**Basic Community Assessment**

**Discovering Ministry Evangelism Possibilities in Your Church and Community**

This simple community assessment tool will help direct your church’s community ministry efforts. By following the simple steps and completing a series of interviews with specific leaders in your community, you can discover areas of human need that your church can address. Each community is different so be sure to adapt the target list of agencies and individuals you interview to suit your community. Once you have completed the assessment get together with your missions team and staff to determine which needs are ones your church can address.

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**Community Assessment**

“need is the trigger which activates God's call to minister if we have the heart to hear and respond.”

Albert L. Meiburg, *Called to Minister*

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<tr>
<th>Purpose of Assessment</th>
<th>Target Agencies/Individuals for Interviews:</th>
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<td>1. To learn about community services.</td>
<td>• Senior Adult Centers</td>
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<td>2. To assess community problems and unmet needs.</td>
<td>• Head Start Programs</td>
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<td>3. To establish relationships with community.</td>
<td>• Senior Adult Daycare Centers</td>
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<td>4. To determine how Christians and churches can become involved in ministry.</td>
<td>• Police Precincts</td>
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<td>• Sheriff Departments</td>
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<td>• Fire Departments</td>
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<td>• Salvation Army</td>
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<td>• Habitat for Humanity</td>
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<td>• Human Services Departments</td>
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<td>• Public Health Departments</td>
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<td>• Mental Health Departments</td>
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<td>• Counseling Services</td>
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<td>• Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Programs</td>
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<td>• Food Banks</td>
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<td>• Community Cooperative Ministries</td>
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<td>• Food Pantries/Soup Kitchens</td>
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<td>• Shelters</td>
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<td>• Vocational Rehabilitation Services</td>
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<td>• School Counselors</td>
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<td>• Civil/Criminal Court Administrators</td>
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<td>• Chaplains</td>
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<td>• Jail and Prison Administrators</td>
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<td>• Housing Project Managers/Resident Council Presidents</td>
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<td>• Multihousing Community Managers</td>
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<td>• City Mayors/Managers</td>
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<td>• City Council/County Commission Members</td>
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<td>• Hospital Administrators/Chaplains</td>
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<td>• Military Base Chaplains</td>
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The involvement of church leaders in a two-day effort makes this community assessment unique and practical. By appointment and in teams of two, volunteers visit local agencies, organizations, and community leaders who provide services to needy people and families. The assessment focuses on unmet needs in the community.

**Participants in Assessment**

1. Church and/or Associational Staff
2. Missions Committee/Team Members/Council – especially the survey direction
3. Other Volunteers
**Planning the Assessment**

Establish a community assessment study group. This group will define the area to be surveyed. There are two ways to define the area (for example, major city/community or select agencies/individuals.

Preparing Assignments:
1. Determine the agencies/individuals to be surveyed.
2. Select a date for the assessment.
3. Recruit church volunteers to conduct interviews. Enlist the same number of volunteers as the number of agencies to be visited.
4. Set appointments with the agencies, organizations and community leaders. Each team of two volunteers will visit two agencies. Schedule half the appoints for 10:00 am and the other half for 11:00 am.
5. Send a letter of confirmation one week before the appointment date. Include in the letter the seven questions to be discussed in the interview.

**Day of Assessment**
1. Schedule for the community needs survey:

   **First Day** –
   - 8:30 am Continental Breakfast
   - 8:50 am Pairing of teams and distribution of assignment cards. (Avoid sending couples together.)
   - 9:00 am Orientation/Interview Assignments
   - 9:30 am Departure for appointments
   - 10:00 am First Appointment
   - 11:00 am Second Appointment
   - Noon Lunch and Sharing Time, complete written reports
   - 1:30 pm Preparation and printing of a report of ministry possibilities. (Print enough copies for the evaluation session.)

