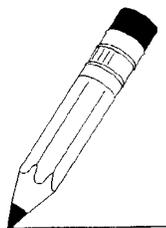


Needs Assessment Techniques

Tips for Managing a Key Survey



- Use volunteers to conduct the interviews, especially program planning group members!! This has several benefits: It can provide them with more direct experience regarding the needs of the community than what they might otherwise have. It can help strengthen their commitment to the programs which are likely to be produced in response to the needs assessment.
- Choose volunteers who can interact well with the people they will be interviewing. They need to be someone people feel comfortable talking to -- even about rather personal subjects. They also need to understand what it means to be a facilitator, to put aside their own agenda and really listen to what the key informant is saying.
- Be willing to help the volunteers push their “comfort zones” by helping them to interview folks with whom they might not otherwise come in contact.
- Work out a “sampling scheme” to help insure that the interviews (taken as a group) provide a high degree of representation of the range on community perceptions of problems. Come up with a system to “assign” volunteers with informants to be interviewed. (Otherwise they may succumb to the temptation to “visit” only with their friends and neighbors).
- Work with your planning group to come up with a general list of questions to be used by all key informant interviews.
- Provide training. You may want to provide a group training experience where your interviewers can interview each other. Include how the interviews are to be summarized and share with the planning committee as part of the training.
- Consider having interviewers conduct the interviews as teams. This may be helpful if your interviewers lack confidence or personal safety is an issue. It also gives two pairs of ears which can help lend validity to the summary. (Be careful.. some informants may respond better to only one interviewer.)

¹Also see: *Needs Assessment Techniques: Using Key Informant Interviews and Conducting a Key Informant Interview* developed by the ICES Office of Program Evaluation.

- Provide interviewers with a “script” to explain the purpose of the needs assessment and to introduce themselves to the key informants, set up interview appointments and begin the interview themselves.
- Provide sample thank you note and stationary so the interviewers can thank the key informants.
- Decide how you want interviewers to summarize the results of each interview. One approach would be to have them record immediately after the interview the following information on a form:

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Person Interviewed: | <u>School Health Nurse</u> | |
| <u>Need Discussed</u> | <u>Who has this need?</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
| <u>Children often come to school hungry.</u> | <u>Many children attending Lincoln Elementary. (Interviewer Note: May want to consider food stamps education program).</u> | <u>Suggested expanding school lunch program.</u> |

- Discuss with your planning group how to “manage the results of interviews”. One approach would be for copies of the summaries for each interview to be shared with the group. In addition, you may want to have interviews supplement the written summaries with verbal summaries.