

***Gathering
and
Using Data***

Strengthening* a community is a lifelong process, one that requires constant nurturing and persistence. Everyone has a role to play. Community change calls for inspired leadership and action from every resident and organization. Today, there's often a gulf between the conversations people have around the kitchen table and the conversations we have with our leaders.

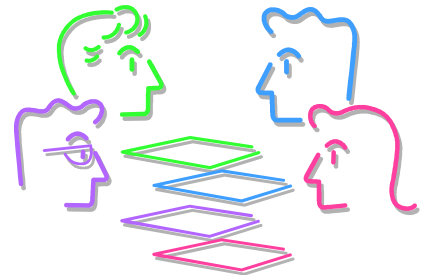
This section is about bringing together the voices and talents of communities. The information is intended to help generate ideas and relationships across lines that divide us. It is for community leaders of all types—anyone who can start a conversation—and it offers a flexible approach that can be adapted to any group's objectives.

Community Dialogues

What Is a *Dialogue*? Why Host One?

A dialogue is an “informally formal” community conversation that can follow many different patterns. It can involve five people around a kitchen table, five hundred people in a large civic setting, or anything in between. A community dialogue can help:

- ◆ expand the base of constituencies and voices (e.g., different generations, business, the faith community, health care providers, public and private agencies, grassroots leaders)
- ◆ reach common ground—integrate the workings of more formal institutions and partnerships with grassroots groups and consumers
- ◆ bring up common issues and the resources to address them, help identify barriers to positive change, and uncover innovative ideas
- ◆ sustain ongoing community discussion between the many groups and partnerships in a community
- ◆ build the capacity of your group to act on its ideas
- ◆ ensure that your planning team is going down the right path
- ◆ launch new initiatives and strengthen the impact of existing community improvement partnerships
- ◆ focus corporate and organizational investment towards community benefit, and align communities' policies and resource allocation with positive community outcomes
- ◆ break through community “turf wars” and connect fragmented resources; build the public consensus and commitment necessary to generate action for better outcomes



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- ♦ generate new sources of in-kind or cash support
- ♦ stimulate action and track progress for accountability
- ♦ generate local media attention
- ♦ help leaders of all sectors to see their roles in building healthy, sustainable communities
- ♦ be a part—vocal and visible—of community work at all levels.

Where Can a Dialogue Occur?

- ♦ at a school
- ♦ at kitchen tables
- ♦ in the workplace
- ♦ at community centers
- ♦ in neighborhoods
- ♦ in places of worship
- ♦ at service club meetings
- ♦ in meetings of existing partnerships
- ♦ in board rooms
- ♦ in the halls of government
- ♦ just about anywhere people can meet comfortably.

Who Can Participate? Who Acts as Host?

Every citizen has a role to play in building community. The vitality of our communities relies upon the active participation of *every* person. Anyone can participate in a dialogue. Seek diversity! Reach across lines of race, culture, class, age, ability, and locale to gather participants. Be as inclusive as possible to ensure that all key stakeholders are invited.

How Do You Host a Dialogue?

There is no one best way to host a dialogue. It depends on your target community, the resources you can muster, and what you want to accomplish. Tailor an approach that works best for your objectives, setting, participants, time, and capacity. Careful preparation will assist you in making your dialogue count. In the end it can help your group develop, focus, and act on the issues that are identified. It can take from two to twelve weeks to prepare for and complete a dialogue. A dialogue can last from one to six hours with anywhere from five to 500 people. It depends upon your scope and capacity. The following steps can help you prepare for your community dialogue, but feel free to modify the steps to fit your purpose, group, and circumstances.

Step 1: Access information

- ♦ Check web resources for other community planning efforts.
- ♦ Check resources at the end of this section.

- ◆ Talk to people who have completed a successful dialogue.

Step 2: Prepare for your dialogue

- ◆ *Build a Dialogue Planning Team to host the event.* A team approach to convening a dialogue will help to build ownership and spread the tasks involved. The team can help define goals for the project and targeted population. Identify a few people that you and others on your project's planning team have worked with before, have credibility with, and who believe in the goal, and invite them to work with your group on planning and conducting the dialogue.
- ◆ *Determine your own goals for the dialogue.* Your community may have some specific goals for the dialogue itself and the information received from it. The design of the dialogue session should reflect this. Your community might want to deepen existing work in the community, initiate a project, or reflect on lessons learned. Your community may also want to start a new group to address community issues.
- ◆ *Determine the group of participants.* Who would you like to bring together to share ideas and opinions? To minimize the effort required for recruitment, you may find it easiest to partner with an existing group or other teams with a stake in your identified issue. This will allow you to use their networks. You may also wish to bring in new voices to your group.
- ◆ *Select and prepare your facilitator.* Good facilitation is critical to a successful dialogue. You should enlist an experienced facilitator or someone who is a good listener and can inspire conversation while remaining neutral. (Attributes of a good facilitator are listed in Chapter 19.) It is important for the facilitator to get comfortable with the questions and process of the dialogue beforehand and be a part of determining how to best design the structure of the conversation.
- ◆ *Set a place, date, and time for your dialogue.* Choose a spot that is comfortable and accessible. Dialogues can be conveniently held in someone's home, a community center, place of worship, library, or private dining room of a local restaurant. Hospitals, schools, fire stations, government buildings, and businesses often have conference rooms or cafeterias where groups can meet. Keeping sites convenient to the participants is crucial. Visit potential sites to determine how easily participants can get to them. Try to arrange sites on public transportation routes and/or offer transportation vouchers to those who

need them to participate. Always look for any environmental barriers for persons with disabilities (check for multiple and accessible bathrooms, entrances, water fountains, and whether the organization of chairs and tables in your meeting room is flexible), and ask participants whether they need assistive resources. Determine the length of the dialogue (from 1 to 6 hours). Think about the scheduling constraints on your participants, and give enough notice of the dialogue that they can put it on their calendars (two weeks minimum, but more lead time is preferable). If it is a large meeting, make a formal registration process, with a deadline of two weeks prior to the dialogue for RSVPs. A reminder call or e-mail two days before the event will help to increase attendance. (See Chapters 31 and 32 for additional suggestions on making consumer-friendly environments.)

- ♦ *Create an inviting environment.* Seating arrangements are important. To assure strong interaction, place seats in a circle or in a U formation for small to medium groups. Small circular tables work well for large groups that may work first in small groups and then share information within a large group. Refreshments (or food for a breakfast or lunch meeting) are a welcome and appropriate sign of appreciation but are not absolutely necessary. Many times, local businesses are willing to donate refreshments for community meetings. Make sure that a sound system is available (and working) if it is needed. Check acoustics beforehand. Have any materials and equipment available and in good working order.

Step 3: Invite participants

People are naturally attracted to leaders and facilitators who speak from commitment and possibility. Trust your project! People *want* to talk about what's possible in their communities. Determine how to reach your desired participants (see Chapters 30 and 31 for suggestions). Contact friends, co-workers, agencies, and specific community groups. Personal contact makes the difference. A telephone call with a follow-up letter, e-mail, or flier with the details is usually very effective. Use your planning teams' networks for potential invitees. If you wish to have a specific number of people in your group, you may need to recruit up to twice as many people as you need. If you want a large group that involves many community constituencies, it may be wise to advertise the dialogue in newsletters or fliers placed where people gather: in coffee shops, grocery stores, gyms, places of worship, community

centers, or libraries. Develop public service announcements for radio and television. The community dialogue should include representatives of all the people whose lives are affected by your issue. This may involve inviting consumers and other citizens who do not typically attend meetings that involve structured discussions. Plan and prepare for their welcomed inclusion.

Step 4: Decide on the structure of your dialogue.

