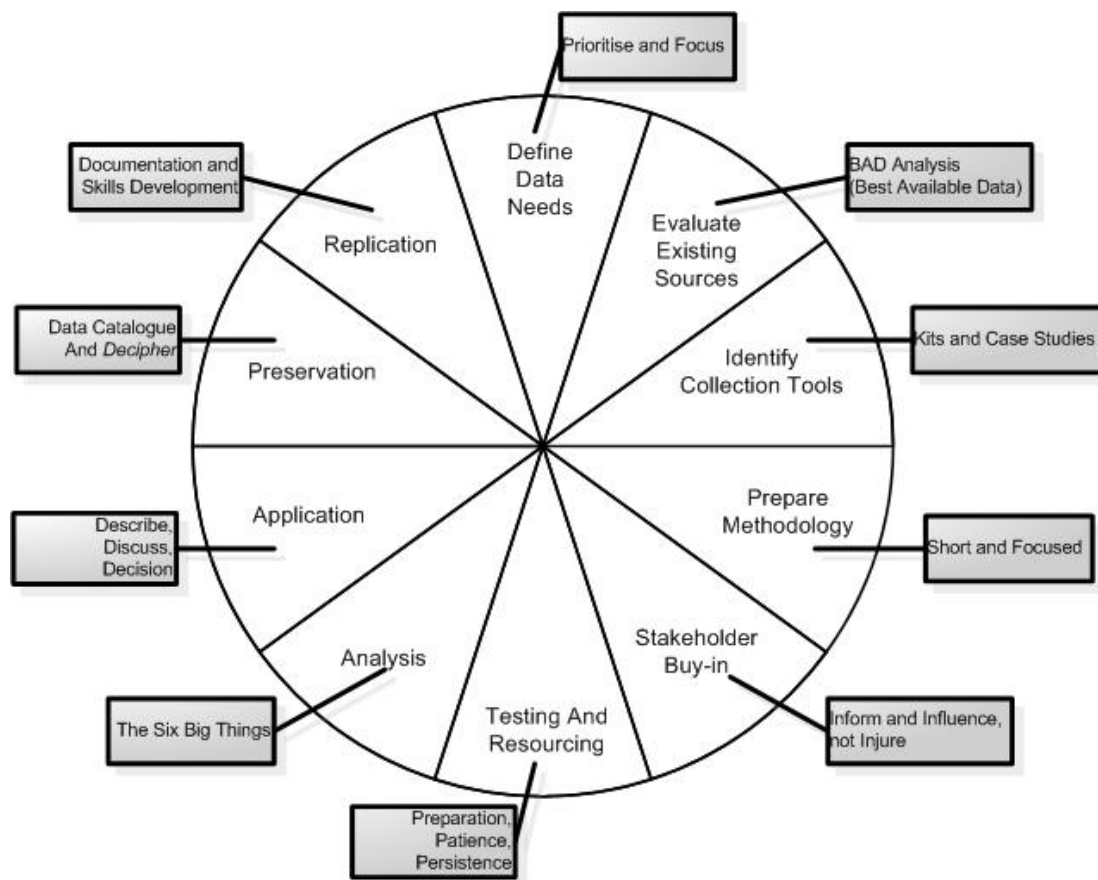
THE DATA MANAGEMENT WHEEL AND BAD DECISIONS

Making a Case for New Sources

Designing a Methodology

BRIEF The Data Management Wheel (see Figure 2) describes the steps in identifying data needs, deciding how to source data, and applying it to specific undertakings.

Figure 2: Data management wheel

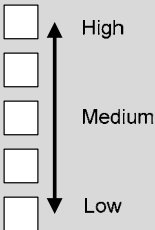
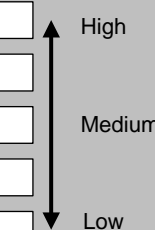


If we start at the top of the Wheel, defining data needs is a process of prioritising and focusing on critical business decisions. There is a range of existing small area data sources, and there is some skill involved in deciding whether existing data sources are suitable for your undertaking, or whether it will be necessary to implement a new data collection. You can begin this assessment using our ‘Best Available Data’ (BAD) framework. The BAD framework identifies seven criteria against different data sources that can be evaluated and compared. It is unlikely that you will ever have a perfect data set (we’ve never seen one), so the skill is in assessing which criteria are most essential for your undertaking. Table 6 describes the BAD evaluation criteria.

Collecting data for broad purposes (e.g., to improve our understanding of visitor behaviour) is much more difficult than collecting data for specific undertakings (e.g., to identify what products visitors to the region find most attractive). The best data collections focus on a small number of these specific undertakings. In general terms, data collected at the state or national level will be more reliable, be more cost effective to access, be more readily available over time, and allow better comparisons between different areas than small area data sets. However, small area data sets can be more valid and timely, and they nearly always have better geographic coverage than state and national data collections.

ACTION If you think you might prefer your own data sources to existing ones, here's a set of criteria you can apply to see if this may be the BAD option for you.

Table 6: Best Available Data (BAD) evaluation criteria

Criteria	Description
<p>Reliability</p> 	<p>In terms of statistical reliability, technical considerations include sample size; sampling procedure; benchmarking processes (if used); and issues of bias in data collection. Clearly, the ability to assess statistical reliability is itself reliant on having statistical skills available at a local level. Most secondary data suppliers invest substantial resources in the statistical reliability aspects of their data sources, and it is almost always safe to assume that the statistical reliability achieved by secondary sources will be higher than that of local sources unless there is clear evidence to the contrary. Importantly, the issue of sample size, which appears to be given most attention in criticisms of secondary data sources, is not the only, and not always even the key, measure of statistical reliability. For example, there has been some focus on the need for surveys of accommodation to include as many accommodation establishments as possible. In reality, the degree of variance in occupancy rates in regional areas is usually small enough to allow reliable interpretation of data from a relatively small number of establishments.</p>
<p>Validity</p> 	<p>Validity is directly related to the interpretation of data. Data items are valid if the responses match the intention of the question. Ensuring questions and data collection techniques produce valid data requires training and experience in data collection. It requires an understanding of the issues of bias and interpretation. Secondary data sources usually rate high on this 'internal' validity because of the resources expended in testing data collection instruments.</p> <p>Another aspect of validity is 'external' validity, which relates to the appropriateness of data in measuring the concepts the end user requires measured. Clearly, in most cases, local interpretation of secondary data sources will require some approximation of data interpretation. Locally collected data has more power to ask questions directly addressing the specific undertaking.</p>
<p>Coverage</p>	<p>Coverage relates to both geographic scope of the data collection, and its temporal scope. National and state data sets are usually established for purposes of national and state level</p>

analysis. Clearly, their coverage at regional levels suffers as a result. This has traditionally been the key driver toward small area data sets. However, for this factor to be the deciding factor in a BAD evaluation, it must be established that the characteristics of the particular locality you wish to apply data to are sufficiently different to the nearest available geographic scope (e.g. tourism region) to warrant the cost of collection. On the other hand, recognise that too great a level of geographic detail may actually be less useful as the number of units of analysis (tourists, enterprises etc.) become so small as to limit the potential for understanding and analysis. As with the issue of sample size, 'knowing too much' can occasionally be a limitation!

