

Data Collection Methods for Needs Assessment

Analyze Existing Information

Key documents

- Examine needs assessments, strategic plans, and trend reports produced by other organizations in your community
- Consider national reports such as the National Citizen Survey
- Check with local planning department, health agencies, schools, and nonprofits

Public datasets

- Demographics, public health, labor, housing, education, child wellbeing, poverty, diversity, and more
- Find data sources at www.imls.gov/research/data_analysis_tools.aspx
- Contact local planning department for additional resources
- Learn more in breakout session today at 1:00

Market segmentation

- Combines demographic and residential information with data on buying habits, leisure activities and other consumer topics
- Library products include Community Connect (CIVICTechnologies) and Analytics on Demand (Gale)
- More info coming up and in breakout session today at 1:00

Library records

- Study collection, programming, computer use and library card statistics
- Consider collection distribution and use patterns by location

Collect New Information

Surveys

- Collect information from all members of your community or from specific groups of interest
- Can be administered online, by mail, by phone or in person
- Learn more in general session tomorrow at 8:30

Key informant interviews

- Structured conversations with community leaders, experts, key library staff, and others with unique knowledge
- Can provide a bridge to groups the library doesn't yet serve
- Learn more in breakout session today at 1:00

Data Collection Methods for Needs Assessment

Collect New Information

Group interviews and focus groups

- Small groups conversation with the general public or groups of community leaders
- Led by a moderator or facilitator following a relatively structured protocol
- Learn more in breakout session today at 1:00

Community conversations and town hall meetings

- Larger, more open-ended group discussion with members of the community
- Conversation is free flowing and follows the lead of community members
- More information available through ALA and the Harwood Institute

Embedded librarianship

- Library staff are integrated into community organizations, government committees, and civic groups
- Staff develop deep community knowledge while delivering library service at the point of need
- More info coming up in this session

Mass media and social media

- Examine news coverage and feature stories in the mass media or local conversations, images and recordings in social media
- Look for patterns and themes that reflect community concerns, trends, and emerging issues
- Consider analyzing a reference period as well to examine change over time

Expert panels

- Gather a group of formal and informal leaders to discuss and reach consensus on key issues, trends, and needs
- Similar to a blue ribbon panel that is commissioned to study a specific issue
- Consider the Delphi technique which uses questionnaires in a structured process to reach consensus