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How to Identify, Prioritize & Tackle Community Needs

Pick 3 important issues in your community now

A. Physical health & basic needs	B. Social and emotional needs

● Health
● Housing security
● Access to healthcare (including mental health)
● Food security & nutrition
● Clean water
	● Positive family & social relationships
	  ○ Abuse & neglect
	● Mental health
	  ○ Isolation, depression, anxiety, suicide
	  ○ Substance abuse
	● Connectedness & belonging
	  ○ Discrimination & exclusion
	Resilience & coping skills

C. Community needs	**D. Financial needs**

● Safety
  ○ Violence & crime
● Discrimination & exclusion
● Infrastructure & access
    (including internet)
● Public transportation
● Opportunities for engagement
	● Unemployment & underemployment
	● Job opportunities
	● Living wage
	● Debt & bankruptcy
	● Financial security/able to save

E. Education & training need	

● Access to training & education
  ○ Literacy & digital skills
● Opportunity to learn
● Meaningful work
● Sense of purpose in life
  ○ Feeling aimless or unvalued	

Step 1 - Pick one topic to focus on today

Identify

Goal: You have the skills to research your community

Step 2 - Develop Research Questions

Question	Suicide Example	Apply to your topic
A. Is this happening in our community?	What is the suicide rate in our county?	
B. Is this more or less of an issue here than it is in other places? What do I compare it to?	What is a high or low suicide rate? Compare our county's suicide to the state average	
C. Who is it an issue for? Do any groups experience this issue more than others: ● Race/ethnicity ● Age ● Income ● Education level ● Geography (urban, rural)	Does suicide impact all groups equally?	
D. If I can't find the exact data I'm looking for, what are related concepts?	Depression, mental health, accidental death, police response	

Step 3 - Select A Source for Research

A. Topics and Numeric Data Sources (Quantitative)

General data about people and society

1. The Census
    a. statistics on income, age, race, language, foreign-born, profession, county level & larger
    b. https://data.census.gov/
2. Pew Research Foundation
    a. a nonpartisan social research organization
    b. https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/
3. Government data on a wide variety of topics
    a. https://www.usa.gov/statistics
    b. https://www.data.gov/
4. A reputable, non-partisan non-profit or university

A. Physical health & basic needs

1. Health
    a. https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/default
2. Housing
    a. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs.html
3. Healthcare/treatment
    a. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/access-to-health-care.htm
4. Food insecurity
    a. https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/food-security-and-nutrition-assistance/
5. Water
    a. https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/drinking-water-data-and-reports

B. Social and emotional needs

1. Abuse & neglect
    a. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/
2. Mental illness
    a. Depression, anxiety, etc.
        i. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/index.shtm
        ii. https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/data_publications/index.html
    b. Suicide
        i. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml

ii. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db330.htm
3. Substance abuse
    a. https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics
    b. https://www.samhsa.gov/data/taxonomy/term/115
4. Social isolation/loneliness
    a. https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/05/ce-corner-isolation

C. Community needs

1. Violence & crime
    ○ https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/17/facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/
2. Discrimination & exclusion
    ○ https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/discrimination-and-prejudice/
3. Lack of internet access
https://www.census.gov/topics/population/computer-internet.html
4. No public transportation
    ○ https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd
5. Lack of civic engagement
    ○ https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2009/09/01/the-current-state-of-civic-engagement-in-america/

D. Financial needs

1. Unemployment & underemployment
    ○ https://www.bls.gov/ces/
2. Debt & bankruptcy
    ○ https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/dataviz/household_debt/
3. Unable to save
    ○ https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2019-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2018-dealing-with-unexpected-expenses.htm
    ○ https://www.urban.org/research/publication/thriving-residents-thriving-cities-family-financial-security-matters-cities

E. Education & training needs

1. Illiteracy
    ○ https://nces.ed.gov/datapoints/2019179.asp
2. Digital divide
    ○ https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/digital-divide/
3. Lack of relevant job skills
    ○ https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/06/key-findings-about-the-american-workforce-and-the-changing-job-market/
    ○ https://www.bls.gov/emp/documentation/education-training-system.htm
4. Feeling aimless or unvalued
    ○ https://www.pewforum.org/2018/11/20/where-americans-find-meaning-in-life/
    ○ https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/05/25/726695968/whats-your-purpose-finding-a-sense-of-meaning-in-life-is-linked-to-health

B. Story Data Sources (Qualitative)

People's stories, experiences, and perspectives are data too.
- A newspaper article with an in-depth interview can be a valuable resource
- A conversation with a local community member can give great insight

Bias & Perspective
- Stories, like all data, have some bias or specific perspective.
- Always consider where an author, organization or individual is coming from and how that impacts their perspective.

Sources for story data:
- Newspapers, magazines
- Local government organizations (county health, parks & recreation)
- Local non-profits & community organizations
- Local churches
- Community insiders (town gossip)
- Patrons who fit the demographics of the issue you're thinking about

Prioritize

Goal: Look at different community needs and determine which ones are the most important to address now.

Reflect

From your gut/heart, if your library could have just one impact on this topic, what should it be? What is your fantasy/magic wand impact?

Considerations

- Most vulnerable vs. largest portion of the population?
- Loudest voices vs. overall community needs?
- Who is not being served? Non-users?
- What are you willing to give up in order to make this happen?

Outcome Example

Because of my library, white men age 40-60 will know that they are in a risk group
               (specific community)   (do/know/believe)

and know about available resources.
       (do/know/believe)

Why is this more important than other things?

Four people in our community have committed suicide in the past 45 days.

⭐ Step 4 - Draft Outcome

Because of my library, _____ in my community will be able to
                   (specific community)

know/do/believe _____.
               (what?)

Why is this more important than other things? _____.

Tackle

Goal: Think creatively about how to address a problem in large and small ways

Small   **Large**   **Crazy**

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Step 5 - Pick one idea to follow up on

⭐ NEXT STEPS

Research Questions p.2

One Data Source p.3-5

1. Do your research.

Draft Outcome p.6

Because of my library, _____ community will be able to know/do/believe
_____. This is more important than other things because _____.

2. See if your dream impact aligns with your library's mission/vision.
3. Think about if your research supports your dream impact--should it be a priority?

One Idea p.7

4. Take one idea from your brainstorm that you'd like to act on.
5. Talk to someone who you think is pretty supportive and open-minded, from home or work, about one of your ideas. See what they think. See if you can articulate how awesome it is.
6. Have casual conversations before you do a formal pitch to process your idea, work out different pieces of it. Get "unofficial feedback".
7. When you're more comfortable, start talking to people who might be interested in working on it with you.