Temporal coverage of data involves the timeframe of reference for the data collection. This is particularly important where seasonality effects are expected. Greater quality is usually expected from 'rolling' data sets where there is good coverage over key periods of time. On the other hand, this coverage must be balanced with the timeframes, which may apply to data analysis. It may be possible to collect daily visitation statistics, however these may most usually be analysed on a weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis. Overall, locally managed data sets tend to have an advantage in terms of coverage but it is recommended that the significance of this advantage be carefully assessed.

Timeliness

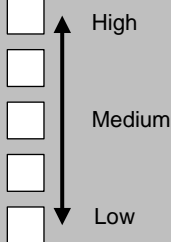
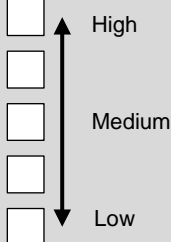
Another issue related to temporal scope is the time lag between data collection and data availability at the user end. Until recently, lags of 12 to 18 months were not unusual for national data sets. This situation is improving with advances in technology and increased experience in data management. Again, locally collected data may have substantially reduced lags but whether this improved timeliness is converted into better use of the data are questionable. Additionally, the trade-off for reduced time lag may be reduced reliability or validity as the data are not as thoroughly 'cleaned' in the rush to make it available to decision makers.

Availability

An aspect related to reliability is the assurance that data will continue to be collected (to a consistent standard) over the period of time for which there is likely to be need for the data. Clearly, even 'standard' secondary data collections undergo periodic review and change. However, few examples have been found of local data sets, which have persisted over time. Again, the issue of longevity in itself is not so critical as to whether the data will be available for the lifetime of the need for that data.

Availability also refers to the physical capacity to access data. The Sustainable Tourism CRC has helped address this critical issue through the development of the 'Decipher' web engine, which contains more than 2,500 reports and tables from secondary data collection.

National and state level data sets are more likely to be available than local ones, as they tend to be based on longer term collection cycles and be less reliant on the skills and championing of one or two key people. They also tend to be easier to access for similar reasons, and because the relatively

	<p>high rates of use of this data result in a community of users. Again, small area data sets may be more reliant on one or two people.</p>
<p>Comparability</p> 	<p>Good marketing and management practice requires an organisation to know its competitors and collaborators as well as it knows itself. Under this model (which may be referred to as benchmarking), the issue of comparability of data becomes essential. At the moment, there are few standards for small area tourism data collection and few circumstances where data collected in one locality is directly comparable with data collected in other localities. This guide is a first step in the tourism industry identifying and adopting standards for small area data collections, however state and national data sets tend to be stronger against these criteria.</p>
<p>Cost</p> 	<p>Issues such as economy of scale are paramount in reducing costs of data collection, and secondary data sources have the advantage here. It is important to consider costs other than simply direct financial costs. Human resource costs, time costs, and 'cultural' costs (convincing your staff and stakeholders to change what they are doing in order to support your data collection) are also important. For many tourism organisations, collecting data are not considered to be core business. Developing quality locally managed data collections therefore involves a cost of culture change within the organisation to support data collection as a core business function.</p>

In summary, national and state data collections have certain strengths, while small area collections have other strengths. While your ratings may look different, the following exposes the type of strengths and weaknesses we would expect to find.

Table 7: Summary of general strengths and weaknesses of national, state and locally managed data collections

	National	State	Local
Reliable	✓	✓	✗
Valid	✗	✗	✓
Coverage	✗	✗	✓
Timely	✗	✓	✓
Available	✓	✓	✗
Comparable	✓	✓	✗
Cost	✓	✓	✗

MANAGING THE COSTS OF YOUR SMALL AREA TOURISM DATA

Gaining the Support of Stakeholders

Allowing Sufficient Resources to Collect Data

BRIEF The case study entries found in this guide may serve as templates for your own small area data collection. Whether you choose to borrow from these resources, or to develop your own collection tools, it is important that your collection methodology be achievable. Often this means running data collection over a shorter, rather than longer, period of time to maintain stakeholder enthusiasm. It always means keeping your collection instrument short and focused. As a rule of thumb, we have found that people are happy to answer up to eight questions but require substantial motivation to answer any more than that.

Most small area data collections rely on the cooperation of operators, volunteers and other stakeholders. It is important that you allow these people to influence the data collection. It is even more important that you are prepared to inform your stakeholders of the specific purpose of the collection, so that they do not just keep adding questions to the survey.

There are a number of ways to reduce the cost of your data collection. One of the best ways to reduce relative cost is to ensure that the collection works. In our research, we heard numerous stories of organisations giving up on their data collections because of low response rates the first time they tried. Successful ventures, such as Queensland's RTAM have become successful because the collection agencies have persisted over time.

Analysis and application of the data are the driving purpose for accessing primary or secondary data. There is always the temptation to detail every possible piece of information that arises from your data collection. We have found that a much more effective approach is to look for the five or six most important implications of the data you have collected. These are often either things you did not know when you started, or things you had assumed but needed confirmed. They are always the things that relate directly to the specific undertaking that inspired the research in the first place. Long and detailed statistical reports are less effective than short briefing notes (one or two pages) and a forum (we use stakeholder workshops) for sharing these notes and discussing their implications. Those with a broader interest can always access the detailed information later.

EXPERIENCE The Tapestry Tourism Futures Modelling Project in the southwest of Western Australia was a Sustainable Tourism CRC project involving Murdoch University, Edith Cowan University, the CSIRO, and the local industry and communities of six Local Government Areas. The three year project aimed to collect information, which could assist in the development of the Tapestry

Tourism Futures (simulator) model and a comprehensive regional data set. The project involved data collection from focus workshops, literature reviews, visitor surveys, employment surveys and other specialised questionnaires such as those utilised at events. Throughout the project stakeholders were seen as integral to the project's success and workshops, focus groups, consultations and presentations were carried out seeking feedback on survey design and offering training and education on strategic visioning and planning, the tourism system, and the importance and use of data. This participation occurred a year and half before the first survey was conducted, and was ongoing throughout the three years of the project.

The project outcomes have been acknowledged as not only the very tangible database of information, but the extent to which stakeholders across the six shires now have a greater understanding of tourism and understand and use the tourism data available to them. The evidence of the importance of stakeholder support and involvement is most evident in what happened after the three year project drew to a close. The project was handed back to the communities involved, and the six shires involved agreed to continue financial support of the project for a further three years.

