

2. Assessing Community Needs and Resources

This toolkit provides guidance for conducting assessments of community needs and resources.

Outline

1. Describe the makeup and history of the community to provide a context within which to collect data on its current concerns.

- a. Comment on the types of information that best describes the community (e.g., demographic, historical, political, civic participation, key leaders, past concerns, geographic, assets)
- b. Describe the sources of information used (e.g., public records, local people, internet, maps, phone book, library, newspaper) of information
- c. Comment on whether there are sufficient resources (e.g., time, personnel, resources) available to collect this information
- d. Assess the quality of the information
- e. Describe the strengths and problems you heard about

Related resources:

[Understanding and Describing the Community](#)

[Collecting Information About the Problem](#)

[Conducting Interviews](#)

[Conducting Surveys](#)

[Qualitative Methods to Assess Community Issues](#)

[Using Public Records and Archival Data](#)

[Identifying Community Assets and Resources Describe the methods \(e.g., public forums, listening sessions, focus groups, interviews, surveys, observation\) used to collect descriptive information](#)

[SWOT Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats](#)

2. **Describe what matters to people in the community**, including a description of:

- a. Issues that people in the community care about (e.g., safety, education, housing, health)
- b. How important these issues are to the community (e.g., perceived importance, consequences for the community)
- c. Methods the group will (did) use to listen to the community (e.g., listening sessions, public forums, interviews, concerns surveys, focus groups)

Related resources:

[Obtaining Feedback from Constituents: What Changes are Important and Feasible?](#)

[Participatory Approaches to Planning Community Interventions](#)

[Rating Community Goals](#)

[The Constituent Survey of Outcomes: Ratings of Importance](#)

[Conducting Public Forums and Listening Sessions](#)

[Conducting Focus Groups](#)

[Conducting Concerns Surveys](#)

[Conducting Interviews](#)

[Conducting Surveys](#)

3. **Describe what matters to key stakeholders, including:**

- a. Who else cares about the issue (the stakeholders) and what do they care about?
- b. What stakeholders want to know about the situation (e.g., who is affected, how many, what factors contribute to the problem)
- c. Prioritized populations and subgroups that stakeholders intend to benefit from the effort
- d. Methods you will (did) use to gather information (e.g., surveys, interviews)

Related resources:

[Developing a Plan for Identifying Local Needs and Resources](#)

[Conducting Needs Assessment Surveys](#)

[Determining Service Utilization](#)

[Identifying Targets and Agents of Change: Who Can Benefit and Who Can Help?](#)

[Conducting Interviews](#)

[Conducting Surveys](#)

4. (For each candidate problem/goal) **Describe the evidence indicating whether the problem/goal should be a priority issue, including:**

- a. The community-level indicators (e.g., rate of infant deaths or vehicle crashes) related to the issue

- b. How frequently the problem (or related behavior) occurs
- c. How many people are affected by the problem and the severity of its effects
- d. How feasible it is to address the issue
- e. Possible impact and/or consequences of addressing the problem/goal

Related resources:

[Collecting Information About the Problem](#)

[Developing Baseline Measures of Behavior](#)

[Obtaining Feedback from Constituents: What Changes are Important and Feasible?](#)

[Gathering and Using Community-Level Indicators](#)

5. Describe the barriers and resources for addressing the identified issue(s), including:

- a. Barriers or resistance to solving the problem or achieving the goal (e.g., denial or discounting of the problem) and how they can be minimized (e.g., reframing the issue)
- b. What resources and assets are available and how the group can tap into those resources to address the issue
- c. Community context or situation that might make it easier or more difficult to address this issue

Related resources:

[Developing a Plan for Identifying Local Needs and Resources](#)

[Identifying Community Assets and Resources](#)

[Identifying Opponents](#)

[Overview of Opposition Tactics: Recognizing the Ten D's](#)

[How to Respond to Counterattacks](#)

6. (Based on the assessment) Select and state the priority issue (or issues) to be addressed by the group.

The Community Tool Box is a service of the [Work Group for Community Health and Development](#) at the University of Kansas.

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