



## **PURPOSE FOR THE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT**

A comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CNA) is not only best practice, but it is required in the CSBG authorizing statute.

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act requires “an assurance that the State will secure from each eligible entity in the State...a community action plan...that includes a community-needs assessment for the community served...”

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“USHHS”) issued Information Memorandum 49, requiring eligible entities to conduct needs assessments and use the results to design programs to meet community needs.

In 2015, USHHS issued Information Memorandum No. 138 establishing Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Organizational Standards requiring CAAs to conduct a Community Needs Assessment and develop a Community Action Plan to address the needs identified in the needs assessment.

At a minimum, CAAs must conduct Community Needs Assessments that meet the following requirements established by the Organizational Standards:

- 1.2- The organization analyzes information collected directly from low-income individuals as part of the community assessment
- 2.2-The organization utilizes information gathered from key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources, during the community assessment process or other times. These sectors include at minimum: community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions
- 3.1 -Conduct the every 3 years
- 3.2-Collects current poverty data and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity
- 3.3 -Collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data on its service areas
- 3.4-Includes key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs
- 3.5 -Governing board formally accepts the completed assessment
- 4.2- Informs an outcome-based and anti-poverty focused Community Action Plan
- 6.4 -Customer satisfaction data and input identified is considered in the strategic planning process

The Community Needs Assessment (CNA) should be completed every three years with updates made to the document in the two years between each assessment. The CNA is intended to provide a broad understanding of the whole community to identify new programming opportunities and service gaps.

The needs assessment process includes a seven-step process for planning and conducting a community assessment:

- ✓ Step 1: Reflect and Strategize
- ✓ Step 2: Identify and Engage Stakeholders
- ✓ Step 3: Collect and Analyze Data
- ✓ Step 4: Determine Key Findings
- ✓ Step 5: Prioritize Top Needs
- ✓ Step 6: Document Plan and Communicate Results
- ✓ Step 7: Plan and Implement Strategies

This Community Needs Assessment Toolkit was designed by Maryland Community Action Partnership to assist community action agencies complete their needs community assessment process in accordance with the CSBG Act and with meeting the organizational standards.

## Introduction

**Community Needs Assessment (CNA)** is the process by which individuals from the community, stakeholder organizations and your agency work collaboratively to identify needs most important to residents and pursue meaningful strategies to address those needs.

The Community Assessment is a key component of the Results Oriented Management (ROMA) framework. Assessment, including determining the needs and resources of a community, constitutes the first phase of the ROMA cycle and sets the stage for the agency planning process.

A comprehensive assessment can and should be more than just gathering and analyzing data; it can also be a basis of creating a plan to be a catalyst of change. It can provide important community information as to who may be working on issues and where gaps in community services exist. It provides an opportunity to meet and develop partnerships to strengthen services for citizens in their service area, which is beneficial to the agency and the community.

### Benefits for the Agency

- A clearer understanding of the community served by your agency, including specific issues, their root causes and the availability of resources and assets to address them.
- Strengthened bonds between community and the agency, leading to increased collaboration around priority issues.
- Greater community buy-in and a sense of shared ownership of and commitment to community improvement.
- Stronger relationships with individuals and organizations that are assets for improving the lives of low-income people.

### Benefits for the Community

- A different perspective of the community and your agency's role in the promotion of low-income people reaching self-sufficiency.
- Gaps are identified that exist within the community.
- Improved communication between community and your agency, contributing to increased collaboration, mutual respect and understanding.
- A sense of shared ownership and commitment to the community needs assessment (CNA) process and any subsequent community coalitions or collaborative improvement efforts.
- The ability to apply knowledge and experiences to improve the health of the community.
- Building involvement and investment in the short- and long-range success of the CNA process.
- The opportunity for leadership development and capacity-building.

The CNA should not only review areas where your agency is already providing services, but rather all areas identified through the six new services and strategies related to Goal one of the National Theory of Change; Employment, Education/Cognitive Development, Income and Asset Building, Housing, Health and Social/Behavioral Development and Civic Engagement and Community Involvement.

When developing a CNA, consideration must be given to the three levels; family, agency, and community, as defined by the model of Community Action. Identifying a general need will often not provide enough information as to how the need can be address, therefore it is essential to understand the barriers that are perpetuating and causing the need. By understanding the root cause of the need, programs can be developed or altered to address them holistically.

It is critical for the Board members to participate in the assessment process, as they represent different sectors of a community and as such they bring a range of experience, perspective and knowledge. The will also approve the completed Community Needs Assessment and document the approval in official board minutes.

Steps that could be taken to engage the board:

- Inform the board of the need to conduct a community needs assessment
- Solicit board volunteers to serve on community needs assessment workgroup (consider strengths and connections of board members)
- Ensure appropriate board members participate in the planning meetings
- Ensure the board provides input on the scope of process and information to be collected
- Interview board members as part of qualitative data collection

In conclusion, a CNA helps the agency in its planning process by providing a foundation for effective strategic planning, assessing if the agency is meeting the needs of the community, determining what programs or projects are critical, which may have become obsolete, and what programs or projects may provide new opportunities for the agency.

Doing an assessment also helps you build valuable relationships and encourages community members to actively participate in making lasting improvements. It's a critical first step in creating trust, community ownership, and sustainability.

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## STEP 1: REFLECT AND STRATEGIZE

### Purpose

Community Needs Assessment is an ongoing process. Before beginning a new assessment cycle, reflect on your previous community needs assessment (CNA) to identify what elements worked well, areas for improvement and whether your implementation strategies had their desired impact.

### Key Components

#### ***Obtain leadership support***

Agency leaders should be engaged at the initiation of the assessment and updated regularly throughout the process. Your agency board members can be strong supporters and may be able to leverage internal resources to support the CNA process.

Organizational leaders and board members can:

- Lend their names to increase the credibility of the project
- Commit resources, including funding and staff support
- Attract potential assessment partners or external funding sources
- Help overcome any roadblocks that emerge along the way
- Champion the project among policy-makers and elected officials

#### ***Identify and obtain resources***

No discussion about community assessment is complete without including community resources. It is important for an agency to know what resources are available, as well as what is needed.

The size of the budget and the nature of financial and in-kind resources will vary with the scope of each assessment. Construct a budget and develop a plan for securing needed resources.

Plan for the following resource needs:

- Staff time (existing staff or hired consultants)
- Assessment design (e.g., scope, objectives)
- Data collection and analysis
- Facilitation of collaboration, planning and priority-setting exercises
- Report writing, production and dissemination
- Operational expenses, including meeting supplies and communications costs

### ***Build an Assessment Team***

An intentionally developed team keeps the CNA process in motion. This team should include individuals from any relevant departments as well as front-line staff who are experienced in community services and/or who have significant ties to community groups.

When developing the plan, it is a good idea to brainstorm with your team:

1. What issues or domains will you assess?
2. What are the different sources you will use to get a variety of type and level of data?
3. What data collection method will you utilize for each?
4. How will you identify resources and assets?
5. What are the goals of the CNA?

Identify the goals of the community needs assessment. Clearly define what you expect to know once the assessment is complete in order to determine what data to collect.

Sample Goals:

- Identify the causes and conditions of poverty in the service area(s)
- Determine the level of poverty in the CAA service area(s)
- Determine the needs of low-income persons
- Determine how well the needs of low-income persons are being met
- Identify (organization-based and client-based) barriers to serving residents
- Identify community strengths and assets
- Solicit recommendations of solutions to address barriers
- Determine broad categories of data to gather. Examples are:
  - Population Profile, Employment
  - Education, Income Management
  - Housing, Emergency Services
  - Nutrition, Linkages and Coordination of Services
  - Self-Sufficiency, Health Care

### ***Reflect on the previous assessment***

Assemble your CNA team to think through the previous CNA process. Strategic questions to consider include:

- What elements of your assessment worked well?
- What elements would you like to do differently this cycle?
- Did your implementation strategies achieve their intended impact? Why or why not?
- How successful were your Community Needs Assessment efforts in the last cycle?
- Were you able to keep community members engaged throughout the assessment?
- How involved was the community in developing the implementation strategies?
- Are there additional stakeholder organizations with whom you could partner?

### ***Review the data sources***

A thorough review of how data were collected and used in previous CNAs can include the following considerations:

- **Quantitative data:** What sources were used in previous years? Did these sources provide new insights or confirm previous findings? Did the resources address/reflect the needs of specific communities or broader regional areas? Are there new or different data sources available?
- **Qualitative data:** What stakeholders were engaged in data collection? During which steps of the process were they engaged? Did these stakeholders provide new information or confirm previous findings? Were any groups inadvertently excluded? Were participants representative of the community served?
- **Data analysis:** How were trends, comparisons and other methods used to identify significant needs and their possible causes? What trends or changes can you detect in the data as a result of the previous CNA process?

### ***Determine the Scope***

When starting to define the scope of your community assessment, you should first determine the specific needs you want to address. Being focused can help develop a clear path to a successful assessment.

