COMMUNITY TOOL BOX

Section 1. Developing a Plan for Assessing Local Needs and Resources

(http://ctb.ku.edu)

Learn how to develop a plan for community assessment to guide efforts to better understand community needs and resources.

Developing a plan for identifying local needs and resources can help changemakers understand how to improve their communities in the most logical and efficient ways possible. This section provides a guide for developing and implementing a plan to assess the needs of communities and the resources available to them.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY NEEDS AND RESOURCES?

Needs can be defined as the gap between what is and what should be. A need can be felt by an individual, a group, or an entire community. It can be as concrete as the need for food and water or as abstract as improved community cohesiveness. An obvious example might be the need for public transportation in a community where older adults have no means of getting around town. More important to these same adults, however, might be a need to be valued for their knowledge and experience. Examining situations closely helps uncover what is truly needed, and leads toward future improvement.

Resources, or assets, can include individuals, organizations and institutions, buildings, landscapes, equipment -- anything that can be used to improve the quality of life. The mother in Chicago who volunteers to organize games and sports for neighborhood children after school, the Kenyan farmers' cooperative that makes it possible for farmers to buy seed and fertilizer cheaply and to send their produce directly to market without a middle man, the library that provides books and Internet access to everyone, the bike and walking path where city residents can exercise -- all represent resources that enhance community life. Every individual is a potential community asset, and everyone has assets that can be used for community building.

WHY DEVELOP A PLAN FOR ASSESSING LOCAL NEEDS AND RESOURCES?

There are really two questions here: The first is Why assess needs and resources? Answers include:

- It will help you gain a deeper understanding of the community. Each community has its own needs and assets, as well as its own culture and social structure -- a unique web of relationships, history, strengths, and conflicts that defines it. A community assessment helps to uncover not only needs and resources, but the underlying culture and social structure that will help you understand how to address the community's needs and utilize its resources.
- An assessment will encourage community members to consider the community's assets and how to use them, as well as the community's needs and how to address them. That consideration can (and should) be the first step in their learning how to use their own resources to solve problems and improve community life.
- It will help you make decisions about priorities for program or system improvement. It would obviously be foolhardy to try to address community issues without fully understanding what they are and how they arose. By the same token, failing to take advantage of community resources not only represents taking on a problem without using all the tools at your disposal to solve it, but misses an opportunity to increase the community's capacity for solving its own problems and creating its own change.
- It goes a long way toward eliminating unpleasant surprises down the road. Identifying needs and resources before starting a program or initiative means that you know from the beginning what you're dealing with, and are less likely to be blindsided later by something you didn't expect.

The second question is: Why develop a plan for that assessment? Some reasons why you should:

- It allows you to involve community members from the very beginning of the process. This encourages both trust in the process and community buy-in and support, not only of the assessment, but of whatever actions are taken as a result of it. Full community participation in planning and carrying out an assessment (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/analyze/where-to-start/participatory-approaches/main) also promotes leadership from within the community and gives voice to those who may feel they have none.
- An assessment is a great opportunity to use community-based participatory research (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/intervention-research/main) , further involving community members and increasing community capacity.
- A good plan will provide an easy-to-follow road map for conducting an accurate assessment. Planning ahead will save time and effort in carrying out the process.
- A planning process will give community members the opportunity to voice their opinions, hopes, and fears about the community. Their idea of priorities might be different from those of professionals, but they shouldn't be ignored.

It may be important to address the community's priorities first, in order to establish trust and show respect, even if you don't believe that those priorities are in fact the most important issues. Building relationships and credibility may be more important at the beginning of a long association than immediately tackling what seems to be the most pressing need. Among other things, community members' priorities may be the right ones: they may see underlying factors that you don't yet understand.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR ASSESSING LOCAL NEEDS AND RESOURCES?

