Handout for Activity 4.1a Dissemination, Outreach and Marketing: Good or Bad?

Principles of good chart design

Tips for Good Presentation
- Clear visual message
  - Avoid unnecessary lines and boxes. They clutter up the page and distract the reader's eye.
  - Eliminate distracting details in the text and in the graphics.
- Appropriate heading
- Convey one finding or a single concept
- Simple

A Good Graph
- Accurately shows facts
- Grabs the readers attention
- Shows trends or changes
- Is clear and easy to read
  - To make text easier to skim, align the tops of column headings and the left sides of row headings.
  - To make groups of symbols easier to read, keep the symbols close together so they create a visual "block". Also, rather than centering the symbols, left-justify them so that it is easy to see which groups are larger than the others (i.e., so that reading the symbol blocks is like reading a bar chart).
  - To make the text in the graphic easy to skim, vary font sizes, use bold type, and insert line breaks that separate the main text from subpoints.
- Has a title and minimal labels
  - Line up titles, headings, and the left edges of graphics to create a clean look.
- Uses colours or patterns to show differences
  - Be careful about using alternating colors in bars or tables. Readers often think that the colors mean something, e.g., that rows with a background that is colored rather than white are more important. Also, colored backgrounds can make the same symbol look different.
  - Be cautious with shading; it is useful for highlighting differences, but can make text hard to read (especially for older readers and those who are visually impaired).
Look for opportunities to create "white space" on the page and around graphic elements and text (White space is empty space that contains no graphics or text).

Based on UNECE's publication Making Data Meaningful (http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/writing/) and the following website: http://www.talkingquality.gov/docs/section3/3_5.htm

The Components of a Chart

There are three basic components to most charts:

- the labeling that defines the data: the title, axis titles and labels, legends defining separate data series, and notes (often, to indicate the data source),
- scales defining the range of the Y (and sometimes the X) axis, and
- the graphical elements that represent the data: the bars in bar charts, the lines in times series plot, the points in scatterplots, or the slices of a pie chart.

Extracted from the following website: 
http://lilt.ilstu.edu/gmklass/pos138/datadisplay/sections/goodcharts.htm
Basic Guidelines for Chart Design

Here are some basic guidelines for designing clean, readable charts:

- Avoid unnecessary lines and boxes. They clutter up the page and distract the reader’s eye.
- Be cautious with shading; it is useful for highlighting differences, but can make text hard to read (especially for older readers and those who are visually impaired).
- Be careful about using alternating colors in bars or tables. Readers often think that the colors mean something, e.g., that rows with a background that is colored rather than white are more important. Also, colored backgrounds can make the same symbol look different.
- Line up titles, headings, and the left edges of graphics to create a clean look.
- Look for opportunities to create "white space" on the page and around graphic elements and text (White space is empty space that contains no graphics or text).
- To make text easier to skim, align the tops of column headings and the left sides of row headings.
- To make groups of symbols easier to read, keep the symbols close together so they create a visual "block". Also, rather than centering the symbols, left-justify them so that it is easy to see which groups are larger than the others (i.e., so that reading the symbol blocks is like reading a bar chart).
- To make the text in the graphic easy to skim, vary font sizes, use bold type, and insert line breaks that separate the main text from subpoints.
- Eliminate distracting details in the text and in the graphics.
- Don’t vary the width of related columns (e.g., the columns for each health plan) even if some have more text than others.

Extracted from the following website:
http://www.talkingquality.gov/docs/section3/3_5.htm