The 'community' was represented by a wide, disparate and heterogeneous group. There was often dissention and challenging voices in the workshops and information sessions. In several instances it was the challenging voices who contributed the most to the project. Operators who declaimed the usefulness of their input as being too costly in terms of time input and visitor discomfort grew to recognise the accumulative value of their input. Those who cried we need the information now (2001) are now receiving timely, individual and accumulative visitor satisfaction and demographic details. They are experiencing a wealth of information from a shared systems approach (Lee & Chok 2005: 44).

ACTION The following are some hints and tips for reducing the cost of your data collection (see Table 8).

Table 8: Hints and tips for reducing data collection costs

Hint	How
Use existing collection instruments where possible (to save on designing and testing your own).	Visit the websites of agencies featured in this kit – they usually include copies of survey forms or reports that you can learn from.
Thoroughly prepare your data collection including experimenting with what the results might look like and how you should present them. This will help you to demonstrate the potential value of the collection to stakeholders and encourage their investment and cooperation.	Set up a spreadsheet with some imaginary results in it, and create tables and graphs which demonstrate how your data meets the needs of stakeholders. In some cases, you may be able to run a small pilot study (just a few responses) as a demonstration of real data.
Eight questions can provide some very powerful information. You should always test your data analysis procedures before you embark on data collection to make	Each time you feel tempted to add a new question, ask what the immediate worth of the answer is, and add it to your test spreadsheet.

Hint	How
<p>sure that you have the best questions for your purpose.</p>	
<p>Get stakeholder buy-in for the undertaking (campaign evaluation, market segmentation etc.) and leave the survey design to the experts.</p>	<p>Avoid setting up a committee which has direct responsibility for the survey design. Design by committee never works. Instead, engage stakeholders to scope out their information needs, and then you demonstrate how your survey will help.</p>
<p>The most expensive component will be the labour costs in collection, data entry, and analysis. Look for innovative ways to reduce these costs through the use of volunteers.</p>	<p>Ask your local high school, TAFE, or University if they run courses where students might benefit from being involved in data collection, data entry, or data analysis. You might be able to help these institutions with student projects.</p>
<p>Be prepared to start small (with a small sample or using just a few key questions) and increase the scope of the collection once you have established some momentum.</p>	<p>Reduce costs by working in the first instance with those stakeholders who are keen to collaborate. A cheap, small study with one or two operators or with 20 or 30 visitors at your VIC can be a good demonstration of what is possible.</p>

Quotable:

.... Our Local Tourism Association compiles evaluation data and general market research, such as on current trends from other tourism organisations and distributes this information together with booking enquiry numbers to its members. This happens in the form of a monthly email newsletter... (Museum manager).

MANAGING THE RESULTS

Feeding Results Back to Stakeholders

Listening to the Views of Others on What the Data May Mean

Referencing the Results in Decision Making

Storing the Results for Future Use

Documenting Processes

BRIEF Once you've collected your data the process of data entry, analysis and reporting begin. The way you manage your results is often the difference between a valuable small area data collection, and an otherwise one-off project.

ACTION The following are some hints and tips for managing the results of your data collection (see Table 9).

Table 9: Hints and tips for managing your results

Hint	How
Once your data has been analysed and you are trying to interpret the results, it is a good idea to share the process with others.	Distributing the results to a key group of stakeholders before you have interpreted, and organise a time that you can come together and discuss them. This will often allow for different views on the meaning of the results to become evident. Often we get stuck on our own biases and look past more obvious explanations.
Referencing your results in your decision-making highlights to stakeholders the importance of the research undertaken and the value of small area data.	Remember that the link between information contained in reports is not automatically made back to the research projects undertaken. It is important to remind people where information has come from whenever you use it to highlight the value of all your efforts.
Sharing information from small area data collections is a great inspiration for operators and stakeholders in the area to get together and discuss how they can use this knowledge as well as other initiatives they can undertake.	Recognise that the collection is not just about commenting on tourism in your area. It is also about a collaborative partnership with operators and other stakeholders in designing, collecting, analysing, and applying. We strongly recommend a meeting of operators to discuss the findings when they are available.
The data collection will be more valuable in the long run if you retain 'corporate memory' about how it was managed (including problems that emerged and the context of particular decisions). This includes managing the storage of results and data for future use.	Let the Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre know what you are doing (email: artrc@scu.edu.au) and make sure that you document every step you take along the way.

PREPARATION

Setting Short Term, Achievable, Visible Goals for Your Project

Testing Your Data Collection

BRIEF Before you get started on collecting your small area data, it is important to prepare in several ways. One of the hardest things to achieve throughout the process is maintaining the momentum and enthusiasm among stakeholders. The hypothetical case study at the beginning of this guide talked about the loss of enthusiasm amongst committee members over time, preventing the completion of data entry, analysis and reporting, with some members even forgetting that the survey had taken place! Starting small not only allows you to manage costs but also allows for feedback, providing direction and reinforcement of the initial aims. Once you have made achievements and people are comfortable that the process provides useful information, you can be more adventurous in your goals. Another thing to consider before embarking on research is to make sure you test your methodology and survey instruments. The experience documented in this section, is an example of how preparation and testing was a valuable part of the research process.

ACTION To help maintain enthusiasm over the life of the project, make sure you set yourself short-term, achievable, visible goals:

Short-term – Outcomes are delivered within a relatively short time period after the project commences, e.g. if your LTA meets monthly, aim to have something substantial to report at each meeting, such as an analysis of the sample so far.

Achievable – The outcomes that you set should be able to be achieved relatively easily. The first case study looked at the fact that by including everyone's 'wants' into the survey, a 6-page questionnaire was developed. Response rates were then low because visitors didn't want to fill out such a long survey. Examine what is realistically achievable in a short time frame, within your budget and other resource constraints.

Visible – Make sure that the results from the research can be seen and used by as many people as possible. Part of this is presenting them in a way that is easy to understand and via mechanisms that are easily accessible. For example, think about presenting results in a story in the local paper, or in a newsletter, rather than just the official reports. Also, if you have other achievements as a result of doing the research, for example you receive increased funding, remind people how you were able to get the information that led to this achievement.

EXPERIENCE Before implementing a survey on the impact of the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) on visitor behaviour, researchers from Victoria University wanted to see how the data might look when they analysed it. The purpose of the collection was to indicate whether visiting the VIC encouraged people to stay longer, do more activities, or return to the region in the future. A simple test with ten made

up responses and a few tables showed that the survey form allowed them to cross-tabulate those yield related variables with demographic characteristics of visitors. It also encouraged them to change the original question about the level of satisfaction experienced by visitors with various parts of the VIC (staff knowledge, placement of brochures, use of touch screens etc.) so that the data were easier to analyse. The survey form ended up including mainly response categories, with very few open-ended questions (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Snapshot of Visitor Information Centre Survey Form

11. How would you rate each of these characteristics of the Visitor Centre?

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Very Good
Staff knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Touch screens/computers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brochures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Do you think the information that you gained from the centre might influence the following aspects of your current trip?

a. The amount of time you spend in this region?