Will there be a featured speaker? Will there be structured questions to jump-start the conversation? Will there be small groups and then large group processing? Will you need any supportive materials and resources for participants to use or to take with them at the end? How will you use the facilitator? What will the agenda look like and how will you share this with the participants?

Step 5: Plan to record your dialogue

Designate a person or persons to take notes and summarize important points. The recorder doesn't need to keep a word-by-word account of the conversation but should summarize the group's views during their interaction. It's just as important to note areas of disagreement as areas of consensus. Obtaining quotations and stories from participants can make the issues more real and personal. The facilitator and/or planning team representatives should sit down with the recorder immediately after the dialogue to review the notes and prepare a summary. During some dialogues, particularly with large groups, it is often helpful to have someone writing key points on a flip chart sheet or projected transparency to remind the group what has been covered.

Step 6: Conduct the dialogue

- ♦ *Greet participants.* It is important for the facilitator and planning team to greet participants as they arrive to develop rapport before the dialogue begins. This will help put guests at ease and encourage them to speak up. Help people know where to sit. Name tags or table tents are useful when participants don't know one another.
- ♦ *Introduction.* The facilitator should introduce her- or himself and thank the participants for attending. A brief introduction, stating the purpose of the dialogue and the importance of asking the community for their opinions, should follow. It is also very important to explain how information from the dialogue will be used. If the group is small, the facilitator may ask participants to introduce themselves or initiate a quick warm-up activity to set the tone for sharing.

- ♦ *Share the agenda and settle any housekeeping issues* (breaks, locations of bathrooms, agenda topics and purpose of the dialogue, cell phone usage, ground rules for the group, etc.).
- ♦ *Initiate the dialogue.* Follow your plan for the dialogue. This plan can be as varied as asking a series of structured questions and facilitating a group conversation, to incorporating formal speakers or consumers with personal stories related to your topic (prepare these speakers ahead of time), to small- and large-group work (see the box at the end of the chapter on small-group work). It is important to keep the pace and flow of the dialogue interesting and flexible to the needs of the group process. Remember that people's attention spans are short when it comes to a single presenter or presentation of information. Limit formal presentations to no more than 15 minutes, and make sure there is plenty of group interaction to support the inclusive purpose of the dialogue. (See the examples of dialogue questions at the end of this chapter.)
- ♦ *Engage the media and document the event.* Some groups will want to have local media present to report on the dialogue and its findings. You may also want to take a few photos or video clips of the event that you can use later to publicize your efforts. (This works best for medium to large events. Be sure to photograph people doing things, rather than just sitting around tables working or listening to a speaker. Although people attending a public meeting may be photographed without their permission, it's a good idea to tell people how the pictures might be used, and for shots of individuals or small groups, get identifying and contact information.)

Step 7: Concluding the dialogue and next steps

At the end of the dialogue, the facilitator can remind the group that simply taking the time to share ideas and personal values with fellow citizens is important. The group may consider some possible next steps. The group recorder may summarize the dialogue aloud and should then plan to send the notes to the participants. A sign-in sheet asking for postal and e-mail addresses will help with this.

For groups that want to do something more, here are a few possible next steps:

- ♦ The group may be excited about a particular idea it would like to take action on and agree to meet again to develop some action plans.

- ◆ The group may decide to have a more detailed conversation and involve some missing voices and perspectives from their neighborhood (or to involve their elected representatives and the local newspaper).
- ◆ The group may decide to have additional dialogues on other subjects of importance to them.
- ◆ The group may share information about existing community efforts that could benefit from volunteers and additional leadership.

How Do You Make Your Dialogue Count?

To make your findings count, record them and use them. Ensure that the results of your conversations advance local action by getting the results out to participants and relevant organizations within ten days of the dialogue. Follow up with the group on its interests. Ask each participant to share what he or she learned and to keep the conversation going. Remember that each participating voice contributes to community well-being.

To Sum It Up

A community dialogue is aimed at bringing together the many voices and talents in communities. Tailor yours so that it works for your objectives, setting, participants, time, and capacity. Make your findings count by recording and using them. Ensure that the results of your conversations advance local action by getting them out to participants and organizations within ten days of the dialogue. Follow up by asking participants to share what they learned with others in the community—this will keep the conversation going.

Resources

- Brownlee, Tim. Leading a community dialogue on building a healthy community. *The Community Toolbox*, http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1052.htm (His article is adapted in turn from "Healthy people in healthy communities: A dialogue guide" by Tyler Norris and Lynde Howell and The Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities [<http://www.healthycommunities.org>], 1 North Franklin, Chicago, IL 60606.)
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- Gardner, John W. 1993. *On Leadership*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Heifetz, Ronald A. 1994. *Leadership with No Easy Answers*. Boston: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Kellerman, Barbara, and Lorraine R. Matusak, eds. 1999. *Cutting Edge: Leadership 2000*. College Park: The Academy of Leadership Press at The University of Maryland.
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Sample Questions for a Dialogue

1. What do you believe are the 2 or 3 most important characteristics of a community that _____? (insert your identified topic of interest)
When you picture this community addressing this issue effectively, what stands out?
2. What makes you most proud of our community in how it currently addresses this issue?
3. What are some specific examples of people or groups working together to improve our community around these identified problems? (Listen for and record compelling statements and stories.)
 - ◆ How did these come about? Who was involved? How did they access needed resources? What was accomplished?
 - ◆ How do you think some of these efforts could be expanded?
 - ◆ What are the most important lessons you have learned from both successful and unsuccessful community efforts?
4. What do you believe are the 2 or 3 most important issues that must be addressed to improve our community around our identified issues?
 - ◆ If you could improve one thing in your community right now, what would it be?
 - ◆ What are the 2 or 3 most important challenges we will face in the next 5 to 10 years?
5. What do you believe is keeping our community from doing what needs to be done to improve? (Refer to issues identified in question 4.)
 - ◆ What do you believe are the underlying causes or reasons for these barriers?
 - ◆ What is our community currently doing to address these issues?
 - ◆ What makes leadership and change difficult on these issues?
6. What action, policy, or funding priorities would you support to build a community that accomplishes our vision?
 - ◆ What is the responsibility of community members in building a better community for the targeted population?
 - ◆ Would you support the priorities if they meant an increase in taxes? (At what level? Federal, state, local?)
 - ◆ What changes in how our community spends its time and resources would make our community better?
7. What would excite you enough to become involved (or more involved) in improving our community in the identified areas?
 - ◆ What is the best way to engage other community members?
 - ◆ Who else should be involved? Who should we talk to in future dialogues?
 - ◆ What is the best way to get different generations, families, organizations, businesses, the faith community, community centers, educational centers, and media involved?
 - ◆ How can we best build upon the assets and strengths of our community?
 - ◆ How could learning from this conversation apply to your current activities?
 - ◆ Are there any obvious next steps?

About Small-Group Work

Small group work offers a number of advantages as part of the dialogue process. It can be helpful to include small group work in any gathering of more than 8 or 10 people that lasts more than an hour or two.

- ◆ People who would be reluctant speak up in a large group often will talk in a smaller group. It sometimes helps to have people write their thoughts on a worksheet first and then bring them to the whole small group.
- ◆ Small groups may be able to generate a lot of ideas quickly and select the best, which can then be presented to the larger group. This may provide both a greater diversity of ideas initially and a way to identify the most acceptable or workable ones quickly.
- ◆ Remember that your store of expertise the collective experience, knowledge, and wisdom of the community members in the room. A dialogue where participants spend most of their time listening to speakers (“sages on the stage”) isn’t a dialogue and squanders your most valuable asset. The more talking your participants do—with one another, and to the group as a whole—the better.
- ◆ You can set groups to work on the same task—for example, generating ideas and selecting among them—or you can ask them to work on different aspects of an issue or phases of a process—for example, strategies for making the community aware of elder abuse and strategies for working with law enforcement about the same issue.
- ◆ For many community planning dialogues it is helpful to have the membership of small groups as diverse as possible. One way to do this, if you know in advance who is attending, is to place name cards at the tables yourself, ensuring that most tables have at least one representative from your principal stakeholder groups. If you aren’t sure exactly who will be attending, you could put the attribute you want on a name tent (“caregiver,” “resident of assisted living,” “human services agency staffer,” “leader in a faith organization,” “advocate for people with disabilities,” and so on) and ask participants to find a seat labeled with a qualification they have.