When defining the scope of the community assessment to be performed, it is important to narrow down the key questions you want the assessment to answer. Here are some examples of key questions:

- Are we considering the current data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for the service area as required by organizational standard 3.2?
- What services are local public agencies providing, and to whom? (Include law enforcement, probation, courts, schools, workforce development.)
- What do local residents see as the primary needs for this community?
- What are the various intervention strategies being used in my community to address the issues? Are these practices demonstrating any clear outcomes?
- Who are the leaders in my community? What key players in local government are concerned with the issues we want to address?
- What local volunteer groups (e.g., Rotary clubs) serve the community?
- What community organizations focus on the issue? Are they delivering services in a meaningful way?
- Are there partnering opportunities with other nonprofits or faith-based and community organizations?
- What are the gaps in service to people in the community? What would a complete system look like?

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.

When conducted in a systematic and community-engaged manner, the CNA process can serve as a powerful tool to develop community partnerships and implement evidence-based strategic interventions that address priority community needs.

Reflecting on the community's prior needs and your current assets will help your organization strategize where it would like to go and how to get there. Be clear on what you want to accomplish, who you need to involve, develop a clear work plan and a strong committee that will help to implement plan and promote engagement right from the start.

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## STEP 2: IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

### Purpose

Establishing robust, trusting relationships with community stakeholders fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment, creating a stronger sense of joint ownership of the community needs assessment (CNA) process. While this is a discrete step, stakeholders should be engaged throughout the CNA process.

### Key Components

#### ***Map assets that support community improvement***

The process of mapping community assets emphasizes individuals and resources in the community that can act as change agents to affect your agency's' decisions about services. This process can illuminate unexpected stakeholders or partners to engage in the CNA process.

Types of assets identified include:

- **Human resources:** An organization's staff, board of directors, programs, membership and target population, including individual expertise, talent, training and skills
- **Physical resources:** A geographic location that is accessible to the target population and provides public space and meeting rooms
- **Informational resources:** Formal and informal networks of communication and participation in formal and informal associations
- **Political resources:** Constituencies of elected officials and public and private institutions that advocate for resources and policy changes
- **Existing intervention resources:** Anti-Poverty programs that are already occurring in the community

The goal is to start with the community's strengths, and then build toward consensus.

Community assets may include:

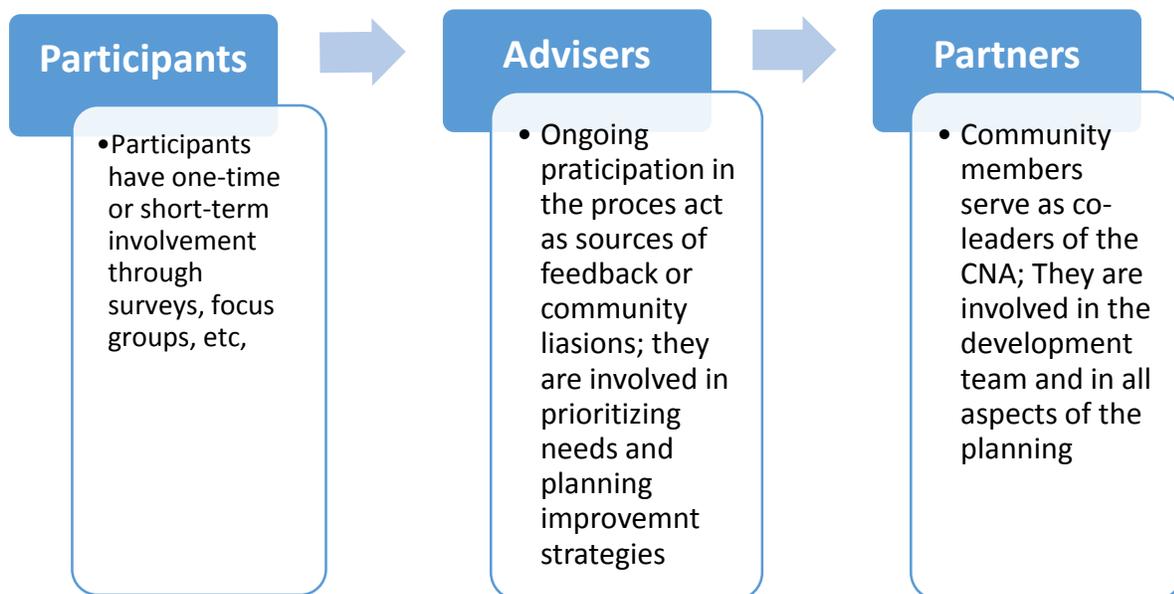
- Individuals, including recipients of current your agency community benefit services
- Government, public, private and philanthropic institutions
- Representatives of the local economy and workforce development
- Holders of physical spaces where the community might be engaged (e.g., community gardens, libraries)
- Associations (neighborhood, tenant, legal, advocacy, faith-based, etc.)

### ***Develop an engagement approach***

Engaging stakeholders should be a deliberate process. Community stakeholders and the Assessment team may have different ideas for what their involvement looks like, but should work together to define their roles and responsibilities and agree upon expectations for involvement. Ensuring shared understanding of CNA goals and expectations will facilitate collaboration.

There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to Community Needs Assessment; the scope of engagement depends on your agency and community factors and preferences. The figure below presents a spectrum of levels of Community Needs Assessment in the CNA process.

#### **Community Needs Assessment Spectrum**



Source: Health Research & Educational Trust. (2016, June). Engaging patients and communities in the community health needs assessment process. Chicago, IL: Health Research & Educational Trust. Accessed at: [www.hpoe.org/engagingCHNA](http://www.hpoe.org/engagingCHNA)

While all of these approaches will meet the requirements for your CNA, emphasizing more robust partnerships can enhance the quality and impact of the CNA process. Engaging communities at an advanced level requires a concerted effort and time to activate and sustain the relationship. Fostering a sense of joint ownership of the assessment — thereby making the community a part of the process, rather than the subject of it — will improve the chances that your CNA will achieve its desired impact, which in turn paves the road toward building a healthier community.

### ***Identify stakeholders to participate in the CNA***

Stakeholders can come in many forms; they can be individuals or organizations, from the community – all of those voices are valuable. Stakeholders should be representative of the community to ensure that all voices are heard. It is particularly important to engage populations most at risk for having barriers to self-sufficiency; having those individuals be part of the process will help you identify the root causes of the problems and develop appropriate approaches to address them.

### ***Engage a range of community members***

Perspective can be gained on the community from soliciting input from a wide range of community members. A **community member** is any resident of a particular geographic area, including anyone who lives or works within that area. The list below describes subgroups of people from your community and your agency that can be engaged in a CNA process.

**Clients:** Individuals who have come to the agency seeking assistance may have nuanced insights into the needs of the community.

**Volunteers:** Volunteers include those who freely offers their time, services, and/or skills within the agency.

**Agency staff:** Increasing engagement in the CNA process within your agency strengthens relationships across departments and professions.

**Board Members:** Your agency leadership, the Board– are particularly strong partners in a CNA process, as their primary responsibility is to assure that CAA not only meets all federal and state requirements but also provides high-quality services to low-income community served.

**Populations experiencing specific disparities:** It is particularly important to reach out to populations that are known to have specific challenges, such as, homeless persons, legal and illegal immigrants, ex-offenders, the elderly, physically and developmentally challenged individuals, pregnant women and children living in poverty, and minority populations or their representatives. It is particularly important to build relationship with these individuals, as any implementation strategies may address their exact needs.

**Stakeholder organizations:** CNA stakeholder organizations may be public or private entities from a wide range of sectors interested in the health of community members. Engaging stakeholders from a wide range of sectors allows diverse perspectives to be represented. Organizations that also serve your clients can provide unique insights and function as implementation strategy partners. The Community Sectors and Groups to Consider for Partnership in the CNA Process, identified as **Appendix A**, suggests potential partners in a CNA process.

Community stakeholders vary by community, and this is just a sample list of potential partners. Identifying early in the process can highlight unexpected stakeholders or partners to engage in the CNA process.

It is vital to be accountable and responsible to those community stakeholders who contribute time and energy to the process. Engaging, thanking and reporting back to those stakeholders who have been involved can flow naturally into planning the next CNA together.

Community Needs Assessment should be an ongoing and thoughtful process. Be sure to set reasonable expectations for community members' involvement, and coordinate your efforts with other organizations so that the same individuals are not tapped for multiple assessments. It is important to be culturally sensitive to the needs, norms and values of the community, including recruiting participants in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner

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## STEP 3: COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA

### Purpose

As required by organizational standard 3.3, the organization must collect and analyze a combination of quantitative statistical data as well as qualitative data that reflects the experiences and opinions of community stakeholders. Summarize and combine these data to develop a picture of overall community health and to highlight the particular needs of various populations in your community.

### Key Components

#### ***Develop a data strategy***

When planning the data collection process, the CNA assessment committee can discuss the following considerations:

- Is this the agency's first CNA or an update from previously published CNAs?
- Will the collected data be new, updated from existing data or both?
- What requirements need to be fulfilled?
- Is the agency operating alone or with other partners?
- Is the CNA representing one or multiple jurisdictions?
- Is there a system in place to store and manage CNA data?
- Does the agency require additional support to compile, assess and publish the data?
- What is needed to identify disparities and unmet needs?