As we've discussed, the assessment process benefits greatly when there's full participation from community stakeholders. Among those who should be involved:

- *Those experiencing needs that should be addressed*. It's both fair and logical to involve those who are most directly affected by adverse conditions. They know best what effects those conditions have on their lives, and including them in the planning process is more likely to produce a plan that actually speaks to their needs.
- *Health and human service providers*. These individuals and organizations, especially those that are community-based, often have both a deep understanding of the community and a strong empathic connection with the populations they serve. They can be helpful both by sharing their knowledge and by recruiting people from marginalized populations to contribute to the assessment.
- *Government officials*. Elected and appointed officials are often those who can help or hinder a community change effort. Engaging them in planning and carrying out an assessment helps to ensure that they will take the effort seriously and work to make it successful.
- *Influential people*. These can can include individuals who are identified as leaders because of their positions -- college presidents, directors of hospitals and other major organizations, corporate CEOs -

- because of the prestige of their professions -- doctors, professors, judges, clergy -- or because they are known to be people of intelligence, integrity, and good will who care about the community.
- *People whose jobs or lives could be affected by the eventual actions taken as a result of the assessment*. These include teachers, police, emergency room personnel, landlords, and others who might have to react if new community policies or procedures are put in place.
- *Community activists*. People who have been involved in addressing policy or issues that could come up in the course of the assessment have a stake in planning the assessment as well.
- *Businesses, especially those that employ people from populations of concern*. The livelihoods of local business owners could be affected by the results of the assessment, as could the lives of their employees.

WHEN SHOULD NEEDS AND ASSETS BE IDENTIFIED?

Identifying needs and assets can be helpful to your organization at almost any point in your initiative. If your group has a specific goal, such as reducing teen pregnancy, identifying local needs (better communication between parents and teens, education programs, etc.) and resources (youth outreach programs, peer counselors) related to the issue can help you craft a workable, effective goal. On the other hand, if your organization is more broad-based -- if you're dedicated to helping the health needs of under-served people in your city, for example -- identifying assets and needs can help you decide which aspect of the problem to tackle first.

ASSESSMENTS OF RESOURCES AND NEEDS SHOULD BE DONE REGULARLY THROUGHOUT YOUR INITIATIVE:

- Prior to planning the initiative. This gives coalition members, community leaders, and those being served an idea of how to improve their circumstances.
- During implementation of an initiative. It is important to make sure that you are on target not only at the beginning and the end of a project, but also during its implementation. If car companies only did quality checks on the steel before the parts are constructed and the paint job after it rolled off the line, you might not be inclined to trust the engine. Identifying needs and assets during the life of the initiative helps you use your own resources well, and ensures that you're addressing the right issues in the right way.
- On an ongoing basis. During monitoring and evaluation, either ongoing or after the completion of a project, it is important to celebrate successes and to learn from setbacks to further community development.

HOW DO YOU DEVELOP A PLAN FOR ASSESSING LOCAL NEEDS AND RESOURCES?

The best way to assess needs and assets is by using as many of the available sources of information as possible. "Possible" here depends on how easy the information is to find and collect, and what your resources -- mostly of people, money, and time -- will support. Developing a plan will allow you to take these considerations into account and use the results to determine goals, devise methods, and create a structure for a community assessment that will give you the information you need to conduct a successful effort.

The following guidelines, while they are laid out in a step-by-step order, may often turn out in practice to take a different sequence. You may find yourself carrying out two or more steps at once, for example, or switching the order of two steps.

Recruit a planning group that represents all stakeholders and mirrors the diversity of the community

Try to be as inclusive as you can, so that the group is diverse and truly representative of the community. You may have to work particularly hard to persuade people from groups that are generally not offered seats at the table -- low-income people, immigrants, etc. -- that you actually want their participation, especially if they've been burned by insincere offers in the past. It's worth it to take the time and effort, however, in order to get a real picture of all aspects of the community.

A truly representative planning group is not only more likely to come up with a plan that produces an accurate assessment, but is also a signal to community members that they are part of the process. They are more apt to trust that process and support whatever comes out of it.