<input type="radio"/> More than planned	How much more than you planned?
<input type="radio"/> Same as planned	<input type="radio"/> Couple of hours <input type="radio"/> 2 – 4 nights
<input type="radio"/> Less than planned	<input type="radio"/> Day trip <input type="radio"/> 5 – 14 nights
	<input type="radio"/> Overnight <input type="radio"/> 14 nights or more

Project leader, Dr Marg Deery, recognised the value of testing the whole process. 'If we had have gone into the field with the original questionnaire, we would have had a much more difficult time conducting the data analysis. It's true that you learn something each time you run a survey – so run it early and often!'

Wellington Shire Council in Victoria received their copy of the Commonwealth Department of Tourism, Industry and Science Tourism Impact Model for local government. The tourism manager was keen to implement the model but was not confident he knew enough about the accountancy and mathematical procedures required to get good results. The model sat on the shelf for some time until the tourism manager discovered that one of the new volunteers at the VIC was a retired accountant. The accountant was happy to volunteer some time to work through the model. Once the process was completed, Wellington Shire had a valuable source of information, which fed directly into their tourism planning process and the budget process (a more detailed case study is included in the *2004 Australian Regional Tourism Convention Handbook: Regional tourism solutions*. The handbook is available for free from the Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre website at www.regionaltourism.com.au). Speaking at the 2004 Australian Regional Tourism Convention, tourism manager Frank Norden encouraged all delegates to ask all volunteers, school teachers, TAFE students and any other contacts to assist because the skills you need are probably in your community somewhere.

ACTION Now that you have some background to the issues covered in this guide, you may choose to access more information about tourism data, its uses, and how to get your hands on some.

Decipher (www.decipher.biz) delivers information from more than 150 data suppliers. Some of this information is in the form of tables and graphs, and others are summarised in PDF publications and web based newsletters. Users can bring together a range of information that relates to their region and use it to help make decisions. One of the great features of Decipher is the capacity for users to load their own information (as publications or web pages but also as completed data sets in the form of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets), and then build reports that feature the data and the secondary data sources. It is free for subscribers to load their own data sets, and doing so means you have a permanent record of the data, you can access it from any Internet enabled computer, and share it with stakeholders, as well as other regions. You can also use Decipher to see the data sets that other people have loaded, and perhaps borrow some of their ideas for your own collections.

The Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre worked with the Sustainable Tourism CRC to produce this guide to manage small area data tourism collections. Clearly, a short guide like this is designed to spark interest and introduce you to some thoughts and ideas for conducting your own research. The Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre offers a range of services to help you manage your data collections. We have expertise in survey design for a range of undertakings. We can help you design a methodology which will reduce the costs of data collection. We provide data analysis services, including online data collection and analysis of operator surveys through our IPAT system (www.regionaltourism.com.au/IPAT). The Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre is building a catalogue of small area data collections and we encourage you to register your data collection with us (email: artrc@scu.edu.au) so that others can benefit from your experience, and you will be able to compare what you have done to the work done by others.

READINESS CHECKLIST

BRIEF We hope that this guide has helped you get started. The checklist below reprises the process described in the Data Management Wheel. You might find it useful to ensure that you have completed each step before moving to the next. You will find it at least as useful to be aware of the steps that remain, and to prepare yourself for them.

ACTION Before you commit resources to managing a small area tourism data collection, go through the following checklist and use it to help plan your data strategy.

Table 10: Data collection checklist

Have you...?	Where to look for more information in this guide
Defined your data needs	Using Small Area Tourism Data
Decided who you want data from and how often	Using Small Area Tourism Data/ Collecting Your Own Data
Assessed the relevance of existing sources	Sources of Data
Evaluated data collection tools	Small Area Data Collection Tools
Contacted the Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre or other organisations that can help you through the process	Small Area Data Collection Tools
Made a strong case for new sources	The Data Management Wheel and BAD Decisions
Designed a methodology	The Data Management Wheel and BAD Decisions
Allowed sufficient resources to collect data	Managing the Costs of Your Small Area Tourism Data
Received the cooperation of operators and other stakeholders	Managing the Costs of Your Small Area Tourism Data
Set short term, achievable, visible goals for your project	Preparation
Tested your data collection	Preparation
Listen to the views of others on what the data may mean (i.e. letting go of your own biases)	Managing the Results
Fed the results back to the stakeholders	Managing the Results
Referenced the results in your decision making	Managing the Results
Stored the results for future use	Managing the Results
Documented processes to facilitate replication	Managing the Results

Short term, achievable, visible

EXPERIENCE Hay Tourism and Development saw the need to increase their understanding of tourism markets in Hay. The association has undertaken a number of research efforts, including a visitor survey run through their Visitor Information Centre (VIC). The VIC survey was inspired by a perceived need to be able to monitor changes in visitor behaviour associated with new promotions and tourism development strategies. Of particular importance were the places visitors came from, the length of time they spent in the area, and how much money they spent while they were there. There were no existing data sources which were immediately helpful, as the existing sources related to the region as a whole. However, existing data sources could be used to compare how well Hay was performing when compared to the region as a whole.

To commence the data collection process, a detailed visitor survey was conducted in 2001 and 2002. It consisted of a two page survey. This survey provided a baseline for assessing change. Once the initial survey was complete, the VIC used its newly acquired data collection skills to maintain an ongoing smaller survey of length of stay and place of origin. This relatively small amount of data has been influential in subsequent activities of the association and its members. In particular, it –

- Improved the tourism planning process by ensuring that there were local visitor data that could be used in conjunction with secondary data sources and perceptions of tourism businesses.
- Provided an inspiration for community and business representatives involved with the association to think about what problems they faced as a destination, and to actively monitor the results of campaigns designed to address these problems.
- Provided important information back to operators, which improved the circulation and importance of the association's newsletters and meetings.
- Inspired other operators to undertake their own data collections and contribute the results to the collective understanding of trends.
- Allowed progress against the strategic tourism plan to be assessed using evidence rather than simply intuition.

Hay Tourism and Development has ambitious plans to extend its collection and use of local data. Many of its members have indicated a willingness to collaborate in these plans. The experience shows that a relatively small and controlled starting point can bring about increased collaboration and knowledge. Most Local Tourism Associations would be in a position to instigate this type of activity.

APPENDIX A: DATA CATALOGUE FORM

A.1 Guide to completing the form

The data catalogue form has ten sections for you to complete. This table provides instructions for filling out each section. The typical entry is about a page in length.