The agency can call on both internal and community resources to advise on data collection and provide data. This can include:

- Your agency staff
- Public health departments
- Local colleges/universities
- Research organizations
- Community volunteers
- Consulting firms

#### ***Decide what data to include***

Comprehensive CNAs include a thorough review of the statistics regarding a range of population indicators. Data collected and analyzed should reflect the factors that impact the causes and conditions of poverty.

Some segments of a population—such as individuals who lack a stable address or who do not speak English—may not be represented in existing data. Make a specific effort to engage

individuals from those populations. Consider where these individuals congregate and conduct targeted outreach in these locations.

### ***Apply research principles to the CNA process***

Your CNA will include a combination of two main types of data:

- **Quantitative:** numerical population data that can establish a benchmark for indicators and conditions examples include Census Data, Community Commons, Internal agency reports, etc.
- **Qualitative:** descriptive data based on opinions and perceptions that can illustrate how people think or feel; typically gathered from survey, key informant interviews, focus groups or community forums.

### ***Collect quantitative data***

There are lots of ways to get statistics. The US Census Department publishes all its data so it can be used to create a profile of your community.

You can find out how many people own their homes versus those who rent, how many families have one (or two) parents in a household with children ... and many more statistics. But sometimes that is hard to navigate these numbers.

A program called Community Commons was created to help make access to the data more user friendly. It is possible to download charts, graphs and maps (and other visualization tools) that will help you share the data with your Assessment Team.

If you find that the majority of people with low income are found in the north west section of your service area, you would want to work on getting your services out there – so they can be easily accessible to the people in need. If there is limited transportation, you would not want to locate your main office or your primary service sites in places where access is difficult.

If you find areas where there are no low cost grocery stores or stores where fresh produce is available, that may prompt a community level strategy to be established.

National data sets of quantitative sources that can help you identify disparities at the local level can be found in **Appendix B**.

### ***Collect Internal Data***

Just as you are looking at the external community and different data sets, as well as, gathering qualitative data from external constituencies, it is important to look at the agency and the programs and initiatives you facilitate.

Not only is this best practice, but funders are now expecting that agencies evaluate both the outcomes and return on investment, as well as participate in continuous quality improvements.

Performing a fiscal and impact analysis allows you to ensure:

- Programs are still adequately meeting community needs
- Program outcomes are appropriate for the program and needs
- Funding is spent in a manner that produces the best possible return on investment
- Programs are sustainable

### ***Collect community-engaged qualitative data***

Information not available in existing databases should be collected directly from your community. This is an ideal opportunity to engage your community. There are four main approaches to obtaining qualitative data:

- **Community surveys:** surveys distributed widely to the community on paper and/or online, see **Appendix C** for examples
- **Key stakeholder interviews:** one-on-one conversations between facilitators and community stakeholders
- **Focus groups:** group-based conversations of 5 to 10 participants led by a facilitator
- **Community Forums:** community-wide meetings led by a facilitator

See **Appendix D** for more details on the qualitative approaches described above.

Guiding principles to consider when soliciting the opinions of community members about their community health needs include:

- Involve community members in developing surveys or interview guides to ensure that questions are culturally appropriate, are understandable and will elicit desired responses. Do not use agency specific jargon, as most people outside of the field will not understand it.
- When developing questions, make sure the questions accurately and directly address what is being measured.
- Keep the wording of questions simple, with clearly defined terms. Avoid leading questions, two-part questions or questions that make assumptions about the respondent.
- Test the questions on a small sample of potential respondents so they can give feedback and identify any confusing terms or suggest modifications.
- Keep surveys short to reduce the time burden on the respondents and increase the response rate. Include only relevant, necessary questions.
- Collect responses from a large and diverse group of individuals who are representative of the community served. If there is a significant non-English-speaking population, consider approaches that would allow those individuals to participate in their native language.
- Train individuals who will be conducting interviews and focus groups to perform this work consistently and neutrally so as not to influence responses.
- Develop standard processes for analyzing data. This is particularly important when coding qualitative data, as it is a fairly subjective process.

Don't forget to include Customer Satisfaction data, which is an excellent source for the identification of agency level needs.

If customers have an issue with the amount of time it took for them to get a service or the trouble they had in getting to the service site, that will let you know that you must identify either new resources or new ways of using your existing resources. If customers praise your staff, the way they were respected during service, the ease of accessing the service – that will let you know you must maintain your resources to continue to provide the level of service that has satisfied them.

### ***ANALYZE DATA***

A CNA is not about presenting the data; it is about sharing the story of what the data is telling you. It is about letting your agency, Board of Directors, state and federal agencies, funders, decision-makers, and the community-at-large get a picture of the needs and strengths of your community, while understanding the critical role your agency plays in it. Many CAA staff have shown concerns with what they must do with the results of their CNA.

Conduct analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis is the most critical part of the assessment process because the critical needs that are identified and the key findings will guide the strategic planning and set the course for what needs to address and how to best address them (types of services, location of services, staffing, partners, etc.). This step can be carried out by staff, management, the CNA workgroup, a consultant, or a combination of these.

In order to effectively analyze data, you should:

- Analyze both the quantitative and qualitative data
- Carefully review the written survey responses and determine how to categorize
- Develop methodology to take quantitative and qualitative data and rank needs
- Identify any similarity in findings from quantitative and qualitative data
- Review agency data on the poverty population being served and the services being provided
- Compare agency data to data collected in the needs assessment and identify any gaps or barriers
- Identify trends and compare data from prior needs assessments

Be sure to reflect:

- Compare data from the CSBG Performance Report to data obtained from the Community Commons website to assess how effective the agency is at proportionately serving each county and different populations
- Compare the county poverty data to the persons served by county data in the CSBG Performance Report for the prior year

- Compare the CSBG National Performance Indicators (NPI) Performance Data on number of persons receiving each type of service to the needs indicated in quantitative and qualitative data.

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## STEP 4: DETERMINE KEY FINDINGS

### Purpose

The data collection step should result in ample data and information about your community's needs and assets. As you have now analyzed the data, you will identify the assessment's key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty as required by organizational standard 3.4.

Key findings serve several purposes: they validate anecdotal evidence of community needs and assets, they highlight significant trends found in the data collection process, they reveal differences across segments of the community, and they help clarify answers to the community assessment's key questions.

### Key Components

Identify key findings of the causes (the factors causing and/or impacting poverty) and conditions of poverty (what poverty looks like/what the need looks like).

Causes of poverty could be lack of jobs paying a decent wage, lack of jobs, lack of basic life skills, lack of completion of secondary education, lack of post-secondary education, lack of financial resources, institutional poverty, intergenerational poverty, single-parent households, lack of medical care, etc.).

Conditions of poverty (the living conditions at a household and community level of persons in poverty) are conditions such as substandard housing, lack of health care providers and facilities, lack of adequate nutrition, lack of a mass transit system, etc.

It is recommended to describe the causes and conditions for each CSBG service area since they vary for each community. Key findings can be organized into categories to help summarize the data. When you separate your key findings from one another, you can use them more effectively when planning your response. Common key findings categories used in community assessments include:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses/Gaps
- Opportunities
- Challenges

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## STEP 5: PRIORITIZE TOP NEEDS

### Purpose

The agency and community stakeholders go through a process to distinguish the most pressing community needs based on the data collected. The identified priority needs will be addressed through the implementation strategies established by the Board and Management.

### Key Components

There are many techniques to use to prioritize the issues – force field analysis, the five whys, setting up a matrix, cost-benefit analysis, etc. See **Appendix E** for description of techniques.

Once you have decided on the priority issues that the agency will address, a list of need statements should be developed.

Regardless of your process, there may be situations in which judgment calls are required. One segment who provided input thinks x is the biggest need and another segment thinks it is y. When you move to the planning phase, you will consider many different factors and the “top” needs may change.

It is important to be clear with all participants in the Assessment Committee whether their ‘votes’ are binding, or simply ‘recommendations’. It is also important to be clear about whether certain individuals have the power to make judgment calls and/or eliminate “priority” areas based on other factors.

This takes considerable time and effort to determine

NOTE -- This process includes identifying criteria to use in the prioritization process.

#### ***Identify criteria for prioritization***

It is at your discretion to develop prioritization criteria and processes. A set of criteria should be determined to guide the prioritization process. Typically, three to six priorities are selected, based on:

- Magnitude of the problem
- Severity of the problem
- Need among vulnerable populations
- Community’s capacity and willingness to act on the issue
- Ability to have a measurable impact on the issue
- Availability of your agency and community resources
- Existing interventions focused on the issue
- Whether the issue is a root cause of other problems

- Trending health concerns in the community

Additional prioritization criteria can include:

- The importance of each problem to community members
- Evidence that an intervention can change the problem
- Alignment with an organization's existing priorities
- Your agency's ability to contribute finances and resources to address the concern
- Potential challenges or barriers to addressing the need

### ***Select Top Priority Needs***

Priority needs should be set by Board and agency leadership.

