

Tool #28: Preliminary Community Profile

Preparing a preliminary profile can be a useful first step in a community study. The aim of this profile is to capture existing knowledge about a community; no significant new research is required at this stage. The person(s) on the community study team who are most knowledgeable about the community can prepare this basic overview. This profile can serve as an orientation to the community (or "Community Who's Who") for others on the ministry team, as well as the starting point for networking and building an asset inventory (see tools #33 and #34).

1. Provide a short (less than 1 page) description of the community in ministry context – where it is located, key demographics, unique features, what is known about its challenges and its potential, a history of the church's connection with the community (if any).
2. List the most significant individuals and organizations in the community (this doesn't have to be an exhaustive list – identify the names that you are most familiar with or that are most important for people to know about):
 - (a) leaders and gatekeepers
 - (b) institutions (e.g. schools), associations (e.g. Rotary Club), non-profits (e.g. Salvation Army)
 - (c) churches
 - (d) key businesses or economic engines
3. List the most significant organizations or programs based outside the community that serve or are involved in the community (e.g. city-wide housing coalition, welfare office)
4. List reputable sources for information on this community (e.g. reports or published articles); if there is a good, concise description of the community that would be helpful for all the team to read, attach it to this profile.
5. Big picture questions: Based on what is already known about the community, what is most important for the team to discover or understand about the community in order to be an effective ministry partner? What are main themes or questions to research further in the community study (if one is planned)?