Table A1: How to complete a data catalogue form

Section	Instructions
Name of Collection	A short but descriptive name (e.g. SmallTown Visitor Survey).
Responsible Organisation	The agency which provides access to the data.
Overview	A one paragraph summary of the collection – who data is collected from, where it is collected, how often, and for what geographical area.
Purpose	Describe the main purpose/s of collecting the data. Who is intended to use the data?
Scope	Indicate who is covered by the data collection. Is it about all visitors, or just visitors to your VIC? Is it about some but not all tourism businesses? Who is included or excluded in your sample, and how is your sample drawn?
Data Detail	What are the key variables included in your data collection (e.g. length of stay, level of satisfaction, employment)? Describe in a couple of sentences what type of information people would be able to collect from your data.
Geographic Detail	What geographic area is covered by the data collection?
Frequency	How often is the data collected? If it is an ongoing collection, indicate 'ongoing'. If it is not collected on any regular basis, indicate 'irregular'.
History	When did you start the data collection? Have there been any notable changes in how or when it is collected? Have there been any periods of time when the data hasn't been collected?
Availability	Indicate whether the data is available for use outside your organisation. If it is only available to a limited group (for example, the members of your LTA), please describe who can get access.
Decipher Availability	Indicate whether the data is already available on Decipher.
Date Entered in Catalogue	The date you submitted the form.

A.2 Blank Form

Use the following blank form as a template if you do not have access to the web based form or to keep for your own records.

Name of Collection	
Responsible Organisation	
Overview	
Purpose	
Scope	
Data Detail	
Geographic Detail	
Frequency	
History	
Availability	
Decipher Availability	
Date Entered in Catalogue	

Copy and paste the blank form into your own document, and email completed forms to artrc@scu.edu.au for inclusion in our data catalogue. You might also want to email a few words on how the collection went and how you have used the results.

APPENDIX B: SMALL AREA TOURISM DATA COLLECTION EXAMPLES

Table B1: Examples of small area tourism data collections

Name of Collection	South West Tapestry Futures Modelling
Responsible Organisation	Currently managed by Edith Cowan University under funding by the local government areas involved.
Overview	The Tapestry research project brought together the academic and technical expertise of Murdoch University, Edith Cowan University, the CSIRO and local industry in a Sustainable Tourism CRC project to investigate future opportunities for sustainable tourism in the Tapestry Region. The result was the development of the Tapestry Tourism Futures (simulator) model and a comprehensive regional data set.
Purpose	To develop a database of tourism statistics for planning, marketing and lobbying purposes.
Scope	Event surveying, tourism employment surveys, visitor surveying at accommodation venues, visitor surveying at staffed attractions.
Data Detail	Number of nights spent in the region, local places visited within the region, main activities undertaken in the region, attractions visited, visitor numbers, age profile, place of residence, travel party, previous visitation characteristics, visitor satisfaction, market segmentation, expenditure, reasons for choosing to stay in the region, infrastructure comments/ feedback.
Geographic Detail	Local Government areas of Bunbury, Harvey, Collie, Dardanup, Donnybrook-Balingup and Capel, Western Australia
Frequency	Ongoing collection
History	First data collections started in 2001
Availability	Not currently available outside of the project area
Decipher Availability	No
Date Entered in Catalogue	22 Nov 04
Name of Collection	Hay Museum Visitor Numbers
Responsible Organisation	Hay Tourism & Development Inc. and Hay Shire Council
Overview	This is a collection of visitor numbers to Hay's 5 museums
Purpose	Target marketing, internal benchmarking and cross marketing among the museums and human resource planning
Scope	Visitors to museums
Data Detail	Break down of visitor numbers as to domestic and international visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visitors • State/country of origin • Month of visitation Some of the museums also collect number of bus group arrivals
Geographic Detail	Local Government Area
Frequency	Ongoing collection
History	First data collections started in 2001

Availability	A selection of data is communicated in the form of a bi-monthly newsletter, a more comprehensive summary in the Annual Report
Decipher Availability	No
Date Entered in Catalogue	22 Nov 04
Name of Collection	Hunter Valley Wine Country Tourism Related Statistics and Information
Responsible Organisation	Cessnock City Council and Cessnock City Tourist Board
Overview	The council use a consultant to analyse visitor behaviour. This is achieved by a wide-ranging study of selected tourism establishments.
Purpose	To collect data on visitor behaviour
Scope	Visitors at tourism establishments (300 intercept surveys)
Data Detail	Extensive study involving length of stay, transportation, accommodation, perceptions, winery sales and growth, economic impacts etc.
Geographic Detail	Hunter Valley Wine Country
Frequency	Currently conducted once
History	Various establishments in the region collect their own data but little or none is comparable or useable on a regional level
Availability	Report is published at - www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au/Cessnock/index.asp?id=49&SearchType=AND&terms=tourism
Decipher Availability	Yes
Date Entered in Catalogue	16 Nov 04
Name of Collection	Tourism Eyre Peninsula Visitor Studies
Responsible Organisation	Tourism Eyre Peninsula (TEP)
Overview	Tourism Eyre Peninsula conducts a number of different surveys to gather a range of data. The studies are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Centre data • Seafood and Aquaculture Trail 1 • Seafood and Aquaculture Trail 2 • Car counters • Operator Survey • Website enquiries • 1-800 number calls
Purpose	To collect data for analysis and dissemination throughout the local tourism industry and other tourism networks. The collections allow comparison to previous years and seasons. The operators survey allows businesses to analyse the return on their marketing investment.
Scope	Each survey varies in the data collected to present a holistic view of tourism activity in the region: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Centre data is collected through 4 accredited VICs • Seafood and Aquaculture Trail 1 – tracks users of the tour