For some tasks, though, having homogeneous groups may be more effective (for example, caregivers at one table, agency representatives at another, if you were looking for ways that agencies

could support caregivers; on the first round each group could develop and share their perspective on the problem and on the second, the groups could be mixed to generate strategies).

- ◆ It's a good idea to
 - ◆ have a concrete task for the group to accomplish, with written instructions on a worksheet or posted on a flip chart or overhead
 - ◆ get the members to assume such roles as facilitator, timekeeper, and recorder
 - ◆ allow time for members to introduce themselves briefly
 - ◆ allow ample time for small groups to present their findings to the larger group.
- ◆ Small groups formed at community dialogues may become the pioneer members of larger work groups for your planning process.

One of the most important and helpful steps in analyzing your long-term care system is finding community-specific information and data. Your planning team may first decide to research county-specific information to complete parts of the Core Long-term Care Service Evaluation Tools, but local information and data will also help give your planning team a more solid base from which to advocate for long-term care reform, help in prioritizing needs and issues, confirm or refute anecdotal information and personal beliefs, benchmark your county's services against other counties, and help ensure that you're making the right decisions.

The next chapter discusses how your planning team can collect new and needed data by conducting surveys, focus groups, and public forums. This chapter is on the wealth of public data available to you that may help in the planning effort. Many of these sources will be easy to find; others may take some perseverance to locate.

Finding and Using Public Data

10 Steps in Information Collection

Before your planning team begins looking for information and data, it should develop a game plan to ensure maximum output for minimum effort. In her article, "Collecting Information About the Problem," Janette Nagy identified ten steps to follow.

1. *Agree on the value and purpose of the information that you will collect.* Determine the general types of information you will need, why you need it, how you will use it, and who will see it.
2. *Determine when you want to use the data.* Decide when the planning team needs the data to meet your deadlines.
3. *Determine exactly what you want to know and what sort of information you must find to know it.* For example, if you want to know how many people currently use a service, enrollment for the month or year may be sufficient. If you want to understand trends in service use, however, you would need enrollment figures for several years. As Nagy explains, the more precise your team is at the beginning in determining the information necessary, the better the data you'll have to work with.
4. *Determine who will find the information.* Sometimes, a planning team member will either already have the information or know exactly where to go to find it. More likely, though, it will take a bit of work to find what the planning team needs.
5. *Identify possible sources of information.* There are many different sources of county-specific information, as well as state and national information for

comparison to your county or planning area. (Some specific sources are noted here, but see Appendixes C and D for more extensive lists.)

6. *Set limits on how much information you want to collect.* Nagy notes that too much information can be just as much a problem as too little. She suggest that your county's planning team decide on the limits of the data and information (e.g., do you really need information for the past twenty years, or would five years answer your question) before you begin collecting, so that don't end up drowning in data.
7. *Collect the information and data.*
8. *Identify gaps in your knowledge.* After the team has finished collecting the data and information, it's time to reevaluate. Was the planning team able to find everything it wanted? What information could not be found? Did your team exhaust all the possible resources that might have that information? Has the information that the team was able to find made you realize that there are other new issues or areas that need to be researched, too?
9. *Redo the process to try to fill those gaps, or collect your own data.*
10. *Compare data for your community with that of other comparable communities or the nation as a whole.* Look at trends in your community. Nagy remarks on the importance of putting your information in context, especially when you use it for advocacy. For example, she notes that a statement like "The level of violent crime in our community is twice the national average" is more striking and informative than just the local crime rate.

State and Federal Resources for Local Data

Quite a few state and federal agencies use and provide county-specific data and information (and state team members can probably help you access any information collected by their divisions). State and federal agencies can be very useful in providing preliminary planning information about what services are available in your community. Also, public use data is available on many topics, ranging from demographic characteristics to service options, use, and quality. If you think that data or information might be available at a certain state division or federal agency, you can search their website to see if it is posted on line or call them and ask for the person responsible for that program area. If you have difficulty reaching the correct person, you can call upon the members of the state team (see Appendix E) for assistance within their respective divisions.

Census information

At the start of your community's planning process, a good place to begin is the federal Census Fact Finder website at <http://www.factfinder.census.gov>. Here, you can easily find data on basic demographic statistics (such as population, age, race, income levels, housing, and economic/business indicators) to help your planning team get an overall "feel" for its community. You can search for data specific to your state, county, city, or town and make comparisons with similar communities. The website also allows you to conduct community mapping with some of the available data.

Government resources

In Appendix C, "Internet Resources for LTC and Community Planning Initiatives," you'll find a long list of possible data sources from state and federal agencies, with brief descriptions of what each website has to offer to your planning process. Many of these websites contain county-level data or state-level data, which is useful in comparing or benchmarking with your community. Some of the most useful include:

- ◆ *Medicare* (<http://www.medicare.gov>). Besides other useful information, Medicare's website includes Nursing Home Compare, Home Health Compare, and Dialysis Compare, which allows you to search for all of the nursing homes, home health agencies, or dialysis centers in a specific state or county and compare them to one other based on established quality indicators.
- ◆ *National Center for Health Statistics* (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/default.htm>). This site is run by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- ◆ *NC @ Your Service* (<http://www.ncgov.com>). Under the "About NC" link, you can find county profiles, population facts, and demographic projections.
- ◆ *NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) agency websites* (see the Internet Resources listing for specific websites). Many agencies within DHHS house large datasets that are available through their websites. Here you may find information on where services are available, LTC expenditures and funding sources, the number of enrolled providers per county per service, the number of eligible people by county, and penalty review information.
- ◆ *DHHS Computer Databases* (<http://dirm.state.nc.us/pubrecs/dipage3.htm>). This website includes summaries on and contact information for all DHHS databases.
- ◆ *Geographical Data Clearinghouse* (<http://cgia.cgia.state.nc.us/ncgdc/>). Here's the place to look

for data on community infrastructures, such as roads, hospitals, schools, and water and air quality.

- ◆ *Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities* (<http://www.omhhd.dhhs.state.nc.us>). Here, you can find health facts for different minority populations in NC.

If you are trying to find data on an issue or program area that you can't find on a state or federal government website, that doesn't mean that the information isn't located within the agency or that staff members don't know where to find it. Agencies often put only the most frequently requested information on their websites. Call or e-mail and ask for help in locating the information you want.

Advocacy groups and trade associations

Advocacy groups and trade associations often conduct their own research and/or keep up with all of the research that has been conducted relevant to their particular interest. Often, these groups are willing to share the information they have. Some of the more prominent advocacy groups and trade associations are listed in Appendix C, but that list is not comprehensive. You can usually find the advocacy groups and trade associations for any topic or issue by looking through the yellow pages or a community directory, asking your county's Information and Assistance agency, or searching on-line (e.g., search for "Alzheimer's Disease advocacy organizations" if you are researching Alzheimer's Disease). Be a little cautious with data from these sources, though, given their interests. Evaluate how the information was gathered, and look for potential sources of bias.