Action steps to be considered are:

- Discuss the data – Present the qualitative and quantitative data to the Board. Make sure that the data are presented in a format that is accessible and easy to comprehend.
- Review community assets – Reflect back on the data collected to identify what resources exist in your community to address the need. Take stock of what resources (staffing, in-kind, financial, etc.) in the agency could potentially be leveraged to address that need.
- Select priorities – Decide which approach you want to use to determine priority needs.
- Build consensus around priority needs – If you select priorities that vary from community recommendations, justify the reasons for making those choices. Consider the consequences of not addressing an issue and how that can affect the community's well-being in the future. In the case of overlapping needs, consider consolidating into a single priority.

### ***Describe which needs were not prioritized***

It may not be possible to address all community needs at once. If there are significant needs that are not prioritized or will not be addressed, you should be able to describe what the needs are and why you have chosen not to address them.

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## STEP 6: DOCUMENT PLAN AND COMMUNICATE RESULTS

### Purpose

The completion of a community assessment process should allow you to make informed decisions about your goals and objectives. As required by organizational standard 3.1, the organization must conduct and assessment and issue a report within the past three years.

Documenting and sharing the results of the board approved assessment with both internal and external audiences is vital. This provides an opportunity for the many participating organizations and the community at large to see the final product. It serves as a reference point for future discussions and planning strategies to address community needs.

### Key Components

#### ***Publish the CNA process and results***

Write and publish a public report documenting the process and findings of the community needs assessment (CNA). The report should include:

- Executive Summary
- Background on Community Needs Assessment (requirements/processes used to conduct the CNA)
- Organizational Profile (agency and services currently provided)
- Community Needs Assessment Results Overview
- Community Needs Assessment Process Overview
  - Timeline and Data Collection Plan
  - Identification of all organizations or any other third parties that collaborated or assisted
- A description of the service area and community served
- Data Collection Methods (surveys, interviews, forums, research) and general description of work completed by service area and by county. Provide, either in this section or in an appendix referenced in this section, the names of the community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector persons or organization, public sector individuals, and persons representing educational institutions that were either surveyed, interviewed, or participated in a forum or focus group to ensure Org Standard 2.2 is met.
- Organize Data Using CSBG Domains
- Key Findings on Causes and Conditions of Poverty (by county and overall CSBG service area)
  - Causes of Poverty per county
  - Conditions of Poverty per county
- The process for identifying and prioritizing needs, including prioritization criteria

- A prioritized list of community needs and a description of those priority community needs
- Potentially available resources and strategic measures to address priority needs
- An evaluation of impact for strategies implemented since the last assessment, if available

***Present material in an accessible way***

A written document, approved by the board, representing your CNA process and results allows information to be shared with the community.

Presenting data in a clear yet comprehensive way, can enable discussion and interest in community improvement. Tips for organizing and presenting data include:

- Organize data, surveys, and findings based on topics/headings.
- Use graphs, maps, photos, tables and charts when necessary and applicable to the data.
- Select appropriate graphics or visualizations to display findings.
- Identify ways to present data that highlight disparities.
- Use descriptive labels on all graphs and tables.
- Use qualitative data to support quantitative data
- Try to tell a story with the data.
- Cite references

Variations of the CNA Report that can be helpful to generate include:

- A report targeted to the general public which presents CNA data and findings in a briefer and more simplified format
- A simplified shortened needs assessment report to post on the agency’s website o A report or document targeted to potential funders or partners
- A report or document targeted to local elected officials
- A report or document targeted to State Representatives and Senators from the service area addressing the needs of their constituents

***Publicizing CNA results***

Publicizing the results of the CNA raises awareness about the issues affecting the community served and promotes engagement and conversation between your agency, partners and potential collaborators. The CNA can be publicized through various channels to gain a larger audience, such as:

- Websites of your agency, partnering organizations, businesses and other stakeholders
- Social media accounts of your agency, partnering organizations, businesses and other stakeholders

- Press releases in print, online and broadcast media
- Distribution of copies of your CNA in print and online format in and out of the your agency
- Email blasts of your agency, partnering organizations, businesses and other stakeholders
- Newsletters of your agency, partnering organizations, businesses and other stakeholders
- School ListServes
- Issue briefs
- Links to key findings on websites of your agency and community organizations

The CNA document can also serve as a repository of community assets by including a list of resources related to the identified community needs. Consider linking to websites of community resources and to upcoming education and promotion events.

Develop a tracking system to assess how many individuals accessed your CNA through all forms of distribution. This will help determine which method drives the most interest and whether there are populations who are not receiving the information.

***Engage the agency and community around CNA results***

Present the report to both internal and external audiences, such as staff members, clients, key stakeholders, collaborating partners and community organizations and local residents to stimulate dialogue and comments on the assessment process and outcome. This can be done by:

- Conducting meetings with community members to gather their input on the CNA results
- Providing oral presentations about the CNA report in public meetings to promote more interaction and engagement
- Discussing the CNA findings with your agency staff members to raise awareness about community needs and other pertinent issues in the community and workforce

A robust community discussion of the CNA results can open the opportunity for fostering partnerships around implementation strategies and future assessments.

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## STEP 7: PLAN AND IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES

### Purpose

Developing comprehensive, multifaceted strategies to address the community needs prioritized in your assessment is crucial to improving community strength. Regardless of whether you have been doing community improvement work for many years or are new to this process, you can strengthen, abandon or implement services or programs to address the needs identified in your community needs assessment (CNA).

### Key Components

#### ***Engage strategic partnerships***

Actively encourage involvement in the implementation strategies planning process to ensure widespread buy-in and to increase the odds of making an impact on the community.

**External partnerships:** Develop a plan with community stakeholders to garner support for implementation efforts. You may want to form an implementation committee including individuals who participated in previous stages as well as new stakeholders who can offer fresh insight and resources. It is particularly important to involve members of the population who will be affected by the implementation strategies to ensure plans are culturally appropriate. Reinforcing and strengthening these relationships can be important as your agency moves from the assessment phase to developing and implementing strategies to address identified community priorities.

#### ***Collaborative strategies increase potential for impact***

The Collective Impact Framework posits that no single entity or sector alone can tackle our society's most complex problems. The top needs identified in your CNA are likely the result of complex social, economic and environmental factors, making Collective Impact an appropriate model to apply to your implementation strategies. Widespread collaboration among community stakeholders around shared challenges can catalyze positive change in the community. The Collective Impact Framework has five key elements:

- Participants have a common agenda with a joint approach for solving an agreed-upon problem.
- Data and results are measured consistently across participants.
- Action plans have mutually reinforcing activities.
- Open communication is necessary to build trust and ensure mutual objectives.
- A backbone organization coordinates the collaborative effort.

Consider adopting some or all of these elements as you shape your approach for addressing community needs.

### ***Determine your community assets***

Assets in your community can be leveraged for your collective improvement efforts. There is no need to duplicate services or programs that already exist. Reflect on identified assets and partners within your community at large. Ensure that the partnership would be mutually beneficial for all stakeholders.

### ***Identify the drivers of community improvement***

Developing a ROMA logic model helps guide the theory and assumptions underlying the implementation strategies. The ROMA Logic Model can be a “blueprint” for any of the CAAs programs or services. It is a systemic way to visualize the relationships among the needs, services/activities, outputs and projected changes or outcomes, that you hope to achieve. In addition, the logic model can help improve program management and decision-making,

### ***Select strategies to address priority needs***

Develop a strategy for each need prioritized in your CNA. Your agency can select strategies that impact the needs of the population (e.g., transportation, improved access to health care, lack of affordable housing)

### ***Set goals and objectives for the implementation strategies***

Set goals for each of the strategies you decide to adopt. What do you want to change? Defining your specific goals and objectives will help focus the strategies. Make sure to set “SMART” goals:

- ✓ **Specific**
- ✓ **Measurable**
- ✓ **Achievable**
- ✓ **Realistic**
- ✓ **Time-bound**

Strive for quantifiable measures, but do not neglect critical issues whose importance may justify the development of non-standardized measures and/or new data sources. Do not shy away from challenges or setting courageous goals—this is your opportunity to tackle the most pressing issues facing your community. If possible, work with community stakeholders to develop community-wide metrics to measure the collective impact of the strategies. Your agency should also have separate metrics to measure the impact of their specific strategies.

### ***Tailor strategies to community culture***

Strategies should be unique to your community based on its needs, the demographics of individuals in the community, the capacity of the agency and the community partners you decide to work with. Be aware of how the culture and environment of your community fits with an intervention. This is an area where engaging external stakeholders can be extremely valuable, as they can provide guidance regarding which strategies would be socially and culturally acceptable.

### ***Consider evaluation from the start***

Evaluation should be built into the planning process of your implementation strategies, including how evaluation activities will be funded. You will need to be able to describe the anticipated impact of the implementation strategies and report on the evaluation of the impact. If your CNA does not contain the baseline data needed, collect baseline measures now so that you will be able to tell the extent that your strategy is working and make sure you are measuring the right things in the right way.