Now is also the time to think about whether the planning group will also oversee the assessment. That arrangement often makes the most sense, but not always. If the planning group won't be the coordinating body, then part of its planning should determine who ought to be part of that group, and how to assemble it.

Another important determination at this point is whether the planning group and those who will actually conduct the assessment -- contact informants, construct surveys, facilitate public meetings, gather data, and report on and evaluate the assessment process -- will need training, and if so, how much and of what kind. Many people that haven't had a great deal of formal education, belong to groups that are often denied a voice in community affairs, or belong to a culture other than the mainstream one don't have the meeting and deliberation skills that many middle-class citizens take for granted. They might need training and/or mentoring to learn how to contribute effectively to a planning group. In addition, many people may need training in data collection methods, evaluation, and other areas important to the assessment process. Whatever training is needed has to be not only anticipated but planned out, so that it gets done in a timely and useful way. Now is the time to start thinking about it.

Design an evaluation process for the assessment (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/participatory-evaluation/main) **, including the development of the plan**

Why is this step here, at the beginning of the planning process, rather than at the end? The answer is that evaluation should start at the beginning of an effort, so that you can monitor everything you do and be able to learn from and adjust any part of the process -- including planning -- to improve your work. That's the purpose of evaluation: to make your work as effective as possible.

Decide why you want to conduct the assessment

There are a number of reasons why you might want to conduct a community assessment of needs and resources, among them:

The reasons for an assessment will affect from whom and how you gather information, what is assessed, and what you do with the information you get. It's obviously important to start planning with a clear understanding of what you're setting out to do, so that your plan matches your goals.

- Determining how to address the needs of a particular underserved or neglected group.
- Conducting a community health assessment in order to launch a public health campaign or combat a particular disease or condition.
- Exploring how to steer the activities of a coalition of service providers or government agencies.
- Understanding community needs and resources as a guide to advocacy efforts or policy change. You can't make credible policy recommendations without knowing about current conditions and the effects on them of current policy.
- Assessing the impact, intensity, and distribution of a particular issue, to inform strategies for approaching it. This may involve breaking the issue down still further, and investigating only a part of it. Rather than looking at the whole issue of violence, for instance, you might want to focus on domestic violence or youth violence or violence among teenage girls.

Determine what data is already available

The chances are that a good deal of information about the community already exists. Resources:

It's important that make sure that whatever data exists is timely. The chances are that if it's more than six months to a year old, it's out of date and no longer accurate. Even census data, which is extensive and generally reliable, is a snapshot of a particular time. Since a full census is a once-a-decade event, census information may be as much as ten years out of date. There are updates in between, but only to selected categories, and not every year.

- Federal government statistics, such as census and public health data. In the U.S., much of this information can be found on the websites of the U.S. Census (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://www.census.gov/#) , the National Institutes of Health (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://www.nih.gov/) , the Centers for Disease Control (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://www.cdc.gov/) , and the Department of Health and Human Services (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://www.hhs.gov/) .

- County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://www.countyhealthrankings.org/) provides important health-related rankings and data for nearly every county in each U.S. state.
- Assessments or studies conducted by local or state/provincial governments or government agencies.
- Assessments or studies conducted by other organizations. Hospitals, human service providers, Chambers of Commerce, and charitable organizations may all conduct community assessments for their own purposes, and may be willing -- or even eager -- to share their results.
- Studies conducted by researchers connected to local universities.
- What you already know about the needs and assets of the community. The caution here is to realize that what you think you know may either be wrong, or may conflict with the opinions of community members. You should be ready to accept the facts if they conflict with your opinion, or to consider, as we've mentioned, the possibility of yielding to the community's perception of its own needs.

Figure out what other information you need

This is the time to finalize the questions you'll ask your informants, as well as the questions you hope to answer with the assessment. Those questions will depend on your purposes. In most cases, you'll want to find out what is important to members of populations of concern or those who might benefit from or be affected by any action you might take as a result of the assessment. You will probably also want to hear the opinions of the people who serve or work with those people -- doctors, human service staff and administrators, teachers, police, social workers, advocates, etc.