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seafood and Aquaculture Trail 2 – a one-off survey of 183 consumers on visitor satisfaction • Fruit fly station counts all cars going east and west • Operator survey – 300 surveys to tourism businesses • Website enquiries • 1-800 number calls
Data Detail	<p>Each survey has limited detail, allowing quick analysis and distribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Centre data collects numbers of visitors only • Seafood and Aquaculture Trail 1 • The number of tours sold is collected and analysed • Seafood and Aquaculture Trail 2 – a one-off survey of 183 consumers on visitor satisfaction • Fruit fly station counts cars going east and west • Operator survey – created in conjunction with SATC asking effectiveness of various marketing campaigns and activities • Website enquiries - tracked • 1-800 number calls - tracked
Geographic Detail	Eyre Peninsula in SA
Frequency	Visitor and Tour statistics collected monthly
History	The Visitor Centre data has been collected since 2001
Availability	<p>TEP uses a newsletter to distribute results to 800 people on database in industry and community. Easy to read and see changes year to year (see attached).</p> <p>The TEP website also distributes visitor stats - www.tep.com.au/corporate/mission.htm#Visitor%20Statistic</p>
Decipher Availability	Yes
Date Entered in Catalogue	16 Nov 04
Name of Collection	Murrindindi Visitor Studies
Responsible Organisation	Murrindindi Shire Council
Overview	<p>The Shire Council commissioned external consultants to conduct two studies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attain a visitor profile; and - examine accommodation provision
Purpose	To establish baseline data for the shire and create a profile of visitors to the Shire
Scope	<p>Visitor profile data was collected from 210 visitors at 5 VICs</p> <p>Accommodation survey data was collected from 86 operators</p>
Data Detail	<p>Data includes: reasons for visitation, previous visits, travelling parties, overnight stays, activities, expenditure and demographics.</p> <p>Data includes: profiles of various accommodation establishments and sectors</p>
Geographic Detail	Murrindindi Shire – Marysville triangle
Frequency	Currently conducted once
History	A lack of baseline data was identified as restricting tourism planning. This study allowed the council and industry to examine its market position and plan for the future
Availability	The Murrindindi Shire Council website provide access to these reports -

	www.murrindindi.vic.gov.au/servlets/web/Classification/1/3
Decipher Availability	Yes
Date Entered in Catalogue	16 Nov 04
Name of Collection	Maroochy Visitor Statistics
Responsible Organisation	Maroochy Tourism
Overview	Using a survey designed by Maroochy Tourism 4 years ago. It is designed to be short, take only a couple of minutes and be administered in the VIC. It asks 8 questions, many of which can be answered in a short conversation with the visitor without imposing on their time
Purpose	To collect baseline data that is comparable over time and between VICs. To demonstrate to council the value of the VIC as well as the VIC staff via visitor numbers and their needs
Scope	Collects data from a non-random sample of visitors into each of the 3 VICs - approximately 1200 per year
Data Detail	8 questions (see attached) The responses to the 8 questions are loaded into Excel for analysis. Have tried further analysis from Access and from booking systems, both unsuccessful in drawing the data needed
Geographic Detail	Maroochy Shire
Frequency	Collected daily, distributed monthly
History	Data collected over the past 4 years
Availability	Distributed widely through the industry (approx 260) and the local community. The local newspaper is used to distribute aggregated statistics and information.
Decipher Availability	No
Date Entered in Catalogue	16 Nov 2004
Name of Collection	Mitchell Shire Data Collections
Responsible Organisation	Mitchell Shire Council
Overview	Two main sources of data are used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VIC survey - collects visitor numbers and postcodes • Designed own survey in 2003 to collect data from visitors. Distributed in accommodation outlets. Given to 'tourism group' to analyse. Results helped to understand branding issues - key strengths from visitors view. These assisted in forming the new logo.
Purpose	To establish visit patterns, visitor profiles, satisfaction levels and main attractions to the shire.
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collected in the 3 VICs each day • distributed in all accommodation outlets
Data Detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stats include place of origin via postcode, type of enquiry, # in party and # questions. They are collated each month and

'Know Your Patch' Kit

	<p>distributed to 'tourism operators group'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey in accommodation operators includes 15 questions covering demographic, trip purpose and perception data.
Geographic Detail	Mitchell Shire
Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily at VIC • yearly for operator survey
History	The Shire lacked any baseline data and needed some information to base decisions on branding and marketing. The survey data was invaluable for this process.
Availability	Results are distributed to 'tourism operators group'
Decipher Availability	Yes
Date Entered in Catalogue	16 Nov 2004
Name of Collection	Noosa Tourism Monitor
Responsible Organisation	Noosa Tourism
Overview	Noosa Tourism collects basic data from VICs collecting numbers of visitors into the centres and their postcodes. Additionally Noosa Tourism engages external consultants to prepare the Tourism Noosa Monitor on a regular basis.
Purpose	<p>To collect regular information that can be used in tourism planning and development. The consultants objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the value of tourism to the Noosa region • Collect core strategic visitor information and demographic data • Facilitate the development of Noosa's tourism industry • Provide an outlook indication for the industry • Identify possible growth opportunities
Scope	The consultants report collects data from other sources (TQ & BTR) as well as locally from intercept surveys.
Data Detail	<p>A wide range of data is collected by the consultants including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situation analysis • Demographic data • Visitor satisfaction levels • Marketing performance
Geographic Detail	Noosa region
Frequency	Every two months
History	Commenced 2001
Availability	Tourism Noosa distributes to selected industry partners
Decipher Availability	Yes
Date Entered in Catalogue	16 Nov 2004

APPENDIX C: MINIMUM DATA ITEMS FOR SMALL AREA DATA

The primary purpose of *Know Your Patch* has been to advise on the process for undertaking small area tourism data collections. Within the guide, there have been a few potted examples of specific data collection initiatives. This final Appendix in the Guide suggests some specific data items you might use in your own collections. They are presented here as 'Minimum Data Items' (MDI) that relate to specific functions. In most cases, you would use these MDI to compare groups of survey respondents (perhaps defined according to demographic variables for visitors or type of business for operators). Following these sets of MDIs, we have suggested a methodology that might apply to collecting visitor data, and a methodology for collecting data from operators. It is strongly recommended that you use these only in the context of the processes described in *Know Your Patch*.

The MDIs are –

- Measuring visitor expenditure;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of a print marketing campaign;
- Measuring the yield impact of an event or activity;
- Monitoring visitor flows; and
- Monitoring business activity.

Table C1: Minimum data items for small area data

MDI for	Measuring Visitor Expenditure
Example of Implementation	Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre Event Evaluation Kit (<i>Encore</i>) [www.crctourism.com.au] Carlsen and Woods (2004) Assessment of the Economic Value of Recreation and Tourism in Western Australia's National Parks, Marine Parks and Forests [www.crctourism.com.au]
Minimum Data Items	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many nights will you be staying in [insert location]? [answer in number of nights] 2. Is this trip part of a package tour? [answer yes/ no. If no go to question 6] 3. How much did you pay for the package? [answer in \$] 4. How many people does that cover? [answer in number of adults and number of children] 5. How many nights does the package include? [answer in number of nights] 6. During your visit, how much do you think your immediate travel group will spend in [insert location] on the following items (excluding any amount already included as being spent on your package tour)? [answer in dollars] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Meals and drinks • Transport • Entertainment • Shopping • Tours and attractions