Evaluation can look at short- and long-term outcomes as well as process metrics. The short-term measures are most likely to be process measures (how many people used a service or attended a program), while long-term outcomes will monitor changes in status—a process that takes more time. Intermediate goals and benchmark metrics in the evaluation process will help you know if you are going in the right direction and will be important when discussing progress with the Board, agency leadership and other internal teams, as well as external stakeholders.

### ***Identify funding sources and opportunities***

New interventions or strategies require resources—both human and financial—to succeed. As you plan your strategies, consider what funding you have available and how it may need to be increased through grant funding. Reflect on these questions:

- How can this intervention be sustainably funded? What grant opportunities are available?
- What community foundations may want to invest? Are there community development financial institutions that you could partner with?
- Are there any collaborative grant opportunities?
- What in-kind resources from the agency or community can be tapped?

Because these strategies will take time to make a population level impact, secure funding sources that will allow the strategy to be sustainable.

### ***Document the implementation strategies***

Document your implementation strategies, including:

- Strategies for each identified need
- Actions to address prioritized needs
- Anticipated impacts of the strategies
- A plan to evaluate the impact of the strategies
- Budget to estimate how much the strategies will cost to implement

### ***Use CNA Results in Strategic Planning and CAP Plan***

After completing the community needs assessment, prepare a plan for how the CNA Report data will be utilized during the strategic planning process. Also, review the agency mission and determine if there is a need to revise based on community needs and agency resources.

Some things to consider during strategic planning include:

- Which of the top 5 or more needs is the agency going to address in the next 5 years and in the next year?
- How will we address the top needs?
- Where do low income persons live?
- Where are the highest areas of need?
- Where do we offer services and are there any adjustments we need to make to the location of centers or outreach?
- What are the gaps in services (needs identified vs. service availability)?
- Where are their gaps in resources both from an organizational perspective and community perspective?
- What are the barriers to access services in specific areas of the community?
- How can we form or strengthen partnerships to better address gaps in services and remove barriers?
- How can we better coordinate services?
- Use CNA results to develop an outcome based anti-poverty focused CAP Plan

Track your progress, note key successes, and document any obstacles to implementing the plan. You will also want to share the data and accomplishments with community leaders and other people and organizations that contributed their time and expertise to the needs assessment. Identify the best venue for sharing the results. You can organize a community meeting and/or write a policy brief or one-pager.

### **Summary**

You should now have the knowledge and tools you need to conduct a successful community assessment. Using the steps outlined here should put you on the right path to serving your community and its needs. Furthermore, this process – from assessment through implementation and evaluation – can be an important and insightful first step toward working to improve the overall health of your community.

## Resources

Information provided in this toolkit was compiled from a variety of resources including:

- Community Action Association of Pennsylvania
- Impact Community Action
- Introduction to Results-Oriented Management and Accountability Trainer Manual
- Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- The Community Tool Box
- Strengthening Nonprofits offers a Resource Guide for Conducting a Community Assessment
- Virginia Department of Social Services, Office of Volunteerism and Community Services

**Appendices:**

Appendix A: Community Sectors and Groups to Consider for Partnership in the CNA Process

Appendix B: Quantitative Data Sources

Appendix C: Survey Examples

Appendix D: Qualitative methods

Appendix E: Prioritization Techniques

## Appendix A: Community Sectors and Groups to Consider for Partnership in the CNA Process

SECTOR	EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS
Agriculture/food suppliers	Farmers (including farmers' markets), food banks/pantries, restaurants
Business	Self-employed individuals, small businesses, corporations with local offices
Community information	Libraries, 2-1-1 systems, newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, social media, blogs, online news magazines, non-English media outlets
Education	Public and private K–12 schools, preschools/early childhood education, colleges and universities, boards of education, English as a second language programs, teachers, school administrators, homeschool organizations, charter schools
Government	Regional, provincial, state and local governments; tribal governing bodies; elected officials; public health agencies; planning departments
Health care	Patients; caregivers; medical, dental and mental health providers; your agencies and health care systems; community clinics/federally qualified health centers; alternative health practitioners; health insurance companies; retail clinics; ambulance companies/paramedics
Housing and development	Public and nonprofit housing agencies, organizations that provide rent subsidies or affordable housing, developers, fair-housing advocates
Public safety	Local and state police, court systems, judges, probation officers, prosecutors, defense lawyers, prisons and jails, fire departments

Public health	State, tribal, local and territorial health departments; public health institutes; nonprofit organizations
Religion	Places of worship and their members and associated organizations
Social services	United Way; nonprofit organizations that provide services such as job training, food, shelter, elder services, services for individuals with disabilities and advocacy for immigrants
Transportation	Public transit, bicycle advocates, transportation departments, safe routes to school programs
Volunteers and activists	Political activists, block/neighborhood associations, community coalitions
Youth	Individuals under 18 and the organizations that work with them, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts

## Appendix B: Quantitative Data Sources

**Table 1-1: Sources of Local Data**

Source	Type
<b>Chamber of Commerce</b>	List of businesses Employment/Unemployment rates Area economic data
<b>Civic organizations</b>	Sources of involved community members Lists of charitable projects
<b>Community college/local university</b>	Enrollment/graduation numbers Fields of study available to students Academic research about the community
<b>Employment Security Commission</b>	Employment/Unemployment rates
<b>Faith-based groups</b>	Membership numbers Lists of members and community needs
<b>Health Department</b>	Immunization rates Disease rates
<b>Hospitals and healthcare providers</b>	Emergency room visits Chronic disease prevalence
<b>Law enforcement agencies</b>	Crime incidence Arrests/convictions numbers Incidence of domestic violence Motor vehicle crash information
<b>Library</b>	Local history/Information unique to the county
<b>Non-profit organizations</b>	Types of services performed Number of people eligible for service Number of people served Plans for the future
<b>Public School System</b>	Enrollment numbers Graduation/drop-out rates Test scores

**Table 1-2: Sources of National Data**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Site</b>
<b>AARP</b>	<a href="https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/">https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/</a>
<b>Annie E. Casey Foundation</b>	<a href="https://datacenter.kidscount.org/">https://datacenter.kidscount.org/</a>
<b>Community Commons</b>	<a href="https://www.communitycommons.org/map/">https://www.communitycommons.org/map/</a>
<b>Community Indicators Consortium</b>	<a href="https://communityindicators.net/resources/">https://communityindicators.net/resources/</a>
<b>Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment tool</b>	<a href="https://cap.engagementnetwork.org/">https://cap.engagementnetwork.org/</a>
<b>County Health Rankings and Roadmaps</b>	<a href="http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/use-data">http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/use-data</a>
<b>Economic Policy Institute</b>	<a href="https://www.epi.org/data/">https://www.epi.org/data/</a>
<b>Knight Foundation</b>	<a href="https://censusreporter.org/">https://censusreporter.org/</a>
<b>Prosperity Now</b>	<a href="https://scorecard.prosperitynow.org/">https://scorecard.prosperitynow.org/</a>
<b>U.S. Census Bureau</b>	<a href="https://www.census.gov/">https://www.census.gov/</a>
<b>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</b>	<a href="https://healthdata.gov/">https://healthdata.gov/</a>
<b>Urban Institute</b>	<a href="https://www.urban.org/research/data-methods/interactive-maps">https://www.urban.org/research/data-methods/interactive-maps</a>

## Appendix C: Survey Examples

### Community Needs Assessment Questionnaire

( source: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3RNQD5Y>)

By completing this survey, you will help towards research of understanding families' resources and needs. You will be asked to answer survey questions that include education, employment, housing, healthcare and other basic needs. This will take approximately 15 - 20 minutes of your time.

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping the organizations in your community to better understand our community needs, the resources available and the services that are still needed. This information will help us to work together to address services that are needed the most. There are no risks to you for participating in this study, and no penalty for not participating.

#### \*1. Today's Date:

Date:

#### \*2. What is your age?

#### \*3. Education?

- I didn't attend school
- 8th grade or less
- Some High School
- GED
- High School Diploma
- Some College
- Associate's Degree
- Trade School
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Professional Certification
- Doctoral Degree



Other (please specify)

**4. Below is a list of agencies. Please select any who are providing you and your family with help?**



Hope



ACCESS



Community Action



The Clothes Closet



The Crisis Center



The Mission (People's Church)



Meals on Wheels



Salvation Army



First Methodist Church



The Good Samaritan



Goodwill



Other (please specify)

**\*5. Are you able to work?**



Yes



No

**\*6. What is your employment status?**



Full time (1)



Not working, retired (5)



Part time (2)



Seasonal (3)



Unemployed (4)

**7. If Unemployed, are you currently looking for work?**



Yes



No

**8. If you are unemployed, please select the reason(s) why below:**

- Attempting to flee domestic abuse or sexual assault
- Criminal Background
- Criminal background: Misdemeanor
- Criminal background: Felony
- Criminal background: Deferred Adjudication
- Criminal background: Probation
- Criminal background: Awaiting Outcome
- Domestic violence/sexual assault victim
- Drug/alcohol problem
- Lack childcare
- Lack permanent address
- Lack proper clothing
- Lack skills/education
- Lack transportation
- Lack US documents
- Language barrier
- Layoff or Downsizing
- Learning/developmental disability
- Mental health problem
- Other health issues
- Permanent physical disability
- Sexual orientation or gender identity
- Temporary physical disability
- Unaccompanied youth
- Other (please specify)

**\*9. Would you like help with these job related activities? (Check all that apply)**

- Career assessment

- Career/job training
- Job search strategies
- Job Interviewing skills
- Resume writing
- Career Information options
- Work clothes
- None

**\*10. Do you have reliable telephone access?**

- Yes
- No

**\*11. Do you have access to the Internet?**

- Yes
- No

If No is selected, then SKIP the next question.