In addition, it will probably be helpful to look at some community level indicators (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluate-commutanity-initiatives/examples-of-community-level-indicators/main) , such as:

- The number of and reasons for emergency room or clinic visits.
- The number of places to buy fresh produce in various neighborhoods.
- The percentage of motor vehicle accidents and traffic stops involving alcohol.
- The number of teen births in the community in the past year, compared to those in other similar communities, in the state or province (or country) as a whole, and/or in past years.

Before you start, take careful stock of your resources -- people, money, skills, time -- to be sure you can do all you plan to. An assessment can be conducted with volunteers and lots of (free) legwork, or it can require statistical and other expertise, professional consultation, and many paid hours. Don't plan an assessment that you don't have the resources to carry out.

Decide what methods you'll use for gathering information

Much of the rest of this chapter is devoted to methods of gathering assessment data. Some general descriptions:

Each community is different, and so you might use any one or any combination of these and other methods detailed in this chapter, depending on what you're looking for and who can help.

- *Using existing data* (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/public-records-archival-data/main) . This is the research you might do to unearth the information in census and other public records, or to find information that's been gathered by others.
- *Listening sessions and public forums*. Listening sessions are forums you can use to learn about the community's perspectives on local issues and options. They are generally fairly small, with specific questions asked of participants. They can help you get a sense of what community members know and feel about the issue, as well as resources, barriers, and possible solutions. Public forums tend to be both larger in number of participants and broader in scope than listening sessions. They are gatherings where citizens discuss important issues at a well-publicized location and time. They give people of diverse backgrounds a chance to express their views, and are also a first step toward understanding the community's needs and resources. A good public forum informs the group of where the community is and where the members would like to go.
- *Interviews and focus groups* (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conduct-public-forums/main) . These are less formal than forums, and are conducted with either individuals or small groups (usually fewer than ten, and often as few as two or three.) They generally include specific questions, but allow room for moving in different directions, depending on what the interviewees want to discuss. Open-ended questions (those which demand something more than a yes or no or other simple answer), follow-ups to interesting points, and a relaxed atmosphere that encourages people to open up are all part of most assessment interviews. A focus group (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conduct-focus-groups/main) is a specialized group interview in which group members are not told exactly what the interviewer wants to know, so that they will be more likely to give answers that aren't influenced by what they think is wanted.
- *Direct, and sometimes participant, observation* (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/qualitative-methods/main) . Direct observation involves seeing for yourself. Do you want to know how people use the neighborhood park on weekends? Spend a few weekends there, watching and talking to people. If you regularly join a volleyball game or jog through the park with others, you're a participant observer, becoming part of the culture you want to learn about (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/describe-the-community/main) .
- *Surveys* (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conduct-surveys/main) . There are several different kinds of surveys, any or all of which could be used as part of a community assessment (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conducting-needs-assessment-surveys/main) . Written surveys may be sent to people in the mail, given out at community events or meetings, distributed in school, or handed to people on the street. People may also be surveyed by phone or in person, with someone else writing down their spoken answers to a list of questions. Many kinds of surveys often have a low return rate, and so may not be the best way to get information, but sometimes they're the only way, or can be given in situations where most people complete them.
- *Asset Mapping* (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/identify-community-assets/main) . Asset mapping focuses on the strengths of the community rather than the areas that need improvement. Focusing on assets gives the power back to the community members that directly experience the

problem and already have the resources to change the status quo. If the changes are made by the community and for the community, it builds a sense of cohesiveness and commitment that makes initiatives easier to sustain.

Decide whom you'll gather information from

For the same reason that you've put together a planning group that represents all the different sectors of the community concerned or involved with the assessment, you should try to get information from as broad a range of people and groups as possible. The greater the variety of people that supply your data, the better perspective you'll have on the real nature, needs, and resources of the community.