**Second Day** –
(This session could be scheduled for a later date if more convenient.)
- 10:00 am Presentation for the ministry possibilities report and implications for strategic planning

2. Give each volunteer a card listing the agency name, contact person to be interviewed, address, phone number, directions and time of interview. Each team will receive appointment cards for two agencies located near each other.
3. Distribute “calling cards” to all volunteers. Volunteers will print their names on the cards to leave with the people they visit. Cards may be from the church or the association.
4. Give field interview forms to all volunteers. The form lists the questions to be discussed and provides suggestions for beginning and concluding the interview. Review the form and the format of the interview.
5. Give interview report forms to volunteers when they return from their appointments so they can complete them.
6. Have a typist prepare the assessment report.

**Implementation and Action for Community Ministries**

The Missions Committee/Team/Council can lead in developing plans for implementing community ministries.
- Prayerfully select a ministry project.
- Define the purpose of the ministry.
- Develop action plans to reach the desired goals.
- Secure resources for the ministry.
- Assign responsibility.
- Receive progress reports and evaluate results.
- Celebrate God’s activity.
1. Introduce yourselves and present calling cards with your names and phone numbers.
2. Explain that you are one of many teams doing a community needs assessment.
3. Say, “Thank you for your time. We represent churches that want to learn about the needs in the community and how to help meet them.”

Our goals are to “build relationships with community agencies and leaders, learn about community services, assess problems and community needs and determine how churches can be involved.” (Ask questions...take careful notes...obtain quotes.)

1. What services do you provide?

2. What problems do you face as an agency?

3. What problems and needs exist among those you serve? (Write quotes.)

4. What trends do you see that will affect your work over the next five years?

5. What can a church, a group of churches or volunteers do to help? (List numerically by priority.)

6. If you had an opportunity to speak to challenge church people, what would you say?

7. May we pray for you and your work before we leave? (Pray for the person interviewed, the agency/organization and the people/families served.)
1. What did you learn about the agency and its services?

2. What did you learn about the problems the agency faces? What are problems and needs in the community and among those served by the agency? (Write quotes.)

3. What trends did you learn about that affect future services?

4. List numerically, in priority order, the areas where volunteers are needed in existing services and programs. Also list the serves and ministries that should be implemented by a church or group of churches. Specify clearly what should be done.

5. What final statement was made by the person you interviewed? (Write quote.)

6. State briefly your evaluation of your experience in this needs assessment.
Putting it all Together
Now that you’ve gathered the information for your community assessment, what do you do with it? You probably have notebooks full of information that seems overwhelming! How you decide which ministry is right for your church or organization? Keep it simple.

1. Decide what criteria are important to your church or organization in deciding what ministry to begin.
2. After you decide what your criteria are, you need to decide how important each criterion is by giving each one a percentage value. Be sure all the percentage values add up to 100%.
3. Once you have your criteria in place across the top of a chart, begin listing the ministry possibilities you think are the most likely for your church.
4. Only list on the chart the ministry that your church is most likely to adopt.
5. Once you have the top ministries listed, you can weigh each one against the criteria. Each one will be given a score from 1-10.
6. After all the criteria are scored, multiply the scores by the percentage given those criteria. Now you can see which areas are most important to your church and which areas your church will more than likely want to begin.

Things to consider
Don’t start too many ministries at one time! It is hard work to begin a ministry and it takes time. Don’t do a ministry because you see other people doing it. Maybe there are give successful food pantries in your community, but that doesn’t mean you should start another one! Look for another ministry that no one else is doing. One way to get people involved meeting human needs is to volunteer in a local ministry. Your church can provide the spiritual aspect to an existing program or ministry.

Finally, don’t ever let a tool take the place of the leadership of the Holy Spirit in your decision-making. If someone in your church has a God-led calling or passion for a particular ministry, give them permission and support to take it further. Always be alert and watching for where God may be at work in your community. Join those efforts that are making a kingdom difference, and trust God to provide resources to start something new.