Local Sources of Data

Your county and region are probably rich with local data. While some data sources are easily accessible and widely known, others may require a little investigative work to find. Members of your planning team will be helpful in locating local data. Among the more common local sources of data are:

- ◆ *Providers of Services*. You've included relevant ones on your planning team (haven't you?), and they have access to data on service use, clients' characteristics, unmet needs, and waiting lists.
- ◆ *Area Agencies (AAAs) and Councils of Governments (COGs)*. AAAs are housed within COGs in North Carolina, and both can be helpful places to go for information and data. Your county's AAA has basic statistics on the older population in your county and information about home and community-based services. Some have even conducted specialty research such as nutritional assessments of older

clients enrolled in meal programs and the needs of informal caregivers in your region. Many COGs have data centers that can provide general statistics on the overall county population characteristics, including age, race, income, housing, crime rates, migration, and economic indicators, and most have sections that do Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping (see Chapter 37 for more on this). AAAs and COGs also know about other agencies and organizations in the region that may have data and information that you need.

- ◆ *Local foundations* and the *United Way* may have conducted needs assessments and other studies or collected information and data from other sources to assist in developing funding priorities. United Ways are also usually well informed about the health and human services resources available in your county and may be able to point you to other sources of information.
- ◆ The *Better Business Bureau* has information about complaints made against private companies.
- ◆ Many *Chambers of Commerce* provide statistics and information on demographics, infrastructure, quality of life, and economic indicators. Sometimes there is a small charge for the information.
- ◆ *Police Departments* are the primary source of crime statistics for your community, including arrests for alcohol and drug possession, driving while intoxicated, and domestic violence. Some police departments may have conducted needs assessments or made reports on issues of importance to the safety of older and disabled adults.
- ◆ *Hospitals* keep records on their patients, including hospital admission and discharge records, emergency room services, and trauma registries, all of which can provide information on the most pressing health care needs, discharge issues, and general health of the older and disabled adults in your community. Many hospitals work to better the health of the community and have representatives sitting on various community boards and task forces or have developed task forces of their own to advocate for issues related to health care services and reimbursement.
- ◆ *Area Colleges and Universities*. Faculty members at area colleges and universities often conduct local research on topics that interest them or have students complete research projects within the community. In addition, faculty members can be great resources about useful federal, state, and local

sources of data. It may help to take a look at the websites of your local college or university and contact any faculty member who does research on topics of interest to your planning team. Students in some majors may be willing to help you with necessary data collection efforts, either independently or as part of a supervised internship.

- ◆ *Local media outlets* (newspapers, TV, radio) have information on health problems, service issues, and new programs. If there are representatives of the media on your planning team, they may be able to help with access.
- ◆ *Reference librarians* can help you quickly find local data housed within your library.
- ◆ *Planning departments* in your county or town government have a lot of local information and data on infrastructure, zoning regulations, and natural resources.

Don't Forget the Anecdotes

Although we don't usually think about personal stories and anecdotes as "data," they are important sources of information that can be just as useful in making a case for long-term care reform as hard facts and statistics. Legislators, county commissioners, media, and the public are often more swayed by seeing real people and hearing their stories related to the issue at hand than by data. When a community member tells a compelling story, his or her face and situation are often more memorable than tables, graphs, and charts. Service providers in your community can lead you to interesting people who might be willing to share their stories. (As mentioned in the next chapter on gathering your own data, a large amount of anecdotal evidence can be analyzed statistically, as well.)

Things to Watch Out For

When analyzing the usefulness of data and information you've found or comparing and contrasting data from different sources, there are a few pitfalls to watch out for:

- ◆ *The data say it's true, so it's true.* Some people say that you can prove anything with statistics. However, the conclusions you reach are only as good as your data sources. Any dataset can be biased, incomplete, inaccurate, or limited in scope, and you need to know the limitations of any data you use. Whenever possible, decisions should be based on several sources (to cross-check one another) and tested against firsthand experiences and general knowledge. Data should *assist* the decision-making process, not rule it.
- ◆ *Biased data produce biased analyses.* Sometimes, people bend the rules of statistical analysis to help the

- data support their viewpoint. If you receive information from a group with an interest in the outcome of your planning strong enough to be considered an “agenda,” learn enough about how the data were gathered to determine if how they were collected or interpreted skews the results.
- ◆ *Data that just don't seem “right.”* Do the data that you found make sense? If not, you may want ask experts why there might be inconsistencies or just not use it. Do conclusions based on the data disagree with conclusions from other sources on the same subject? If so, is there a logical explanation for the disagreement? If necessary, go back to the source of the data and ask for clarification.
 - ◆ *Aggregated data.* Many times, the data you need will be buried within other sources of data. For example, a hospital may report the number of stroke victims it treated in a year, and your team would like to know how many were over age 60. When this happens, the person in charge of the database may be able to produce the specific information you need.
 - ◆ *Different time frames.* Some agencies report data by months, others by year. Some agencies report by calendar years, and others by fiscal years. When you compare data from two or more sources, match up the time frames. If necessary, ask the agencies that provided the data to help you make the time frames comparable.
 - ◆ *Unrepresentative data.* See the next chapter, on gathering your own data, for more discussion of this issue. Briefly, no data collection or survey method is perfect. Because response rates to surveys are often low, it is important to understand as much as possible whether there could be systematic biases reflected in the information you did get—that is, was some group left out or underrepresented. How similar are the people who responded to those who didn't? How would you find that out? There are ways to select small samples that are representative of a larger population, and there are ways to determine how reliable the information is. Reputable providers of data indicate the limitations in their data.
 - ◆ *Different data collection practices.* Similar data may vary from agency to agency based on the practices used to gather them. Your planning team must make sure it is comparing “apples to apples” when making decisions based on such data. For example, if you were studying waiting list numbers, it would be important to know how often each agency updates its list. If one

does so every three months while another does it yearly or at longer intervals, the one with the longer time probably has inflated numbers because some of the people on its list have probably died, moved, or no longer need services. Comparing the waiting lists of these two agencies is not entirely fair and does not provide an accurate picture of need for services.

Resources

- Jaisingh, Lloyd, and Laurie Rozakis. 2000. *Statistics for the Utterly Confused*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kansas Action for Children, Inc. *A Quick Guide: Understanding and Using Data*. <http://www.kac.org/docs/Usingdata.pdf>
- McNamara, Carter, ed. *Overview of Benchmarking*. <http://www.mapnp.org/library/quality/bnchmrkg/bnchmrkg.htm> [Provides links to benchmarking resources and explanations.]
- Nagy, Janette. Collecting information about the problem. *The Community Toolbox*, http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1022.htm
- Rabinowitz, Phil, and Val Renault, eds. How to conduct research: An overview. *The Community Toolbox*, http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1210.htm
- US Census Bureau. Demographic Statistics. <http://www.census.gov/mso/www/sba/demographics.htm> [Tutorial on how to access local data from the Census.]

Home- Grown Data

The last chapter focused on using secondary data—that is, data other people collected for their own purposes. While you can get a lot out of other people's data, you will likely find that they don't answer all the questions you think are important to your plan—particularly such things as local attitudes, concerns, and needs—so you may wish to explore ways of gathering your own data.

The *Community Toolbox* offers several extensive sections on data gathering. It appears early on in the process they outline (see their chapter 3), but it also figures in the evaluation section (see their chapter 36 and following), when planners check to see what has worked, what hasn't, and what should be changed to work better. This immediately suggests that carefully planned data gathering at the beginning of the process can help focus ongoing evaluation as well as provide baseline data.

What Do You Want to Know?

The first critical step in gathering local data is identifying specifically what you want to learn. Next you must decide on a practical and straightforward way to learn it. Some of the sources listed at the end of this chapter suggest that you write a dummy version of the report or newspaper article or position paper that would summarize what you learned. This will often help you determine what questions you need to ask and how to ask them in a way that provides you with the information you need.