Who the people concerned with your particular assessment are, however, depends on your particular focus and purposes. If you're concerned with domestic violence, you'd certainly want to include those directly or indirectly exposed to it, as well as emergency room personnel and police, in your data gathering. If you're concerned with preserving open space, you might look to include both environmentalists and developers. That doesn't mean you wouldn't want the opinions of a variety of others, but simply that you'd try to make sure that the people with the most interest and knowledge -- and often the most to gain or lose -- could have their say. You wouldn't want to miss valuable information, regardless of the opinions of the informant.

> This brings up an important point. Your plan should make sure that the assessment includes the opportunity for all points of view to be aired. You may not like what some people have to say, but if you don't know that there are people with differing opinions, you only have half of the information you need.

Decide who will collect data

Will you use a participatory research process, whereby community members gather data themselves or in collaboration with professionals? Will you hire an individual or a group to gather information? If you choose neither of these, then who will do the work of interviewing, surveying, or carrying out whatever other strategies you've chosen to find information?

These are important questions, because their answers can affect the quality and quantity of information you get. Individuals in the community may be more willing to be interviewed and/or to give honest and detailed answers to people they know or can identify with, i.e., other community members. Participatory researchers may need training to be able to do a good job. You may need an experienced researcher to put together a survey that gets at the issues you're most concerned with. A combination of several types of data gatherers may work best. It's worth spending some time on this issue, so that you can assemble the crew that's right for your community and your plan.

Decide how you'll reach your informants

In order to get information from people, you'll have to contact them. There are many ways to do that, and you'll probably want to use several of them. In general, the more personal the approach, the more effective it will be. Some of the most common:

- *Posting requests on one or more local websites or on social media sites* (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- *Choosing people at random* (e.g., from the phone book) to receive written or telephone surveys.
- *Mailing* *(http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/direct-mail/main)* *or emailing* *(http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/e-mail/main)* *surveys* to one or more lists. Many organizations are willing to share lists of members or participants for purposes like this. Some will mail or email surveys under their own names, so that people receive them from an organization they're familiar with, and might be more willing to complete and return them than if they apparently came to them randomly.
- *Stopping people in a public place to ask them to fill out or, more commonly, give verbal answers to a short survey*. You may have had the experience of being asked your opinion in a shopping area or on a busy sidewalk. People are somewhat more willing to answer questions in this way than to fill out and return a mailed or emailed survey.
- *Putting up posters and distributing flyers* *(http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/posters-flyers/main)* *in public places* (supermarkets, laundromats, bus stops, etc.) and/or sending them to specific organizations and businesses.
- *Using the media*. This can involve holding press conferences (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/press-conference/main) and sending out press releases (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/press-releases/main) , placing PSA's (public service announcements (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/public-service-announcements/main)) and stories (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/news-feature-stories/main) in various media, or paying for media advertising (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/paid-advertising/main) .
- *Direct appeal to existing community groups*. Either a member of the planning team or a leader or member of the group in question might make an appeal at a club meeting, a religious gathering, or a sports event for volunteers to participate in a survey, an interview or focus group, or a larger meeting.
- *Personal approach*. Members of the planning group might recruit friends, colleagues, neighbors, family members, etc. by phone or in person. They might also ask the people they recruit to ask others (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/encouraging-involvement) , so that a few people can start a chain of requests that ends up with a large number.

Decide who will analyze the data and how they'll do it

Once you've collected the information, you have to analyze it to see what it means. That means identifying the main themes from interviews and forums, sorting out the concerns of the many from those of the insistent few, understanding what your indicators seem to show, comparing community members' concerns with the statistics and indicators, and perhaps a number of other analytical operations as well. Some of these might involve a knowledge of statistics and higher math, while others may require only common sense and the ability to group information in logical ways.

