
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENTS

The purpose of a community assessment is to develop a plan for providing information to community stakeholders regarding a specific TDEC event. A well-developed plan will help in achieving the goal of ensuring that all stakeholders have the necessary information and an opportunity to be involved in the public participation process.

Preparing for the Assessment

Attributes of the person(s) conducting the assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good interviewing/people skills.• Engaged in the process, willing to be involved.• Good understanding of technical and regulatory issues.
Define the goals for the assessment. Typical goals may include:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gathering background information about the target community to determine the most effective methods of providing information.• Establishing contacts and developing positive relationships with community members, leaders and organizations.• Making information readily available in the most appropriate format to community stakeholders.• Assisting the community in understanding TDEC's public participation process.• Making the community aware of opportunities for receiving information and for providing input and/or comments.
Outline the issues to be discussed at the event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the relevant issues that will be discussed at the event?• What is the interest level of the community regarding the issues?• What are the anticipated concerns of the community?• What information does the community already have regarding the issues?• What information does the community need to clarify the issues or correct misunderstandings?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the likely reaction of the community to the information that will be provided? • Are there related issues, now or in the past that may influence the opinions of the community regarding the current issues?
<p>Identify and profile the target audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with as wide an array of people as possible to identify stakeholders. • Determine who will most likely be affected by the outcome of the event and should be involved in the process. • Are there community organizations focusing on the issues? • Are there parties not directly affected but that have an interest in the issues, e.g., advocacy groups or environmental groups? • What is the level of trust in regard to the issues?
<p>What are the demographics of the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the age distribution of the target audience? • What is the ethnic make-up? • Are there cultural issues to be considered? • Will information be needed in languages other than English? • Will translators be needed? • What are the economic levels in the community?
<p>What are the geographic limits of the target audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How large is the area to be assessed? • What are the resources that will be required for the assessment? • Are there different demographics within the assessment area?

<p>Identify leaders and partnering opportunities within the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one or small group meetings with the local leadership may help determine the most effective methods to inform and engage the members of a community. • Partnering with local leaders may also lend credibility to the public participation effort and help gain the trust of the community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local leaders may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected officials Faith leaders Business leaders Respected members of the community • How do members of the community prefer to receive information?
<p>Identify potential communication methods and resources within the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the most trusted sources of information available? • Identify established community communication networks. These may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Places of Worship (posting information on bulletin boards, announcements during meetings) ○ Civic, volunteer or neighborhood organizations (Rotary Clubs, homeowner associations) ○ Community centers, senior citizen centers, local interest groups ○ Neighborhood newsletters and social media networks ○ Community action groups ○ Local Libraries ○ Post Office • Broadcast Media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What television and radio stations serve the area? ○ What are their policies on Public Service

Announcements?

- Are there public access channels which serve the community?
- Are there programs that focus on local events and community involvement opportunities?
- Are there on-air personalities trusted by the community?

• Electronic Media:

- How available are computers and access to the internet for members of the community?
- Do members of the community typically use e-mail, listserv, websites, social media, etc.?
- Do members of the community use applications for mobile devices for information?

• Printed Media:

- Identify newspapers or local magazines that are available to the community.
- Which are most widely distributed to or read by members of the target area?
- What are their policies on public notices or advertising local events?
- Evaluate the potential for the use of fact sheets or mailings; including addressing frequently asked questions.

• Personal Contacts:

- One-on-one discussions
- Small groups (including pre-meeting availability sessions)
- Door-to-door contacts
- Focus groups

<p>Assess logistics for effective meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential meeting locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Located in the community or as close as possible to the stakeholders. ○ Accessible by public transportation ○ Adequate size for anticipated participants ○ ADA compliant ○ Accommodates children ○ Positive environment
<p>Identify the most effective time for a meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mornings versus afternoons or evenings • Weekdays versus weekends • Consider typical work schedules of the community members
<p>Identify methods for obtaining feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contact sheets for documenting interactions with leaders and residents ○ Comments card provided during the assessment for comments that may not be made in person ○ Post event surveys ○ Interviews