MDI for	Measuring Visitor Expenditure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other <p>7. How many people does that cover? [<i>answer in number of adults and number of children</i>]</p>
Analysis Tips	<p>When trying to assess the impact on visitor expenditure of a particular event, attraction or feature, include the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you attended/ visited or do you plan to attend/ visit the [<i>insert name of event, attraction etc</i>] during this trip to [<i>insert location</i>]? [<i>answer yes/ no</i>] • On a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (my key motivator), how important was the [<i>insert name of event, attraction etc</i>] to you choosing to visit [<i>insert location</i>]? • You can then make a rough estimate of the percentage of visitor spending attributable to the existence of that event etc. Do this by assuming that each point on the scale is equal to 20% - visitors who attended the event and rate the event as not at all important (1 on the scale) can have 20% of their expenditure attributed to the event. Visitors who rate it as their key motivator (5 on the scale) can have 100% of their expenditure attributed to the event. • The most common form of analysis is to calculate average daily expenditure per person. Do this by totalling the expenditure for each respondent and dividing it by the number of nights and the number of people that expenditure relates to. Package expenditure can be treated separately or included as part of total expenditure (i.e. as if it were another item in question 6).
Comparison Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic and lifecycle variables • Market segment variables • Trip descriptors (such as purpose of visit, whether first or repeat visit to the region, travel group description etc.)
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess a component of the economic value of tourism • To monitor the flow of visitor expenditure (including leakages from the local community)

MDI for	Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Print Marketing Campaign
Example of Implementation	
Minimum Data Items	<p>1. To what extent has the [<i>insert name of promotion</i>] encouraged you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit [<i>insert location</i>] on this trip [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>] • Spend more time in [<i>insert location</i>] on this trip than you otherwise would have [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>] • Do more activities in [<i>insert location</i>] on this trip than you otherwise would have [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>] • Return to [<i>insert location</i>] in the future [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>] <p>2. Please indicate the places you have visited/ activities you have undertaken during this trip to [<i>insert location</i>] [<i>list places and activities. answer yes/ no</i>]</p> <p>3. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of the [<i>insert name of promotion</i>]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy of maps and directions to finding places and activities • General layout • Level of information provided

MDI for	Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Print Marketing Campaign
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall impression • [you may choose to use other aspects] <p>4. What is the postcode or country where you normally live? [<i>answer postcode or country name</i>]</p>
Analysis Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common way to implement this MDI is to include an insert or tear out page in your printed material (such as a touring guide or brochure), and encourage users of the material to return the insert/ tear out in person or by post. For those returning it in person, you may offer a free coffee and cake or similar incentive at the locations where they can return it. • While some people who do not act on the material may return the insert/ tear out by post, your overall analysis should only include those who have visited the location (i.e. acted on the promotion). You may be able to draw some indicative material for those who chose not to act but to return the survey. • For places visited, you may wish to ask visitors if they spent any money there, or just spent time. A response set may be: spent money in this place, did not spend money in this place. • Places and activities may be both those in the promotion and those not in the promotion. This will allow you to observe whether the promotion had spin-off effects for places and activities that did not participate. • While considering the above, list no more than eight places or activities (say six which are in the promotion and two which are not). • The simple act of returning the survey (especially in person) gives some indication of the reach of the promotion. Frequency of response from postcodes and countries indicate levels of effectiveness in various source markets when compared to the total number of brochures etc. delivered to those markets.
Comparison Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic and lifecycle variables (the most common is place of residence or origin of trip) • Market segment variables • Trip descriptors (such as purpose of visit, whether first or repeat visit to the region, travel group description etc.)
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess which source markets respond to which types of printed collateral

MDI for	Measuring the Yield Impact of an Event or Activity
Example of Implementation	Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre VICkit [www.crctourism.com.au]
Minimum Data Items	<p>1. How many times have you visited [<i>insert location</i>] before this visit? [<i>answer may be in number of times or in groups – never, once before, many times before etc. If this is the first visit, go to Question 5</i>]</p> <p>2. When was your most recent visit? [<i>answer with an expression of time frames e.g. This year, last year, two years ago, more than two years ago</i>]</p> <p>3. Did you [<i>insert description of event or activity, e.g. ‘visit the Heritage Centre’</i>] on THAT visit? [<i>answer yes/ no. If no, go to Question 5</i>]</p> <p>4. To what extent did THAT [<i>insert description of event or activity, e.g. “visit the Heritage Centre”</i>] encourage you to -</p>

MDI for	Measuring the Yield Impact of an Event or Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make this trip [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>] • Stay longer on this trip [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>] • Do more activities on this trip [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>]. <p>5. Have you [<i>insert description of event or activity, e.g. 'visited the Heritage Centre'</i>] on this trip to [<i>insert location</i>]? [<i>answer yes/ no</i>].</p> <p>6. To what extent do you think [<i>insert description of event or activity, e.g. 'your visit to the Heritage Centre'</i>] on this trip has encouraged you to -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend more time in [<i>insert location</i>] on this trip [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>] • Do more activities in [<i>insert location</i>] on this trip [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>] • Return to [<i>insert location</i>] in the future [<i>answer not at all, to some extent, to a great extent</i>]
Analysis Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core indicators of increased yield are that people stayed longer than they otherwise would have, did more activities than they otherwise would have, or increased their likelihood of visiting the location again.
Comparison Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic and lifecycle variables • Market segment variables • Trip descriptors (such as purpose of visit, whether first or repeat visit to the region, travel group description etc.)
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess the influence of a VIC on trip behaviour • To assess the impact of a specific campaign on trip behaviour

MDI for	Monitoring Visitor Flows
Example of Implementation	Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre Tourist Flows and Dispersal project [www.crctourism.com.au]
Minimum Data Items	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the postcode or country where you normally live? [<i>answer postcode or country name</i>] 2. How many nights will you be away from home on this trip? [<i>answer in number of nights</i>] 3. How many nights will you be in [<i>insert location</i>] on this trip? [<i>answer in number of nights. If number of nights in this location is the same as total number of nights for trip, end survey</i>] 4. What places did you visit before coming to [<i>insert location</i>]? [<i>answer as town/ locality name</i>]. Multiple answers allocated to 'spent at least one night' or 'visited but did not spend the night'. Respondent instruction to only list places where they did an activity (having a meal, getting petrol, visiting an attraction etc.). Ask respondents to list in order starting from first place visited after leaving home [<i>but indicate if respondents were unsure of order</i>]. 5. What places will you visit after leaving [<i>insert location</i>]? [<i>answer as town/ locality name</i>]. Multiple answers allocated to 'spent at least one night' or 'visited but did not spend the night'. Respondent instruction to only list places where they did an activity (having a meal, getting petrol, visiting an attraction etc.). Ask respondents to list in order starting from first place visited after leaving this place [<i>but indicate if respondents were unsure of order</i>].
Analysis Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall of locations already visited will be more accurate than projections of places they intend to visit after they leave.