If you've engaged in a participatory research process, the community researchers should also be involved in analyzing the material they've found. They might do this in collaboration with professionals from local organizations, with consulting academic researchers, or with a paid consultant. If you've decided to hire an individual or group to conduct the assessment, then they'll probably conduct the analysis as well.

In either case, the methods used (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluate-community-interventions) will probably depend on such considerations as how "hard" you want the data to be -- whether you want to know the statistical significance of particular findings, for example, or whether you'll use people's stories as evidence -- how much you think you need to know in order to create an action plan, and what kinds of data you collect. Chapter 37, although its title concerns evaluation, is actually about research methods, and contains a lot of good information about how to approach the choice of methods.

Plan whatever training is needed

We've already discussed the possible need for training. Now is the time to decide what, if any, training is needed, who should be involved, and who will conduct it. In order to keep members of the planning group on an equal footing, it might make sense to offer the training to everyone, rather than just to those who are obviously not highly educated or articulate. It is probably important as well that the training be conducted by people who are not members of the planning group, even if some of them have the skills to do so. The group will function best if everyone feels that everyone else is a colleague, even though members have different backgrounds and different sets of skills and knowledge.

Decide how you'll record the results of the assessment and present them to the community

Depending on your goals and what's likely to come out of the assessment, "the community" here may mean the whole community or the community of stakeholders that is represented on the planning committee. In either case, you'll want to be able to explain clearly what the assessment found, and perhaps to engage people in strategizing about how to deal with it. That means you'll want to set out the results clearly, in simple, everyday language accompanied by easy-to-understand charts, pictures, and/or graphs. Your report doesn't have to be complicated or to use technical language in order to be compelling. In fact, the more you can use the words of the community members who contributed their concerns and experiences, the more powerful your report will be.

How will you communicate the results to the community? With the availability of PowerPoint and similar programs, you have the opportunity to create a professional-looking presentation that you can use in a number of ways. It could be presented as a slide show in one or more public meetings or smaller gatherings, posted along with a narrative on one or more social media sites (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) and/or on your website, run as a loop in a public place, such as a local library, or even broadcast on community access TV. Furthermore, it could be used by a number of people without each having to fetch and carry large and cumbersome equipment or signboards and the like.

Decide who will perform what assessment tasks

The group should make sure everyone has a role that fits her skills, talents, and, to the extent possible, preferences. It should also make sure that all necessary tasks are covered. If more people need to be recruited -- as data gatherers, survey mailers, phone callers, etc. -- that recruitment should be part of the plan. The point of having a plan is to try to anticipate everything that's needed -- as well as everything that might go wrong -- and make sure that it has been arranged for. Assigning tasks appropriately is perhaps the most important part of that anticipation.

Create a timeline

Work out what should happen by when. How long will you spend on preparing for the assessment -- contacting people, training interviewers and/or group facilitators, preparing and printing surveys? How long will you gather information? How long will you take to analyze the data and write up a report? Each phase of the assessment should have a deadline. That creates benchmarks -- checkpoints along the way that tell you you're moving in the right direction and have gotten far enough along so that you'll finish the assessment on time with the information you need.

Present the plan, get feedback, and adjust it to make it more workable

Once the plan is done, it should be presented to at least a sample of those who will be asked for information and those who will have responsibilities for parts of the assessment. This will allow them to consider whether the plan takes the culture of the community into account, and is likely to make data collection and analysis as easy as possible. As a result of their feedback, you can adjust parts of the plan to make them more acceptable to the community or more workable for the assessment team.

Now you can celebrate the completion of the plan, but it's not an occasion for resting on your laurels

There's a lot of work ahead as you conduct the assessment, analyze the data you get from it, and make and implement action plans based on that analysis. It's important to have benchmarks built into the assessment plan and the action plans that follow, so you can keep track of your progress. But it's also important to hold your long-term vision in view, and to keep moving toward it until the community becomes what all its members want it to be.

