


Handout 2.4 – Using personas to better understand data users

Example persona

Persona:	* Ministry of Agriculture Senior manager	
Fictional name	* Matthew Johnson	
Job title and experience	* Manager, Natural Resources Conservation Recently transferred into this role from Rural Development Branch	
Area(s) of responsibility	The Ministry's natural resources conservation programs address issues such as soil erosion, water quality and supply, marine and wildlife habitat, and damage caused by floods and other natural disasters	
Demographics	* 51 years old * Has a Ph.D in Agricultural Economics	
Goals and tasks	He is focused, goal-oriented with a strong leadership role. One of his concerns is maintaining quality across all output of programs. Matthew spends his work time: * requesting and reviewing research reports, * preparing memos and briefs for agency heads, and * supervising staff efforts in program implementation.	
Statistical skills	Matthew is familiar and extremely comfortable using macroeconomic statistics and key agriculture and rural development indicators. He is less experienced with environmental statistics and measures of climate change, but has to learn quickly in this new role. He relies on regular (quarterly) updated information to monitor how well his program is addressing policy issues. He is very capable of analyzing and interpreting high-level or summary tables and graphs, but avoids working with detailed statistical information.	
Quote	"Get some data into that report so we can show progress"	

Questions to guide development of a persona

Personal	* What is the age of your person? * Are they male or female? * What is the highest level of education this person has received?
Professional	* How much work experience does your person have? * What is your person's professional background? * What is their role in policy development? * What kind of statistical information do they need? * How frequently do they need these statistics?
Statistical skills	* How statistically literate are they? * What is their experience in being able to find the data they need? * What is their understanding of statistical concepts? * What is their ability to analyze data and interpret the results? * What is their role in communicating statistics?
Motivation	* What is your person motivated by? * What is your person aiming to achieve? * What are his or her needs?

Sources: Adapted from the Usability.gov page on Personas (www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/personas.html); and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) website.