For example, you can use Census data to learn how many people in your community reported that they had various types of impairments in 1999. You can use survey data of your own to make a more up-to-date estimate, learn how many people with such impairments live with family caregivers or alone, and what supports and barriers are in the community to help them manage well. However, knowing this only gives you an estimate of the number of people at risk of needing some kind of long-term care. It will not tell you what proportion of your community might want or need in-home services, assisted living, home modifications, or medical and general transportation, and how likely they are to use any of these services. To get a better idea of the need for services and the appeal of different services to consumers and their families, you could use a number of different methods. You could include questions to capture service preference on a survey. You could use a listening session or town meeting to gather information from family caregivers about their concerns and how they manage currently. You could use focus groups or group interviews composed of people with mobility impairments and their caregivers (different groups for each) to learn



how to develop formal or informal services each will use because they meet their needs.

How Will You Find Out?

The resources listed at the end of the chapter describe some of your options in great detail. Briefly, the most commonly used methods are the ones mentioned above—surveys, town meetings or listening sessions, and focus groups or group interviews. Surveys are often the basis for *quantitative* analysis—they generate information from which you can extract numbers and percentages. If they are done correctly, surveys more accurately reflect the entire community, but they limit the range of possible responses people can make.

Large- and small-group methods produce *qualitative* information—themes and sentiments (What are the major concerns in the community? How strongly do people feel about a particular issue?). Qualitative information can be quantified (the number of people at a town meeting or focus group who mentioned a particular theme or topic), but that's not its strength. It's a better way to understand the feelings and the reasons behind the more quantitative answers. For example, if your survey showed that few people in the community were interested in using adult day care, a focus group or group interview might make it clearer why not, even when it seems to be a good solution for their service needs. Quantitative and qualitative methods each have their benefits and limitations. Which method you choose depends on what you want to learn. Here's a brief description of both.

Surveys

A well-designed survey can net a lot of useful local data, but the key word here is “well-designed.” Each question must have a specific reason for being included and be carefully developed and worded to elicit a clear response. Hampton and Vilela (in the *Community Toolbox*) provide a good thumbnail sketch of designing and carrying out a survey. Some departments in colleges and universities house faculty members who do a lot of survey research, and there are independent organizations that do this as well. You may be able to find someone in these organizations willing to help design your survey.

Surveys are probably the most efficient way of gathering numbers about people. You can ask questions about specific attributes of the respondents (In what year were you born?), behaviors (How often do you use the public transportation system? Never, once or twice a year, once a month, once a week, almost daily), or opinions (How does the public transportation system suit your needs? I don't use it, Very poorly, So-So, Very well). As you can see from these examples, the

most commonly used kinds of questions produce numerical values (born in 1950, so 54 this year) or categorical values that can be easily counted (87 of 200 people said they never used public transportation; of the 113 who do, 50 use it almost daily, and 35 of those say it suits their needs very well). When providing choices for these closed-ended questions, remember that choices must be both *mutually exclusive* (except in the case of questions that instruct you to “check all the answers that apply”) and *exhaustive*.

Mutually exclusive answers are those in which it is impossible for a person to check more than one answer. The most common mistake made by people writing survey questions is to violate this rule. For example, if you ask the question, “How long have you had this condition?” and give the choices “0 to 1 year,” “1 to 3 years,” “3 to 5 years,” someone with the condition for 1 year or 3 years could equally accurately check two different answers. The correct way would be to offer these choices: “less than 1 year,” “1 through 3 years,” “4 through 5 years.” You may want to include the instruction “report to the nearest whole year” to help the person who has, for example passed the third year but not reached the fourth one.

Giving *exhaustive* answer choices means that respondents will always find one that fits their situation accurately. One way to be certain this is so, is to include the response “other (specify) _____” or, in the case of the example given above, adding “more than 5 years.”

You can ask open-ended questions on surveys, but a substantial minority of respondents will skip them, and it can be difficult and time-consuming to compile and make sense of the answers. In general, use only one or two open-ended questions on a survey (if you need any at all), and limit those to areas in which you really don’t know what people want or what they are thinking and want to hear about it in their own words.

Surveys can be administered by mail or other indirect means of distribution (e.g., in a newsletter), by phone, in person, or over the Web, and which method (or which combination) you use depends on the group you are trying to reach. Mail works well for people who have no difficulty reading, and you can improve your response rate by including stamped return envelopes, sending reminder cards, publicizing the survey before you send it, or offering a prize or prizes to those who return it, to name just a few strategies.

Telephone or personal interviews often produce better response rates because of the contact with the interviewer, and they accommodate respondents who have difficulty reading. They also take more time, require trained interviewers, and may be less effective than self-administered written surveys if you are going to ask questions about sensitive topics (e.g.,

“Do you ever feel so stressed by caregiving that you yell or shout at the person you care for?”). Telephone interviews, however, won’t reach people who have no phones, are deaf or hard-of-hearing, or have limited access to one (e.g., in a facility with shared rather than individual phone lines), and you may have to develop alternative ways to reach them. Also, you may need to make calls outside of regular working hours to reach people at home.

Web-based surveys are popular because they are easy to administer and the respondents do the data entry for you, but respondents must have access to a computer and be both literate and computer-literate enough to answer the questions. A new strategy that combines some of the benefits of personal interviews and web-based surveys is equipping interviewers with personal data assistants (PDAs) or laptop computers with the surveys on them. The interviewer asks each question and immediately records the respondent’s answer. The information gathered with a PDA can be uploaded to another computer.

Two great challenges of surveys are getting enough responses to be able to make valid conclusions about the results and making sure that the results you get represent the diversity of the people you survey. In small communities, you may be able to survey every household (a census), but in larger ones, you may wish to survey a *random sample* whose results can be generalized to the community as a whole. There are calculators on the web that you can use to determine how many complete surveys you need to represent the community adequately. This, however, is one area where consultation with someone skilled in survey design will help you get the most reliable information.

Why is it important for the sample to be random? People not accustomed to survey research often use a “convenience sample”—that is, they survey a group of people who are easy to reach (e.g., asking everyone on the planning team to give the survey to 10 of their friends). Sometimes these convenience samples provide helpful information, but they always contain *bias*. That is, some people in the community have a very high likelihood of being asked and some people have no chance at all. By using a truly random selection, everyone in the relevant population has an equal chance of being asked to participate, and what is learned can be safely interpreted to represent the entire population, assuming you ask enough people to get a sufficient number of responses.

To create a random sample, you must have a list of all of the people (or households, or institutions) in your community (a *sample frame*). Sometimes, however, you cannot get a perfect sample frame and must settle for one in which you will

know the bias. For example, you may be able to get a list of registered voters in a given age group, but you realize that you will be missing people who are not registered to vote (perhaps they're not citizens or have no interest in politics). You must decide whether omitting them is acceptable for your purposes—would the views of the missing people be substantially different from the views of the ones you survey.

Once you have your sample frame, an estimate of the number of answers you need, and the approximate number of people you will have to approach to get that many responses, the easiest way to randomize is to calculate what proportion of the sample frame you will have to contact. Let us say it's 15 percent, which means you will be contacting 1 out of 7 people. You then pick a number between 1 and 7 by drawing it out of a hat or using a random number table or generator. You start with the person on the list corresponding to that number—for example if you drew a 4, you would start with the 4th person on the list—and then pick every 7th person. The people you pick in this way become your *random sample*.

Although Hampton and Vilela note that surveys are less expensive than some other methods of data gathering for the amount of information they produce, be sure to take into account all the costs. A mailed paper survey requires photocopying, outgoing and return envelopes, stamps or people's time in hand-delivering them, and data-entry time (including checking for accuracy), not to mention development of the survey and analysis of the results. Personal, telephone, and web-based surveys can be developed to eliminate or reduce the cost of materials and data-entry time, but the first two require interviewers' time and the second, skilled programming, access to a Web server, and publicity, all of which are much more costly than stamps and stationery. As you develop local support for the planning process, you might estimate and include these costs in your wish list.