IN SUMMARY

Needs and resources are really two sides of the same coin. In order to get a comprehensive view of your community, it is important to look at what you have and what you need. With these things in mind, you can have a positive impact on the problem you wish to address. Understanding the community's needs and assets will also help your organization clarify where it would like to go and how it can get there.

Contributor

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Online Resources

The **Action Catalogue** (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://actioncatalogue.eu/) is an online decision support tool that is intended to enable researchers, policy-makers and others wanting to conduct inclusive research, to find the method best suited for their specific project needs.

Best Practices for Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Strategy Development: A Review of Scientific Methods, Current Practices, and Future Potential (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://www.phi.org/uploads/application/files/dz9vh55o3bb2x56lcrzyel83fwfu3mvu24oqqvn5z6qaeiw2u4.pdf) is a report of proceedings from a public forum and interviews of experts convened by the CDC.

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://www.countyhealthrankings.org/). Ranking the health of nearly every county in the nation, the County Health Rankings help us see how where we live, learn, work, and play influences how healthy we are and how long we live. The Rankings & Roadmaps show us what is making residents sick, where we need to improve, and what steps communities are taking to solve their problems. The health of a community depends on many different factors – ranging from individual health behaviors, education and jobs, to quality of health care, to the environment, therefore we all have a stake in creating a healthier community. Using the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, leaders and advocates from public health and health care, business, education, government, and the community can work together to create programs and policies to improve people's health, reduce health care costs, and increase productivity.

Community Assessment Tools (http://ctb.ku.eduhttps://my.rotary.org/en/document/community-assessment-tools). A companion piece to Communities in Action: A Guide to Effective Service Projects. Publication by Rotary International.

Community Assessment Toolkit: Nutrition and Physical Activity (http://ctb.ku.eduhttps://vnrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Fit_and_Healthy_Vermonters_Community_Assessment_Toolkit.pdf). A Tool kit to help with community assessment on a specific topic from the Vermont Dept. of Health Fit & Healthy Vermonters program.

Community Needs Assessment (http://ctb.ku.eduhttps://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/healthprotection/fetp/training_modules/15/community-needs_pw_final_9252013.pdf) – participant workbook from the CDC.

Conducting a Community Needs Assessment (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/guidebooks/Community_Assessment.pdf) – Strengthening Nonprofits: A Capacity Builder's Resource Library.

Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic (http://ctb.ku.eduhttps://docs.google.com/document/d/1clGjGABB2h2qbduTgfqribHmog9B6P0NvMgVuiHZCl8/preview#) - This crowd-sourced document was initially directed at ways for how to turn fieldwork that was initially planned as using face-to-face methods into a more 'hands-off' mode. It provides an alternative source of social research materials if researchers decide to go down that path.

HealthEquityGuide.org (http://ctb.ku.eduhttps://healthequityguide.org/) is a website with a set of strategic practices that health departments can apply to more meaningfully and comprehensively advance health equity.

Improving Health Equity Through Improving Data in Community Health Needs Assessments (http://ctb.ku.eduhttps://www.communitypsychology.com/improving-health-equity-through-improving-data-in-community-health-needs-assessments/) from Community Psychology.

Preparing for a Collaborative Community Assessment (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://www.extension.iastate.edu/publications/CRD334.pdf). From the Iowa State University Extension.

Road to the Community Plan (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://www.cura.umn.edu/sites/cura.advantagelabs.com/files/publications/KNCBR-1367.pdf) shows a collaboration between the Macalester-Groveland Community Council (MGCC) and the City of Saint Paul to create a road map that illustrates key steps as a guide for communities to reference as they embark on their community plan process. This document is a tool intended to offer best practices and insights to guide the conversation between district councils and their respective communities as they develop their own unique approaches to the community plan.

Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) Workbook: Needs Assessment (http://ctb.ku.eduhttp://preventsubstanceabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/MSPF2-Final-Draft-Workbook-11-2-2016.pdf) from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Behavioral Health Administration.

Print Resources

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