**12. Where do you usually use the internet? (Check all that apply)**

- At home
- At work
- At the library
- At a friend's home
- At a family member's home
- Other (please specify)

**\*13. What is your Zip code?**

**\*14. In what town do you usually stay?**

- Alto
  - Bullard
  - Cuney
  - Etna
  - Gallatin
  - Jacksonville
  - New Summerfield
  - Reese
  - Recklaw
  - Rusk
  - Troup
  - Wells
  - Outside of Cherokee County
  - Other (please specify)
- 

**\*15. What is your housing status?**

- Own
  - Rent
  - Staying with friends or family
  - Homeless - streets/car
  - Homeless - shelter
  - Homeless - transitional housing (HUD temporary)
  - Hotel/motel
  - Nursing/long term care
  - Assisted living
  - Group home
  - Halfway house
  - Other (please specify)
-

**\*16. Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage?**

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Non-Hispanic White or European American
- Latino or Hispanic American
- American Indian or Alaska Native and White
- Asian and White
- Black or African American and White
- American Indian or Alaska Native and Black or African American
- Other Multiple race combinations greater than one percent (please specify)

**\*17. What language do you speak at home?**

- English
- Spanish
- Spanish and English
- Other (please specify)

**\*18. What is your marital status?**

- Single
- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Living with partner

**\*19. Do you have minor children? (Under 18)**

- Yes
- No

If No is selected, then SKIP the next question.

**20. Are you your child (ren)'s primary caretaker?**

- Yes
- No

**21. If you have children or other dependents under your care: What is your family situation?**

- Single mom
- Single dad
- Two parents
- Raising own children and children of others
- Raising children of other family members (I am a grandparent, aunt, etc.)
- Raising someone else's children, not family
- Foster parents
- Shared custody
- No children, other dependents

**22. Who provides your childcare? (or dependent care)? (Check all that apply)**

- Self
- Friends
- Family
- Church
- Daycare
- Have to leave children alone
- Before and/or after school on campus

If "Self" is selected, then SKIP the next question.

**23. Is your childcare (dependent care) provider dependable?**

- Yes
- No

**24. Do you need different childcare (dependent care) help?**

- Yes
- No

**25. What kind of childcare (dependent care) help do you need?**

- Daycare center
- Before/after school care
- Care for child with special needs
- Evening hours due to work shift schedule
- Other (please specify)

**26. Have you ever lost a job because you didn't have dependable child or dependent care?**

- Yes
- No

**27. Are you caring for adult children or adult dependents including seniors? (Due to mental or physical disability)**

- No
- Yes (please specify)

If No is selected, then SKIP the next question.

**28. Who provides care for the adult children or adult dependents? (Check all that apply)**

- Self
- Friends
- Family
- Church
- Daycare
- Have to leave elder/senior alone

Able to stay home alone

Other (please specify)

**\*29. How many people live where you stay?**

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Other (please specify)

**\*30. Using the answer from previous question, please select the appropriate number of household members to determine Income level?**

Family of 1 - \$11,490 (1)

Family of 2 - \$15,510 (2)

Family of 3 - \$19,530 (3)

Family of 4 - \$23,550 (4)

Family of 5 - \$27,570 (5)

Family of 6 - \$31,590 (6)

Family of 7 - \$35,610 (7)

Family of 8 - \$39,630 (8)

Family of 9 - \$43,650 (9)

Family of 10 - \$47,670 (10)

For each additional Family member, add \$4,020 (11)

**\*31. Is your household income "More than" or "Less than" the Income level selected for the number of household members?**

- MORE than
- LESS than

**\*32. Which of these monthly bills do you have? (Check all that apply)**

- Cable/Satellite TV
- Car/Transportation
- Child Care
- Child Support
- Credit Cards
- Food
- Gasoline
- Insurance
- Internet
- Loans
- Loans - Payday
- Loans - School
- Medical
- Mortgage
- Phone - Cell
- Phone - House
- Rent
- Utilities
- None
- Other (please specify)

**\*33. What types of income do you have? (Check all that apply)**

- Child support
- Employer wages
- Family/Friends

- Kindness of strangers
- No Income
- Pension/Retirement
- SS
- SSI/SSDI
- Student grants/loans
- TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)
- Unemployment benefits
- VA
- Other (please specify)

**\*34. Tell me if you or a household member receive any of these types of assistance? (Check all that apply)**

- Children's Medicaid
- Department of Family and Protective Services
- Dept. of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services
- Housing Voucher (Section 8)
- Medicaid
- Medicare
- SNAP (Food stamps)
- TANF - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Workforce Commission
- WIC - Woman, Infants, and Children nutrition assistance
- Women's Health Services
- None

**\*35. Do you, or someone in your home have special needs?**

- Yes, me
- Yes, a household member
- Yes, a household member and me
- No

If No is selected, then SKIP the next question.

**36. Do you have any of these School/Education related needs? (Check all that apply)**

- Adult Basic Education
- Adult Education (i.e. computer classes)
- ARD Assistance (Special Education services at school)
- Child's behavior concern
- Child's homework/schoolwork concerns
- Child's school attendance concerns
- Child's standardized exams STARR
- Money for tuition. (School, College, Trade School)
- Difficulty reading (adult)
- Difficulty reading (child)
- English as a second language
- GED/High School Diploma
- Need clothes for school
- Obtaining money for school supplies
- Other (please specify)

**\*37. In the past 24 months, has your child had to transfer schools because you moved?**

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable, no school aged child
- If YES, how many times?

**\*38. Do you have any of the following housing related needs? (Check all that apply)**

- Home not safe-structure
- Housing not affordable
- Furniture or household goods

- Handicap access or modification
  - Mortgage or Rent assistance
  - Other medical related accommodations
  - Pet friendly environment
  - Repairs
  - Utility assistance
  - Neighborhood not safe
  - NONE
  - Other (please specify)
- 

**\*39. Do you need any of the following transportation related help? (Check all that apply)**

- Car/truck
  - Bus tickets (\$ for bus)
  - Child safety seat(s)
  - Driver's license
  - Gasoline
  - Information about bus routes/services
  - Insurance
  - Auto repairs
  - Vehicle registration
  - Vehicle inspection
  - Transportation for someone with a disability
  - NONE
  - Other (please specify)
- 

**\*40. Have you ever lost a job (or not been able to accept a job offer) because of transportation issues?**

- Yes
- No

**\*41. Are you in need of help with any of these things: (Check all that apply)**

- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Anger control
- Caregiver support
- Couples communication
- Depression
- Disability counseling
- Elder abuse
- Family conflicts
- Making decisions/problem solving
- Parenting classes
- Personal problems
- Planning for the future/ Goal setting
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Self-esteem
- Spouse or child abuse
- Thoughts of suicide (in the past 6 months)
- Trauma
- Victimization
- NONE
- Other (please specify)

**\*42. Where do you usually get your food?**

**\*43. Do you need information on how to cook food for any of these special diets? (Check all that apply)**

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Heart Disease

- HIV/AIDS
- Gluten free
- No, I do not need that information
- Other (please specify)

**\*44. Do you need information on food nutrition?**

- Yes
- No

**\*45. Do you need to know how to store food so it will last longer?**

- Yes
- No

**\*46. Do you or someone in your household have any of these healthcare needs? (Check all that apply)**

- Adult diagnosed with disability
- AIDS/HIV risk
- Child diagnosed with disability
- Dental care
- Diabetes
- Eye/vision care
- General Medical care
- Hearing care
- Heart Disease
- Hypertension
- Medical equipment
- Mental Health care
- Prescription medication (\$ for)
- Prosthesis
- Pulmonary Disease (COPD, Emphysema, Asthma)
- STD's (Sexually Transmitted Diseases)

- Substance abuse treatment
- Teen pregnancy
- Transportation to appointments
- Sleep problems
- NONE
- Other (please specify)

**\*47. Do you have health insurance or other health care coverage?**

- No
- Yes (please specify)

**\*48. Are there others in your household who are uninsured?**

- Yes
- No, others in household have insurance
- No others in my household
- Yes (please specify)

**49. If you have health insurance, who provides your health insurance?**

- Self
- Employer
- Government
- Other (please specify)

**\*50. Do you have any of these financial needs or problems? (Check all that apply)**

- Achieving a "living wage" of income (if you achieve a "living wage" it means you don't need help from social services or government programs)
- Health insurance
- Car insurance

- Home/Renter insurance
- Need help collecting child support
- Need TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)
- Budgeting - getting the most from your money & prioritizing
- Bank account
- Have bad credit rating
- Have past due bills
- Currently in collections
- NONE

**\*51. Are you a US veteran?**

- Yes
- No

If No is selected, then SKIP to the LAST question.