Town Meetings and Listening Sessions

Francisco and Schultz give good guidelines about holding town meetings or listening sessions. Some of the benefits of gathering information this way are that with proper advertising, you can reach a diverse audience; you may learn things about the community that you hadn't suspected; and you have the opportunity to recruit committed new participants for your planning effort. Some of the costs are that you must find an appropriate location large enough to hold the group (or several locations and times) and advertise the session. Also, if you put out an open invitation to the community, you may find yourself "preaching to the choir," in that the people who come will likely be the ones already most committed to developing

long-term care in your community or with a stake in the outcome of your planning process. You may not hear from the underserved or overburdened who are reluctant to speak up or don't have the time or ability to come to a public forum. It is important, therefore to develop strategies for reaching a broad representation of your community. Think about whether you can and need to provide supportive services such as transportation and child or adult day care at the site of the meeting. Are there interest groups in the community that will help you reach members of the disabled community, older adults, and members of minority groups? Do you need to hold both day and evening meetings for those who can't drive after dark and those who can only attend in the evening?

Particularly if you can get the meeting space inexpensively and have a good facilitator on your team, town meetings can give you a lot of information quickly. However, they are better for developing a big-picture appreciation of your community and its preferences and concerns, rather than details.

To hold the meeting, you need an experienced facilitator, a way of recording what you've heard (on a flip chart, so the group can see what it has said, and perhaps on tape or video, so you can make a transcript or review the event later), and a set of prompting questions that will get participants speaking. Here, too, the better your questions, the better the answers you will get. Francisco and Schultz suggest the following broad categories, but you will want to tailor the questions to be more specific. Be careful, though, that your questions aren't biased toward a particular response.

Issues and Concerns

- ◆ What are the problems?
- ◆ What are the consequences?
- ◆ Who is affected?
- ◆ How are they affected?
- ◆ Are there related issues of concern?
- ◆ Are these issues of widespread concern or specific to a small segment of your community?

Barriers

- ◆ Who or what might oppose efforts to prevent or solve the problem?
- ◆ Can they be involved effectively?
- ◆ What are the other limits on changing the present circumstances?
- ◆ How can the barriers and resistance be overcome?

Resources for Change

- ◆ What resources are needed?
- ◆ What local people or groups could contribute?
- ◆ What monies and materials are needed?

- ◆ Where might they be obtained?
- ◆ Who should be responsible for leading a change?

Alternatives and Solutions

- ◆ What are alternatives for addressing the problem, given the anticipated barriers?

Focus Groups and Group Interviews

People tend to label any small group assembled to talk about a particular topic a focus group, but many of them are not. Focus groups are a well-developed method of researching attitudes and opinions, with commonly used, rigorous procedures for making them as productive as possible. Six to twelve participants are carefully matched according to some criteria (e.g., African American family caregivers in their 50s employed outside the home); responses are recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using specialized software (Atlas TI and NUD*ist are two commonly used ones). Researchers often run multiple focus groups to compare responses across groups with different characteristics or from an earlier to a later time. The point of focus groups is to gain information from the *interactions* among the participants about why they feel or do as they do, rather than just their views on a particular topic.

Group interviews, however, can be a little more relaxed, though some of the procedures and requirements are similar. In both cases, you need a skilled facilitator to keep the discussion on track and a set of questions to focus the group's attention on what you want to learn. You may be able to assemble a slightly larger group that is more diverse (e.g., family caregivers generally) for a group interview.

In either case, you need some way to record what the participants say—if you use audio- or videotape, be sure to inform people beforehand, tell them how you will maintain their confidentiality, and get their permission to record. You will also need a way to analyze what people have said and summarize it later in a way you find helpful. The software packages mentioned above can be used to analyze transcripts, but it is quite possible, though more laborious, to accomplish the same thing with scissors, markers, and index cards.

Don't let the cautions in this chapter keep you from planning to gather your own data from your community. It's worthwhile to do it, because planning for long-term care options isn't a one-size-fits-all endeavor (or we would have already done it). Combining approaches may help you get information from the diverse segments of your population. Although there are costs involved in growing your own data, and it takes careful planning to get good results and not waste your own or your respondents' time, the rewards are having the right informa-

tion to develop a unique set of effective strategies for your community.

Resources

American Statistical Association. 2000. Brochures about Survey Research. <http://www.amstat.org/sections/srms/whatsurvey.html>

1. "What is a Survey ?"
2. "How to Plan a Survey"
3. "How to Collect Survey Data"
4. "Judging the Quality of a Survey"
5. "How to Conduct Pretesting"
6. "What are Focus Groups ?"
7. "More About Mail Surveys"
8. "What is a Margin Of Error ?"
9. "Designing a Questionnaire"
10. "More About Telephone Surveys"

At the same site, see also:

"Surveys and Privacy" (by the ASA Committee on Privacy and Confidentiality)

"Ethical Guidelines for Statistical Practice" (by the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics)

Berkowitz, Bill. Conducting focus groups. *The Community Toolbox*, http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1018.htm

Creative Research Systems. 2004. Survey Design. <http://www.surveysystem.com/sdesign.htm> (See their tutorial. Toward the bottom of this page are some guidelines for developing questions.)

Francisco, Vince, and Jerry Schulz. Conducting Public Forums and Listening Sessions. *The Community Toolbox*, http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1021.htm

Hampton, Chris, and Marcelo Vilela. Conducting Surveys. *The Community Toolbox*, http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1048.htm

Market Navigation, Inc. *Client Guide to the Focus Group*. <http://www.mnav.com/cligd.htm>. (This is a commercial site whose owners run focus groups. This particular article outlines when, why, and how to use them so their potential clients will know whether focus groups would be appropriate to their needs. The article is helpful, but we neither endorse nor discourage use of their services.)

Niles, Robert. Statistics every writer should know. <http://www.robertniles.com/stats/> (This is aimed at journalists, but it provides a quick, readable review of basic statistical terms and concepts for the nonstatistician.)

Survey Research Laboratory, College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, University of Illinois at Chicago. Seminar Series (before Spring 2004). <http://www.srl.uic.edu/seminars/seminar1.htm>
In particular, see Linda K. Owens, Introduction to survey research design, <http://www.srl.uic.edu/seminars/Intro/introsrm.pdf>

Trochim, William. 2000. Sampling terminology. <http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/kb/sampterm.htm>. (Though basic for people who intend to be statisticians, this chapter in his on-line book provides a more comprehensive description of sampling methods.)

Community mapping has been used as a tool for understanding a community's assets and needs for a long time. It involves creating maps of a community and indicating the location of resources, people with demographic attributes, systems such as roads or public transport, and other factors that affect the issue for change that the community has identified. One hundred years ago, community mapping was used by settlement house pioneers to survey Chicago neighborhoods. Its value in planning and community development continues still, and it has been enriched by the way information from a wide variety of computer databases can be tied together through GIS (Geographical Information Systems) mapping. The availability of GIS technology now makes the creation of informative community maps easier and faster for your community.

