

How to Conduct a Community Assessment

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This brief community assessment is a 5-step process that facilitates an exploration of your community's needs in as little as 3 weeks. It is strongly advised that a team of 6-8 work together to complete the community assessment. Each step should be bathed in prayer, asking God to open your eyes and ears so that you will discover with Godly discernment the ministry through which He is calling your church to serve.

1. **Scan** – review available information about community needs, get informed and up to date using news, research articles and facts from the most knowledgeable organizations and places. Gathering key research and news about your community enables you to approach the issues and needs from an informed perspective. Most of this information will come from internet and local research.

- <https://factfinder.census.gov>
- www.census.gov
- <https://www.namb.net/demographics-request>
- <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/demography/>
- Check local sites ...
<https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ky/louisville/demographics>

Ask these questions about information gathered:

- ✓ What trends do you see in the data?
- ✓ How is this need being defined in the US and our community?
- ✓ What are the big issues?
- ✓ Is there any specific mention of needs in the community or among the groups of people that we serve?
- ✓ What are the current concerns and strategies among those who work to overcome this/these issues?

2. **Ask** – talk to people with keen insight about needs and opportunities. Learn from those who deal with needs in many different facets. By completing a set of key interviews, you and your team will be connected to the important places in your community where efforts to address needs are fought and won or lost. Build new relationship and personal insight about the needs and opportunities for service as you meet key players in the community. There is no shortcut for asking people who have personal knowledge and daily experience in the community about needs. Pay attention to needs and community resources and assets as well.



Ask the following questions of health care professionals, school educators or administrators, business owners, neighbors, community leaders, elected officials, non-profit directors, police and fire officials.

- ✓ What do you see as a couple of the greatest needs in our community?
 - ✓ Where do people usually go first in our community when they are challenged with these needs and why?
 - ✓ What programs or resources are needed to help address these issues?
 - ✓ Who is being missed in the current system?
 - ✓ What resources are most needed by your organization (if they haven't already answered)?
 - ✓ Is there someone that you think we should talk with to help us get a better handle on what is happening in our community related to this issue?
3. **Map** – connect the dots between all the various providers and find out where people fit. Learn how various organizations and resources make their way into the lives of people. Find out where people go for help and how various organizations interact to address the needs among those who most need it. The service map that you will create will inform your choices about where and how to help and create informed options about where ministry can be most meaningful.

The goal is to create a map that looks like your city street map or grid that includes symbols marking the various resources and services providing for those in the community (clothing/food, medical, rehabilitation, job skill training, pregnancy care, literacy, parenting/marriage classes, financial assistance, tutoring, etc).

4. **Gap** – identify gaps in response and recovery services to see where your church will fit. Discover where there are real needs for resource and human touch. Identify specific gaps in the safety net and potholes in the road from dependence to healthy self-sufficiency. Specific groups of people and the availability or lack of resources will become clear as you complete this step.



Using information from Scan, Ask and Map, team members will look for three specific gaps:

- 1) service gaps – where are services lacking or non-existent?
- 2) ministry gaps – where in the safety net does there appear to be a lack of redemptive influence by Christ-followers?
- 3) people gaps – what special groups of people are underserved or missing completely from the social safety net?

You should now be able to identify the highest needs related to places where ministry is not evident and the people groups that are underserved. Summarize any barriers to service that are apparent based on the information you have gathered.

5. **Act** – apply your unique calling and gifting to the community context with skill. Based on informed insight and new connections, plan ministry responses that will be meaningful and sustainable. Find a niche for service that will allow your ministry to connect with people who not only need a cup of cold water, but also need spiritual nourishment in Jesus’ name. You will line up your calling, gifts and resources as a ministry with the key opportunities you have discovered and form a plan of action.

By now, you should begin discovering your strategic match or “sweet spot” for community engagement. This strategic match is discerned through the Holy Spirit in you as you seek to honor God by meeting community needs with resources He has entrusted to you and the church.

After discerning your “sweet spot”, follow “Steps to Engaging Your Community in Ministry” as outlined in the workshop notes.