**52. If you are a US veteran, are you receiving veteran's benefits?**

- Yes
- No

**53. If you are not receiving veteran's benefits, do you need help getting them?**

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

**54. If you are a veteran or dependent, do you need assistance with any of the following? (Check all that apply)**

- Connecting to Veteran Organization
- Disability
- Education and Training
- Employment
- Health Care
- Healthcare for family members

- Housing
- Life Insurance
- Medals and records
- Medical benefits
- Mental Health Care
- Pension
- Reserve and Guard
- Special and Limited Benefits
- Transition Assistance
- Transportation
- VA Claim Appeals
- Women Veteran Health Services
- NONE
- Other (please specify)

**55. What have we not asked you about that you feel is important?**

# Community Partner Assessment Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job position: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## Identifying Community Needs

1. Identify specific community needs identified by your clients:

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## Programs and Services

2. What type of community programs and services does your organization offer?

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3. What programs and services do you think are needed in the community both presently and in the future?

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4. Do you feel that residents are aware of the programs and services that take place in the community, and if not, do you have any ideas on how to make them aware?

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## Area Organizations

5. What organizations do you partner with to provide programs and services to help the community?

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6. What role do you see our organization having in providing programs and services in the community?

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Additional Comments:

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Return completed survey to:

# Community Needs Assessment Questionnaire

The following questionnaire will only take a few minutes to complete and it will assist in helping people, meeting the community needs, and providing hope. All information will be kept confidential and your name is not required on the questionnaire. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

## Basic Demographic Information :

1. What is your role in the community? (Please select the best choice which fits your role when completing this survey)
  - Community Action Client/Low-Income Resident
  - Faith Based Organization Representative (Church/Faith Based groups, clubs, councils, associations, etc.)
  - Private Sector Representative/Community Member (for profit, small business, private citizen, etc.)
  - Community Organization/Partner (local service provider and non-profits)
  - Educational Institution Faculty/Staff (local adult eds, schools, college and universities)
  - Board Member of Community Action Agency
  - Staff or Volunteer of Community Action Agency
  - Local Politician/Government/Public Sector Representative (non-profit, government regulated, funding sources, etc.)
  
2. What is your home zip code? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What is your gender? (Circle ) Female Male Transgender
  
4. How old are you? (Circle below)
  - 18-25 years
  - 26-49 years
  - 50-64 years
  - 65 and older
  
5. Do you have children under the age of 18? (Circle) Yes No Currently pregnant
  
6. What is your race/ethnicity? (Circle all that apply)
  - Asian or Pacific Islander
  - Black/African American
  - Hispanic/Latino American
  - Indian/Native American
  - White/Caucasian
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. What was your total household income last year? (Circle below)
  - \$0-25,999
  - \$26,000-\$51,999
  - \$52,000-74,999
  - more than \$75,000
  - don't know/decline to say
  
8. What languages are spoken in your home? (Circle all that apply)
  - English
  - Spanish
  - Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

As part of the local Community Action Agency ongoing Community Needs Assessment, we are asking that you assist us by completing the following survey. The results of the survey assist in targeting funding toward the greatest community needs.

The following topic areas require that you mark the **three most important needs in each category**. Please take the time to review each carefully before making your decision. As always, we value your input and feedback.

- EDUCATION – Mark the three most important needs.**
- More services for adult education
  - Preschool activities for child(ren) to develop school readiness skills
  - More assessable counseling to prepare students for tech or college
  - More certificate/degree programs offered locally
  - Affordable transportation options to and from school
  - Affordable high quality childcare options for parent who would like to further their education
  - Increasing the community’s knowledge of available education resources
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- EMPLOYMENT – Mark the three most important needs.**
- More jobs with better pay and benefits
  - More training for the types of jobs available in the area
  - Affordable transportation to and from job
  - Affordable childcare during work hours
  - Early reinforcement of the values of entering the workforce
  - Increasing the community’s knowledge of available employment resources
  - Improve the workforce readiness skills of people who are able to work
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- HEALTH – Mark the three most important needs.**
- More community focus on preventative healthcare
  - Provide more education on maintaining personal hygiene
  - More payment assistance programs for adult dental and/or hearing services
  - More vision assistance programs for adults
  - Increasing the community’s knowledge of available health resources
  - More emphasis on early childhood nutrition education
  - More emphasis on reinforcing healthy eating habits
  - More nutritional counseling (one on one and free)
  - More knowledge of available food resources
  - More assistance and resources for victims of domestic violence
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- HOUSING – Mark the three most important needs.**
- More monthly rental assistance programs
  - More affordable housing
  - Increased availability of security/utility deposit programs
  - More counseling resources for homeowners
  - More grants to make home ownership and home rehab affordable
  - More grants to provide services that reduce energy cost
  - More programs to provide free home repair
  - More income based rental housing for disabled and seniors
  - More community supports for homeless families
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- INCOME AND ASSET BUILDING – Mark the three most important needs.**
- Anonymous and confidential budget counseling
  - More education on how to build assets
  - Information on how to access free credit counseling
  - Anonymous and confidential savings counseling
  - More access to low interest loans
  - More information on how to access financial resources
  - Increasing the community’s knowledge of available mainstream financial resources
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – Mark the three most important needs.**
- Increasing the community’s skills and knowledge for leadership development
  - More citizenship classes
  - More education on how to join neighborhood associations, community boards, advisory groups or similar organizations
  - More knowledge on civic activities
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- Support Services – Mark the three most important needs.**
- Child Support     Legal Services     Youth Services
  - Meal Programs     Life Skills Programs and Services
  - Substance Abuse Resources     Emotional Abuse Services
  - Sexual Abuse Services     Physical Abuse Services
  - Transportation Services
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- OVERALL NEEDED – Mark the three most important needs.**
- Employment
  - Education
  - Income and Asset Building
  - Housing
  - Health
  - Civic Engagement
  - Support Services (supporting multiple domains)

A web-based version of this survey can be found at:

## Appendix D: Qualitative methods

### Community Surveys

#### CONTENT AND FORMAT

- Assure respondents of confidentiality.
- Collect race, ethnicity and language data in a culturally appropriate manner.
- Ensure that survey questions are culturally appropriate and at a literacy level and language that respondents can understand.
- Review the survey draft with community members to see what needs to be modified.
- Provide versions of the survey in the languages spoken by community members.
- Consider using or modifying a validated survey instrument or questions.
- Allow space for qualitative answers.
- Provide the option for respondents to be contacted for further involvement in the CNA process.
- Distribute the survey online, on paper or both. Consider using both methods if there are major segments of the community's population who do not have internet access.

#### PARTICIPANTS

- Consider oversampling vulnerable populations since interventions would likely need to be focused on the needs of those groups.
- Distribute the survey where people live, work, learn and play—at churches, local businesses, libraries, etc.
- Widely advertise the survey using social media, newspaper advertisements, etc.
- Engage community leaders to encourage participation in the survey among their constituents.
- Consider specifically surveying the patient population.

## Key Stakeholder Interviews

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<p>Consider whom to interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interview stakeholders from a variety of sectors in the community.</li><li>• Engage local partners—including non-profits, local government, community workers, etc.—for interviews as they likely have insights into the needs of clients in the your agency.</li><li>• Interview individual representatives of the community, including subgroups experiencing specific challenges.</li><li>• Supplement topic areas with sparse secondary data by interviewing community stakeholders knowledgeable in that area.</li></ul> <p>Find innovative ways to recruit for stakeholder interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask community leaders if they know and could provide connections to potential participants with the characteristics being targeted.</li><li>• Engage current clients in your agency that participate in programs with extended timeframes</li><li>• Talk to your board and head start policy councils.</li></ul>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make the location easily accessible; consider factors such as proximity to public transportation, time of day, availability of parking, child care, etc.</li><li>• Hold the interviews in a neutral space (i.e., not just at your agency).</li><li>• Consider online or phone interviews to reduce barriers to participation.</li></ul>
<b>FACILITATOR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that the interview facilitator is culturally competent and speaks the language(s) spoken by the interviewees.</li><li>• Use a facilitator who is well trained in moderating interviews, including keeping participants on topic and maintaining a neutral position.</li></ul>

## DEVELOPING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Develop an interview guide so the same questions are asked across all interviews.
- Ask short and open-ended questions to encourage dialogue on various topics.
- Review the list of questions ahead of time with community members to ensure that questions are culturally appropriate and at a level that participants would be able to understand.
- Be aware that the interview facilitator cannot ask people to identify their health conditions.
- If possible, provide the questions to attendees ahead of time.

## CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

- Explain to participants how their input will be used.
- Establish confidentiality of the participants' responses. Especially in small communities, participants may be worried about their names being attached to their comments.
- Provide an estimated timeline of when final results will be shared.
- Ask whether the individual would like to be involved in future stages of the CNA and set the process for continued engagement.
- Establish realistic expectations for what the agency and partners can do to address community needs.

