

Housing Needs Assessments- How to

The main reason for doing a housing needs assessment is so your bands housing department plan will meet the current demand for housing and so you can make some educated presumptions about future housing demand.

The assessment will tell you:

- How much new housing is needed
- What size/types houses are needed
- How much rents your future tenants can pay
- When you should be building new houses
- Where new houses will be built
- What you will need to do first in terms of land prep, road building, accessing power, water and septic/sewer and other required upgrades to infrastructure

No housing plan should proceed to the implementation stage without a good Housing Needs Assessment.

Before you start

1. Determine your GOAL.

- Do you want to summarize the housing needs?
- Develop a set of recommendations? If so, who will read them and make decisions?
- Will the Report be used for planning or for applying for housing funds.

2. Who will do the assessment? what is the scope? and how will it be funded? If your band has received funding to do the Assessment, you may be able to hire someone to do the work. If it needs to be done as part of the day to day activities of the housing department, then the workplan to complete the project should reflect a reasonable time line to get it done by housing staff.

3. Establish expectations for the study; to what extent will community be consulted? Will they be involved in the project? How many surveys need to be returned to accurately measure the results? How will the results be shared and with whom?

5. Establish a timeline and stick to it. Don't lose momentum by slowing down halfway through, force your team through to the completion stage

Other band departments should be involved in the process and the information gathered during the assessment should be shared with them. Growth in the housing sector affects all areas of band government including economic development, health, social development and lands and infrastructure.

What should be included in a Housing Needs Assessment?

1. "Population: Information about the people in your community, including

Age breakdown- use a simple table like this to identify the number of people in each group and then convert that number to a percentage of the population:

<i>Community name</i>	Ages 0-6	7-12	13-18	18-30	30-50	65+
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<i>Total pop. xxxx</i>	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%

2. Gender breakdown
3. Education levels
4. Employment levels
5. Size of household- singles, 2 parent families, single parents, elders
6. "Current Housing supply": Include:
 - number of houses
 - ages
 - sizes (sq footage and # of bedrooms)
 - type
 - condition
 - estimated lifespan left in the house
 - amounts of rents collected for each house
 - occupancy
7. "Affordability: how much the targeted households can pay for housing.
8. "Demand for housing: the number of housing units needed by the target population.
9. "Housing resources: the available land, construction resources, utilities and roads, and funding for developing low-income housing.

Remember these 9 items as you prepare your questionnaires or surveys, develop questions that will provide clear answers, such as "How much rent are you able to pay for a house that will meet your housing needs" or "what is your annual household income"

Steps for the Assessment

Now you are ready to begin the housing needs assessment. Here are the steps to follow:

- Specify the study area
- Collect and organize the information
- Develop a population profile
- Assess and summarize the housing supply
- Determine unmet housing needs
- Summarize costs of new or renovated housing
- Identify available funding
- Summarize the conclusions
- Write the housing needs assessment report

Specify the study area- Include a map of the study area, using existing boundaries. You might want to show which areas are available for housing development or not available or not suitable for residential development.

Collect and organize the information-Use surveys, worksheets, reports from other departments and the results of your own research.

Where to look for the information:

Census
 Social Development
 Employment agencies
 Health Canada,
 Non-profit agencies.
 BC Housing
 CMHC

Surveys-A survey is an effective way of collecting housing need information, especially if:

- The needed information does not exist in local reports or agency files;
- You cannot apply the census information to your community;
- The information is out of date.

Survey methods: .

Windshield survey- you visually assess housing condition from the outside. Although it is quick to do, it is limited to conditions that you can see as you drive or walk by the housing.

Questionnaire- volunteers or staff interview some of the population, either in person or by telephone. An interview can take up to 15 minutes per household to conduct. To interview a large portion of the community, this can take considerable time.

Mail surveys tend to have a low response rate but save staff time to administer.

Online surveys through facebook, twitter and/or band website can be very effective and trend to have a pretty good return rate.

TIP-consider adding an incentive for completing the survey, such as a draw for a prize.

Next steps are self explanatory and may require just a few phone calls to populate a database.

- Develop a population profile
- Assess and summarize the housing supply
- Determine unmet housing needs

This simple table can be used to capture this data

Total number of band members;									
Number of members on reserve;									
Number of members off reserve;									
Total number of housing units on reserve									
1 bdrm		2 bdrm		3 bdrm		4 bdrm		5bdrm	
Total # of households on housing waiting list									
1 bdrm		2 bdrm		3 bdrm		4 bdrm		5bdrm	
Total number of vacancies									

- Summarize costs of new or renovated housing
- Identify available funding, again, a simple table will capture this data

Number of units in need of minor repair;	
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Estimated costs of minor repairs-	\$
Number of units in need of major repair;	
Estimated costs of major repairs-	\$
Number of units in need of replacement;	
Estimated costs of demolition-	\$
Number of units contaminated by mold;	
Estimated costs of mold remediation-	\$
Budget available for renovations/mould remediation	\$

- Summarize the conclusions
- Write the housing needs assessment report

The resulting document can be used internally for planning purposes or can accompany applications for funding as a supporting document for Community Need