"Mapping" and Mapping

In their article, "Mapping Community Capacity," McKnight and Kretzmann outline a method of community mapping that might be useful to your planning efforts. "Mapping" appears in quotes here because their method produces a schematic drawing of a community, rather than a geographical representation (see the example on the next page). They suggest identifying three categories of resources, (1) those in the community over which residents have direct control, (2) those in the community controlled by entities outside the community, and (3) those outside the community controlled by entities outside the community. They suggest relying most heavily on the first category when planning, moving on to the other types of resources only when those in the community are insufficient. McKnight and Kretzmann suggest this strategy for purely pragmatic reasons. When they wrote their article in 1990, they were principally concerned with strategies for reducing poverty, and they believed that federal and state resources were both ineffective and in short supply. To bring about change, they believed communities would have to be as self-reliant as possible. As you plan for long-term care, where available public resources may be limited even as demand increases with the aging of the population, you may conclude that the same pragmatic approach would be helpful. The table on the next page shows examples of what resources they list in each category.

McKnight and Kretzmann recommend that community development efforts begin with two community maps. The first would be the more traditional way of envisioning communities in terms of the needs and deficits identified by human services and other helping organizations. They advocate replacing this map with one that shows the community's assets.

Community Mapping: The Old and the New

The process of identifying capacities and assets, both individual and organizational, is the first step on the path toward community regeneration. Once this new "map" has replaced the one containing needs and deficiencies, the regenerating community can begin to assemble its assets and capacities into new combinations, new structures of opportunity, new sources of income and control, and new possibilities for production.
—McKnight and Kretzmann

Sample Community Needs Map (abbreviated)

70% of inexpensive housing built in 1940s; hard to maintain on limited budget, inaccessible

Historical buildings with public offices not always accessible

Limited public independent housing for older people with low incomes

Half of public buses/vans equipped for people with disabilities

Over 80 percent of our seniors qualify for Medicaid

Only 2 of 10 MDs accept Medicare/Medicaid patients

One for-profit nursing home

Two assisted living facilities, one takes Medicaid, one doesn't

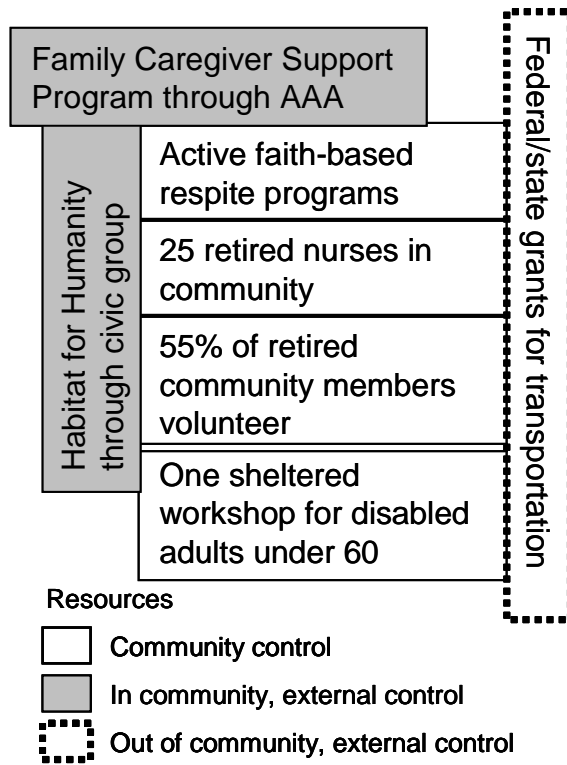
No CAP-DA or CAP-MR slots currently available

Based on McKnight and Kretzmann 1996.

Community Assets

In and controlled by the community		
Individual Assets	Organizational Assets	
Skills, talents, and experience of residents	Associations of businesses	
Individual businesses	Citizens' associations	
Home-based enterprises	Cultural organizations	
Personal income	Communications organizations	
Gifts of labeled people (e.g., those with disabilities, seniors, not usually appraised as assets)	Religious organizations	
In the community, controlled from outside		
Private and Non-Profit Organizations	Public Institutions and Services	Physical Resources
Higher education institutions	Public schools	Vacant land, commercial and industrial structures, housing
Hospitals	Police, fire departments	Energy and waste resources
Social service agencies	Libraries	
	Parks	
Outside and controlled from outside		
Welfare expenditures		
Public capital improvement expenditures		
Public information		
(McKnight and Kretzman 1996, pp. 11, 15, 17)		

Sample Community Assets Map (abbreviated)



Based on McKnight and Kretzmann 1996.

To determine those assets, they provide tools for interviewing individuals about their personal resources (their appendix A) and a list of possible associational resources (their appendix B), both of which may inspire you as you set about identifying the resources available to you.

Here are two sample community maps based on theirs. Drawing such maps can be a small-group exercise at a community dialogue or forum and would (and should) be a lot more free-form than the ones shown here. In effect, this kind of mapping allows for a sort of brainstorming among the people drawing, both about needs and about resources.

Mapping in the 21st Century: GIS

Using GIS (Geographic Information Systems) makes it possible to use public and private data sources in compiling maps of quite remarkable complexity. Also, it is possible to examine change in a community over time and even simulate future circumstances.

GIS combines layers of information on a representation of a geographical area. The grandfather of GIS-style community mapping—and also of epidemiology—was John Snow, who in 1854 marked cholera cases on a map of London and demonstrated that they clustered around two of the public wells. Imagine Snow's map in layers. The

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are computer-based systems that facilitate the input, storage, manipulation and output of georeferenced data. Using GIS, one can relate otherwise disparate data on the basis of common geographic location, creating new information from existing data resources. GIS supports interactive query capabilities, together with graphics tools that support flexible color assignments, toggling on and off of features, and panning and zooming.

<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/stacks/gis/webmap.html>

first layer is a grid representing the streets of London. The second layer contains addresses where people died of cholera. The third layer is the location of all the public wells where people got their drinking water. Though bacteria had yet to be linked to disease, looking at these layers together led Snow to conclude that something about drinking from two of the wells was giving cholera to the people who got water from them, so he had the pump handles removed and the epidemic ended.

TIGER Maps and the Census

The key to GIS mapping is being able to locate features of interest (e.g., hospitals, senior centers, transportation routes, long-term care facilities) with a standardized set of coordinates—Snow’s map, on which he could indicate wells and cholera victims, for example. The Global Positioning System has made it possible for the US government to produce maps for the entire country, using zip code areas, Census blocks, or voting precincts—called the TIGER maps. One can locate buildings, streets, waterways, and all sorts of physical features on them. Because Census blocks are one of the possible map divisions, it is also possible to map the location of people (within the limits of confidentiality) according to the data gathered on the Census—age, sex, race, disability status, income, living alone, and so on. As you can begin to see, this powerful combination of maps and data would make it possible to answer such questions as where older adults are living currently, how close they are to the nearest service provider of some sort (and who has limited or no easy access), whether these service providers are accessible by public transportation, and other such questions. You also might make possible educated guesses, in consultation with demographers and/or GIS planners, about where older people will be in 10 or 20 years and what their characteristics might be. Commercial marketers and public and private community planners and developers use GIS maps to understand current circumstances and try to predict the future. Because the TIGER maps are based on GPS coordinates, you can also gather new information you might find useful, and if you tie it to GPS coordinates, you can map it with the data you’ve gotten from public sources. For example, if you sent teams with GPS receivers to survey your community house by house, you could write coordinates on each completed survey, and so bring all the information you gather into your mapping.

So How do I Get Started Using GIS?

The North Carolina Center for Geographic Information and Analysis is the principal state agency that does this. Their website (<http://cgia.cgia.state.nc.us/cgia/index.html>) contains some information on what data sources are available. Closer to home, many of the Councils of Government (CoGs) have GIS sections that assist county or municipal governments. Depending on who is on your planning team, you may be able to request assistance through public agencies and get information at little or no cost. Many maps are already available to government and the public, so it's worth seeing what's already on hand. Also, some CoGs may provide customized maps for a fee.

Another way to get customized service might be to consult with your local community college (many teach GIS technology) or university (schools or departments of geography, public planning, or public health). Instructors often look for challenging class projects, sponsor service-learning programs, or know current students or recent graduates who might help.