## Focus Groups

### PARTICIPANTS

- Consider whom to sample: a cross-section of the whole community and/or more targeted groups?
- Contemplate recruiting from existing groups (e.g., tenant associations, head start policy councils, volunteers, etc.).
- Find innovative ways to recruit for focus groups where people live, learn, work and play (e.g., advertisements on social media, in newspapers, on the radio, at churches, local businesses, etc.).
- Engage staff to identify clients for focus groups. Consider members of the community who may not be easily reached and brainstorm how they can be recruited.
- Encourage attendance through reminder notices. Limit focus groups to 10 or fewer participants to ensure that everyone's opinions can be heard.

<b>LOCATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the location easily accessible for community members. Consider factors such as proximity to public transportation, time of day, availability of parking, child care, etc.</li> <li>• Hold the focus groups in a neutral space (i.e., not just at your agency).</li> <li>• Consider holding virtual or phone focus groups to reduce barriers to participation. Focus groups should typically last no longer than 90 minutes.</li> </ul>
<b>FACILITATOR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a facilitator who is well trained in moderating focus groups, including keeping participants on topic, maintaining a neutral position, and making sure that everyone participates and is listened to.</li> <li>• Ensure the facilitator is culturally competent and speaks the language(s) spoken by attendees.</li> <li>• Consider using a facilitator from a neutral third party, so participants feel more comfortable.</li> </ul>
<b>DEVELOPING FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a focus group question guide, so the same questions are asked across multiple focus groups. Ask short and open-ended questions to encourage dialogue on various topics.</li> <li>• Review the list of questions ahead of time with community members to ensure that questions are culturally appropriate and at a level that participants would be able to understand.</li> <li>• If possible, provide the questions to attendees ahead of time. Refrain from asking very sensitive questions that individuals would not want to share in a group.</li> </ul>
<b>CONDUCTING THE FOCUS GROUPS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish confidentiality of the participants' responses. Especially in small communities, participants can be concerned about their names being attached to their comments.</li> <li>• Explain to participants how their input will be used.</li> <li>• Give participants an estimated timeline of when results will be shared.</li> <li>• Establish realistic expectations for what your agency and partners can do to address community needs.</li> </ul>

- Ask whether the individual would like to be involved in future stages of the CNA and set the process for continued engagement.

## Community Forums

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertise the meetings where people live, work, learn and play using social media, newspapers, radio, announcements and flyers, local organizations, support groups, etc. If possible, offer child care for participants.</li> <li>• Explain why the CNA is relevant for the whole community.</li> </ul>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the location easily accessible for community members. Consider factors such as proximity to public transportation, time of day, availability of parking, child care, etc.</li> <li>• Hold the meetings in a neutral space (i.e., not just at your agency).</li> <li>• Consider coordinating the meeting with existing community or town meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>FINDING A FACILITATOR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the facilitator is culturally competent, speaks the languages spoken by community members and is sensitive to attendees' needs.</li> <li>• The facilitator should be well trained in moderating community meetings, including keeping participants on topic, ensuring that louder voices do not drown out others, and maintaining a neutral position.</li> </ul>
<b>DEVELOPING AN AGENDA AND QUESTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a draft agenda and questions and, if possible, distribute them to attendees ahead of time.</li> <li>• Ask participants open-ended questions to encourage dialogue about various topics.</li> <li>• Review the list of questions ahead of time with community members to ensure that questions are culturally appropriate and at a level that participants would be able to understand.</li> </ul>

## MEETING LOGISTICS

- Tell all participants how their feedback will be used and when results will be shared.
- Consider using online methods to gain input from more community members, especially those who may not feel comfortable speaking up in a public setting.
- Establish realistic expectations for what your agency and partners can do to address community needs.
- Provide the option for participants to be contacted for further involvement in the CNA process; this is an easy way to identify individuals who desire increased engagement.

Source: Health Research & Educational Trust. (2016, July). Applying research principles to the community health needs assessment process. Chicago, IL: Health Research & Educational Trust. Accessed at [www.hpoe.org/researchCHNA](http://www.hpoe.org/researchCHNA)

1. Hartwig, K., Calleson, D., and Williams, M. (2006). Unit 1, section 1.1: Definitions, rationale and key principles in CBPR. In *Developing and sustaining community-based participatory research partnerships: A skill-building curriculum*. Retrieved from <https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/cbpr/u1/u11.php>

## Appendix E: Prioritization Techniques

### The Five Whys

The “five whys” can help in determining the root cause of a problem. Planners, and those engaged in the planning process, use this tool to ensure that the problem itself is identified and you are not just observing a symptom of something deeper.

The “Five Whys” is a process of identifying root causes of a problem or situation, created by Ken Miller, The Change Agent’s Guide to Radical Improvement, Copyright 2002. Miller suggests that you need to pursue the underlying elements of problems before you can begin to identify possible outcomes and strategies to achieve the outcomes.

The following activity is an example of how this technique will help reveal what you know and what further information you may need to obtain. For example, if the problem is “lack of public transportation” you would begin by writing this on your flip chart.

Problem  
Statement:  
Lack of Public  
Transportation

Then under that problem statement, you would draw five boxes:

Cause  
1

Cause  
2

Cause  
3

Cause  
4

Cause  
5

Ask “Why does this problem occur?” or “How does it cause a problem?” and write each response in a box. Repeat the question at least five times, writing responses in the boxes until you feel you have reached the final cause.

Place a checkmark on the causes you want to pursue further.

In our transportation example, we might write:

- 1 – The rural area is too large for a daily bus route to cover it all
- 2 – The proposed cost of operating a rural route is very high
- 3 – There is not enough demonstrated interest for an “on demand” system
- 4 – No private or government agency has adopted the issue to be solved
- 5 – There is no funding to purchase a bus to use for public transportation

A second example, using the Transportation domain may produce very different responses. If you identify the need as “individuals do not have transportation to work,” the causes might include:

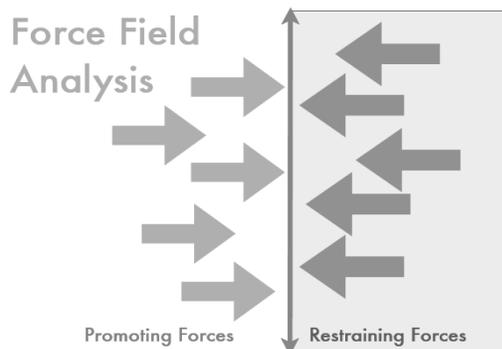
- 1 – Individuals lack driver’s licenses
- 2 – Individuals do not have funds for purchase or repair of private auto
- 3 – Client’s automobiles do not meet inspection
- 4 – Individuals lack funds to pay for insurance
- 5 – Individuals are unable to pay for maintenance

*Consider: Some of the “causes” (such as “lack of funds”) could become problem statements themselves, and the pursuit of root cause continues.*

## Force Field Analysis

In the Force Field Analysis, you identify the forces in the community that will have an impact on the issue have been identified.

You will find both promoting forces and restraining forces at work. Here is a graphic that you could put on a flip chart.



Have participants identify promoting forces and restraining forces and add them to the chart on one of the arrows. Then consideration can be given to how these forces interact to produce the problem and how they will have to be changed to reach a positive outcome.

## Comparison technique

Let’s assume that you have identified six areas where your agency feels the community needs are high and the community resources are low.

One way to identify which are the top three areas, is to compare each one to all the others, and to put the “choice” between the two items the box where they join.

Below is a sample. You will see that the place where the same service is mentioned, that box is blank.

	Services for drug/Alcohol abuse	Skill training for employment	Affordable housing	Access to health care	Lack of jobs	Lack of transportation
Services for drug/Alcohol abuse		Skill training	Housing	Health care	Jobs	D and A services
Skill/training for employment	Skill training		Housing	Health care	Jobs	Skill training
Affordable housing	housing	Skill training		Health care	Jobs	Housing
Access to health care	Health care	Skill training	Health care		Jobs	Health care
Lack of jobs	Jobs	Jobs	Jobs	Jobs		jobs
Lack of transportation	D and A services	Skill training	Housing	Health care	jobs	

Now count up all the times that each item was selected. There are 30 choices:

Services for drug/Alcohol abuse	2
Skill training for employment	6
Affordable housing	5
Access to health care	7
Lack of jobs	10
Lack of transportation	0

So the top three priorities are Lack of Jobs, Access to Health Care, and Skill Training for Employment.

## Cause and Effect

To examine the relationship between a “cause” of an identified need, and the “effect” of that need, some use a graphic representation of tissues.

Here are steps to use this technique:

- Identify a priority issue to examine.
- Brainstorm how it is linked to other related issues.
- Draw a diagram of possible links between the priority issue and other related issues.
- Use arrows (pointing one or both directions) to show how these issues may be related to each other.
- Use the picture to understand the connections between issues.
- How does this picture influence how we would address the issue/problem/goal?

## Trend Analysis

Consider if there are any emerging trends that may impact on the identified problem or on resources. Is there a newly identified demographic that needs to be considered. Are additional resources expected or a reduction of resources?

### Use data to plot a trend:

Is the situation moving in a positive direction?  
Does it stay the same? Is it moving in a negative  
direction? What can influence the movement?

