



CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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Presented to:



UNM Evaluation Lab ECHO Learning Community

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WHAT WE WILL COVER

- ✘ Preparing for and conducting a community needs assessment – some considerations and steps
- ✘ Case study to illustrate process
- ✘ Q & A
- ✘ Presentation will be available via UNM Evaluation Lab

CASE STUDY: ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROJECT

The New Mexico Supreme Court established the Commission on Access to Justice to expand resources for civil legal assistance to New Mexicans living in poverty. “Essential civil legal needs” are those relating to:

- Safe housing and work environments,
- Access to health care,
- Safeguards against financial exploitation, and
- Assistance with family issues such as protection from abusive relationships, child support and child custody.

The initial cohort of communities included: Hobbs. Las Cruces & Taos. The first major task was conducting community needs assessments targeting community service providers.

PROJECT SCOPE: WHAT, WHY, WHO, WHERE, WHEN

- ✘ What: Define the key issue/concern/topic
- ✘ Why: The intent of the needs assessment
- ✘ Who: The intended target population
- ✘ Where: Geographic target
- ✘ When: Project Timeline

What: Barriers individuals face accessing civil legal resources

Why: Access to effective assistance for essential civil legal needs

Who: Community service providers (actor map for each community)

Where: Specific location for each community

When: One year time frame from initial assessment to prioritization

IDENTIFY CONCERNS

What are potential obstacles?

- Context (cultural, historical, political, economic, social, geographic)
- Education (literacy, knowledge, understanding)
- Resources (team skills & experience, budget, infrastructure)
- Time (short, medium, long term)
- Bias (assumptions, structural inequities, missing information)

Context: language, municipality boundaries, judicial systems

Education: understanding of what a civil legal need is

Resources: data collection, storage, access and ownership

Bias: perceptions of the justice system, missing information

CONSIDER DATA SOURCES

Types of data

- Publicly available: government, academic, commercial
- Organizational: reports, studies
- Consider both quantitative & qualitative data

Public: NM & Tribal Courts, NM Nonprofit Directory, Nonprofit Associations (CNPE, NM Progressive Coalition, La Red del Rio Abajo, Impact & Coffee), SHARE-NM, Elected Officials (legislature, county, municipal and Public Education Commission), NM PED

Organizational: NM Public Library association, legal service providers (NM Legal Aid, ACLU, NMILC, Pegasus, etc.), NM Foundations (grantees in target communities), health care providers, faith based organizations, media, business associations

DETERMINE MEASURABLE INDICATORS

- ✘ What do you need to answer your question(s)?
- ✘ Outcome map: what do you hope will happen with the data?
- ✘ How does your data add to the ‘body of knowledge’?

What do you need: understanding of community experiences and barriers in dealing with civil legal needs

Outcome: establish civil legal needs priorities and strategies to address them; identify individuals / organizations willing to address issues and barriers

Body of knowledge: first assessment of community needs conducted

CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- ✘ Gather & Analyze Data
- ✘ Summarize & Disseminate Findings
- ✘ Identify Solution Strategies



GATHER & ANALYZE DATA

In the process of conducting a community needs analysis a number of factors should be considered. These include:

- ✘ technical support in designing and maintaining a database (hardware and software for data collection)
- ✘ instituting quality assurance & quality control measures
- ✘ establishing a recovery plan for backing up data and data products
- ✘ addressing surety issues
- ✘ long-term storage and data archival
- ✘ support for data processing and analysis, as well as generation of reports
- ✘ Ownership of data and data products

SUMMARIZE & DISSEMINATE FINDINGS

- ✘ Summary of data should provide sense-making, reality checking, assumption testing, and answer key questions
- ✘ Findings should provide relevant, credible and useful information for making strategic decisions and implementing programmatic actions
- ✘ Reports should be socialized with community actors who were involved in the assessment

IDENTIFY SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Determine what it is your are trying to address and at what level (individual, community-wide)

- ✘ Changes in attitudes, perceptions, awareness
- ✘ Changes in knowledge, skills
- ✘ Changes in behavior, practice(s)
- ✘ Changes in community norms, social, economic, health, or other conditions
- ✘ Changes in partnerships, collaboration
- ✘ Changes in policies, regulations, laws
- ✘ Changes in allocation of resources