MDI for	Monitoring Visitor Flows
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This MDI works much better as an interview, rather than self-completed survey form. There is a useful matrix format for asking the places before and after questions, which is not included in this guide.
Comparison Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic and lifecycle variables Market segment variables Trip descriptors (such as purpose of visit, whether first or repeat visit to the region, travel group description etc.)
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify locations where you might benefit from promoting your destination (i.e. those visited before). To evaluate the effectiveness of links between your destination and other locations.

MDI for	Monitoring Business Activity
Example of Implementation	Industry Performance Analyser for Tourism (IPAT) [www.regionaltourism.com.au]
Minimum Data Items	<p>A. For Accommodation Businesses -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How many room nights were available during the month of [<i>insert month name</i>]? How many room nights did you sell during the month of [<i>insert month name</i>]? What was the average room rate? [<i>answer in \$</i>] Has the month of [<i>insert month name</i>] been a successful one for your business? [<i>answer very successful, somewhat successful, not sure, somewhat unsuccessful, very unsuccessful</i>] What is your expectation for your business performance for next month compared with that same month last year? [<i>answer much stronger, somewhat stronger, not sure, somewhat weaker, much weaker</i>]. <p>B. For Other Business Types -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How many visitors did you have for the month of [<i>insert month name</i>]? [<i>answer in number of visitors</i>] Has the month of [<i>insert month name</i>] been a successful one for your business? [<i>answer very successful, somewhat successful, not sure, somewhat unsuccessful, very unsuccessful</i>]. What is your expectation for your business performance for next month compared with that same month last year? [<i>answer much stronger, somewhat stronger, not sure, somewhat weaker, much weaker</i>].
Analysis Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operators self-define what they consider a visitor (may be tickets sold, may be door count etc). Analysis relies on an operator retaining a consistent definition rather than requiring consistent definitions across operators because most effective analysis compares change over time, rather than attempts to calculate total visitor numbers at any given time. Successfully used for accommodation, attractions, tour operators, and VICs. Recommend asked monthly In our experience, accommodation providers calculate nights available, nights sold, and room rate as part of their standard accounting practices.
Comparison Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of business

MDI for	Monitoring Business Activity
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of full-time, part-time and casual employees• To track short term changes in business activity• To monitor business confidence• To provide comparisons between current performance and past performance• To benchmark performance for certain time periods (e.g. high, low, shoulder seasons)

APPENDIX D: COLLECTING DATA – MAXIMISING THE RESPONSE

Now that you have developed your small area data collection tool, you will be about to begin the process of actually using this survey to collect data. The following are some points to remember to maximise your response rates.

Check your survey

1. Look at the wording of your survey, it is important to make the wording as clear and concise as possible so that it can be easily understood by as many people as possible.

Here are some things to think about:

Things to Check	Poor Example	Improved Example
Avoid jargon <i>Not everyone is familiar with technical terms that we may use everyday in tourism</i>	Are you visiting for VFR purposes?	Are you here to visit friends and/or relatives?
Use simple language <i>The survey should be able to be read and understood by the majority of people</i>	What is your frequency of utilisation of retail travel agents?	How often do you use travel agents?
Avoid ambiguity <i>If a question may be interpreted differently from the way in which you intended, you may have to rephrase it so that there can be no confusion as to its meaning</i>	Do you visit attractions often?	Which of the following attractions have you visited in the last 6 months? (provide a list)
Avoid leading questions <i>Make sure you are not directing respondents to answer in a certain way</i>	Are you against the extension of the airport?	What is your opinion on the extension of the airport? Are you for it, against it or not concerned?
Ask only one question at a time <i>Don't try and get people to answer two aspects of a question within the one response</i>	Have you visited the visitor information centre, and if so what do you think of the service?	Have you visited the visitor information centre? Yes / No (if yes, proceed to Q.2) How satisfied were you with the service you received there? (provide rating scale)

Adapted from: Veal, A.J. (1992) Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism: a Practical Guide, 2nd Edition. (p.164)

2. Make sure you have minimised the number of open-ended responses that respondents will provide. Too many open-ended questions results in not only a diminished response rate because of the effort respondents need to put in to answer the question, but also this style of question is MUCH harder to analyse. Try and provide response categories for as many of your questions as possible. For example, instead of just asking 'What is the main reason for your visit to the region?', include some response categories: a) Holiday/leisure, b) Visiting Friends and/or Relatives, c) Business, d) Other.
3. The order in which you layout your survey can also effect your response rate. Once again, the idea is to make the survey as easy for participants to complete as possible:
 - Make sure the survey has a logical flow
 - Start with questions most relevant to your research question – if you have said you are collecting information in relation to an event, make sure the first question is about the event
 - Start with easy questions
 - Generally leave more personal (demographic) questions until the end
 - Group questions by topic

Collecting the data

There are two main methods of collecting survey based information, either face-to-face via an interview style process, or by getting respondents to complete the survey themselves. You will probably find that interviewer based surveying will produce the greatest response rate but, as previously discussed, this can be expensive. The guide discusses some innovative approaches to getting labour for this. If you find that interviewer based surveys won't work for you, then you may be able to increase the response rate of self-completed surveys by:

- Offering a small incentive to those that complete each survey – for example, if you are surveying visitors, a postcard or a sticker has worked well in the past.
- Remind participants about the survey – an e-mail to operators, a quick reminder to a visitor at a VIC.
- Make sure that the surveys are in a visible spot so they can be easily accessed.
- Ensure that the surveys are easy to return – for example, provide a drop box in visible locations or provide postage paid envelopes if you want people to return them off-site.

As surveys are completed place these in a safe place, making sure you keep track of how many are collected. If you have multiple collection points for the surveys, make sure these are checked regularly. It is important to keep your target group in mind when deciding when and how to survey, making sure you capture a good cross section in your sample. You may decide to run the survey a number of times throughout the year and analyse results separately for each survey time, and for all your results combined.

How much is enough – a quick word about sample size

Unfortunately there is no simple answer to the question of sample size. The size of your sample will depend largely on how many questions you wish to analyse, and therefore the length and complexity of your survey. In a recent survey conducted at a VIC, the survey was fairly simple and brief, and a sample of 150 respondents was deemed as acceptable. In contrast, a much more complex and lengthy survey examining economic impact of an event required a sample size of over 400 to be deemed a valid study.



local level data collection

'KNOW YOUR PATCH' KIT

The catalogue of local tourism data collections across Australia was designed to both record small area data collections, which are sustained, robust and locally managed, and to identify strategies for assisting local and regional tourism organisations to implement data collection initiatives. Very few qualifying small area data collections were found in a national survey of local and regional tourism associations. Those who had attempted data collections faced barriers relating to skills, resources, and mapping data items to information needs. The research identified the need for a guide to managing small area data collections and has produced such a guide.

The research also suggested mechanisms for improving Australia's small area tourism data through better use of existing data sources and the harnessing of existing structures to promote national standards and build capacity.

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