GIS makes possible some very sophisticated analyses of areas and the characteristics of the people and things there. You can get a long way, however, with a paper map, markers, and drawing pins. In either case, it would be a good idea to consult with someone who uses mapping regularly as a research tool, to understand how to ask productive questions and avoid mistakes in interpretation.

Whether your community starts with McKnight and Kretzmann's approach or with a city or county map, community mapping provides a visual representation of your community's assets and needs, and it can turn a complex and multifaceted issue into something that more people can readily understand. Because it is a picture rather than just a document, it can also help your group creatively uncover potential stakeholders, assets, new areas to explore, and ideas for strategies to address your vision. Community mapping is as much about the process of gathering a diverse group of people of all ages, abilities, and experience in a participatory exercise as it is about completing the map. In their work together, they can share stories about the community, insights, and dreams, as well as information for the common purpose of understanding their community and creating strategies to make it better. Whether you do your mapping with pencil and paper or prepare to talk to an expert in GIS mapping, here is where to begin.

Basic Steps in Community Mapping

1. Identify the issue of focus for your community and create a leadership team to manage the community mapping.
2. Determine the parameters of the community mapping effort. Make decisions about:
 - ♦ what geographical boundaries (i.e., a neighborhood or a whole town) you will use
 - ♦ what needs to be mapped and what data are available
 - ♦ how to collect and analyze new data
 - ♦ who needs to be part of the community mapping exercise
 - ♦ where and when the community mapping will take place
 - ♦ how the community mapping will be used within your overall plan for change
3. Plan the logistics and resources needed for the mapping event.
 - ♦ Determine the facilitators and structure of the event.
 - ♦ Invite a diverse group of interested citizens.
4. Collect high-quality data from multiple sources.
 - ♦ Assign people for different data-collection and analysis activities.
 - ♦ Seek experts if they aren't already part of your planning group.
 - ♦ Produce analyzed information in a user-friendly format to be shared for the mapping exercise.
 - ♦ Gather the necessary tools and materials for the mapping.
 - ♦ Sometimes it is helpful to have a trial run or a mini-mapping exercise in a planning meeting. This may uncover gaps in your preparation and data collection.
5. Hold the mapping exercise event.
 - ♦ Produce the maps, using the collected data and the community knowledge of the participants.
6. Use the maps for decision making.

Resources

ESRI. <http://www.gis.com/> (Use MS Internet Explorer or this site won't display properly.) This site, prepared by a GIS software development company, has an extensive overview of what GIS is and how to use it.

McKnight, J. L., and J. P. Kretzmann. 1990 (rev. 1996). Mapping community capacity. Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University. <http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/community/mcc.html>

Your local Council of Governments is an excellent resource on community mapping and local data. A listing can be found at <http://www.ncregions.org>

SWOT Analysis

What Is a SWOT Analysis?

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It can be very effective for scanning the environment when used as an initial tool in planning. Strengths and weaknesses are usually considered to be “internal factors”—characteristics of the community and planning group. Opportunities and threats are often considered to be “external factors”—circumstances that affect the outcome of the planning process that are not under the direct control of the community or planners. A SWOT analysis helps organize subjective and objective information for review, and this information can provide a foundation for decision making that takes into consideration the competitive environment, opportunities that can be exploited, and strengths that will enhance success.

Why Use a SWOT Analysis?

SWOT analyses help to:

- ◆ isolate key issues to resolve
- ◆ focus activities into areas where you are strong and where the greatest opportunities lie
- ◆ consider factors from an internal and external point of view
- ◆ support a comprehensive, thoughtful, and strategic approach to information that may have an impact on the identified goals
- ◆ help elicit information from different points of view. The more perspectives involved, the more useful the information.
- ◆ identify barriers to success
- ◆ develop priorities for action.

How Can You Use SWOT Analyses?

A SWOT analysis can be used to evaluate a position, an idea, an individual, an organization, or a strategy. It can be done by the whole team together or by a subcommittee or an individual who share the results with the planning team. While it is helpful to do one at the beginning of the planning process, it can also help you determine whether your plans are progressing well or help you make mid-course corrections or identify new opportunities and strategies. The next pages contain a sample tool for gathering information to review. Once you have the information, the planning team can review it and develop actions based on your analysis.

A SWOT Analysis

The Issue:

Internal Analysis

Questions

What are the advantages?

What is going well?

What resources are currently available?

What do people see as the strengths?

What are the motivating factors and influences?

What are notable achievements to date?

What past experiences will promote future success?

Weaknesses

What needs improving?

Where are the bumps in the road?

What is going badly?

What should you avoid if you can?

Where do you lack resources?

What weak areas may lessen your chance of success?

External Analysis

Questions

- What opportunities are present?
- What opportunities might arise?
- What are the emerging trends?
- What needs can you likely meet?
- What advantages in timing can you use?

Threats

- What obstacles are you facing?
- What or who is the competition?
- What current changes may threaten your success?
- Where are you vulnerable?
- What could undermine your success?

A Sample SWOT Analysis

The Issue: An Adult Day Care Center for Mytown, NC

<p>Internal Analysis</p> <p>Strengths</p> <p>What are the advantages?</p> <p>What is going well?</p> <p>What resources are currently available?</p> <p>What do people see as the strengths?</p> <p>What are the motivating factors and influences?</p> <p>What are notable achievements to date?</p> <p>What past experiences will promote future success?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Adult day care is the most needed and requested service for citizens with disabilities in Mytown (documented during our community assessment survey and our three public forums) ◆ Leadership of Mytown is committed ◆ Citizens of Mytown are committed (as evidenced by survey results, public forum results, and media exposure/letters to the editor) ◆ Mytown Church has committed space at 50% of the going rate for rent in the area ◆ Mytown Church is located on public transportation lines and has a van fleet that may be available at a minimal cost for use by the adult day care center ◆ Mary Durham, an employee at the county DSS, developed an adult day care center in a previous job and has agreed to share her expertise with us
<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>What needs improving?</p> <p>Where are the bumps in the road?</p> <p>What is going badly?</p> <p>What should you avoid if you can?</p> <p>Where do you lack resources?</p> <p>What weak areas may lessen your chance of success?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Start-up costs appear to be substantial ◆ Mytown Church's space must be renovated to meet the state's requirements for adult day care centers, which could take 4 months ◆ No organization has stepped forward to "own" or manage the adult day care center

External Analysis

Questions

- What opportunities are present?
- What opportunities might arise?
- What are the emerging trends?
- What needs can you likely meet?
- What advantages in timing can you use?

- ◆ Mytown Community Foundation is interested in the adult day care center and a proposal has been submitted for 30% of the start-up funds
- ◆ Eight of Mytown's citizens currently attend adult day care services in Otherville (15 miles away) and Farawayburg (20 miles away)
- ◆ The adult day care center in Otherville has 4 people on its waiting list and Farawayburg's center has 3
- ◆ Mytown's older adult population will grow at an estimated rate of 10% per year for the next 5 years, and at 15% thereafter
- ◆ Mytown has a large number of family caregivers who work evening shifts at Mytown Plant. Currently, Otherville and Farawayburg Adult Day Care Centers do not offer evening hours. Would Mytown Plant provide some funds for a center?

Threats

- What obstacles are you facing?
- What or who is the competition?
- What current changes may threaten your success?
- Where are you vulnerable?
- What could undermine your success?

- ◆ Other than Mytown Church, no other options have become available for housing the adult day care center
- ◆ Mytown's citizens who currently attend adult day care in Otherville and Farawayburg may not want to change centers, even to one closer to home. We could ask them, though.
- ◆ HCCBG funds have already been allocated this year, and we do not know if any HCCBG funds will be available next year for adult day care services

