

ASSET MAPPING

How to Know What Your Community Wants/Needs

What is asset mapping?

Asset mapping focuses primarily on honing and leveraging existing strengths within a community rather than bolstering community deficiencies. It postulates that solutions to community problems already exist within a community's assets. It involves assessing the resources, skills, and experience available in a community, organizing the community around issues that move its members into action; and then determining and taking appropriate action.

Pray first for God's guidance in discovering the needs/strengths within your community.

Which Congregation members are doing what in the community?

Begin with conversations: Listen and locate current ongoing ministries/needs within congregation

Find a coordinator who will assemble ideas, act as clearinghouse leader, and form a group wherein members are chairs of certain need/ministry areas, who will then go out and find what else is needed.

In the community: coordinating group can assemble ideas from community

Conversations with people in the community, public and private leaders, people both in "in" groups as well as "out" groups.

Review news, like on new Patches, search Internet, read newspapers, especially local ones, looking for opportunities to serve

Pay attention to projects/activities already in place, where members can connect.

Search for un-met needs that could be met through ministry: review needs like for food, shelter, support, health, and loneliness

Review potential plans with pastor or elder to avoid making incorrect alliances

Who is available to do what?

In the church: Identify the gifts of members, especially of time, talents, and spiritual gifts with a survey. In developing sign up lists, find out about availability within/without congregation

Coordinating group could develop lists of those who will serve in different areas, help them get involved

Through means of communication, kiosk, Launch Sunday displays, signups, contacts with new members, church bulletins, information about needs and ministries can be continuously exchanged, and the learning/doing process can be institutionalized

What skills/knowledge is available among the members of the congregation?

Surveys and interviews complete the picture of what skills and knowledge are available. Make no assumptions about potential talents and interests, of others; you will be surprised if you ask about other interests

Who is willing to make those available to the community?

Activities for ministry need to be spelled out, often project plans need to be broken down into segments, with thought in mind of making parts available for youth or seniors, or with people with limitations. Look for what jobs are appropriate, e.g. amount of time, time constraints, physical constraints, capabilities. That way, people can participate to the extent they are able. Projects presented in steps that are doable invite broader participation e.g. can of food a week for food pantry, one visit a month to a member, or one loaf of bread to a newcomer.

Resource: John McKnight book (Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets); Asset Based Community Development Institute, Northwestern University – www.abcdinstitute.org

