Tools, Tips and Techniques

An Easy to Use Data Toolkit to Identify Community Needs & Assets

2011

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Dear Adult Basic Education Providers:

To support you in using data to reflect the needs and assets in your community and guide your community planning efforts, Adult & Community Learning Services is pleased to provide you with Tools, Tips and Techniques - An Easy to Use Data Toolkit to Identify Community Needs & Assets.

This user friendly guide is designed to accomplish the following:

- Achieve a better understanding of the universe of data sources – their relevance, value and limitations
- Highlight community assets and demonstrate need
- Support further needs for technical assistance
- Incorporate into requests for grants or other possible funding sources
- To better “tell a story”.

The information contained in this tool kit is supported with direct links to a host of websites. It also includes techniques to present your data in different formats such as graphs and charts, and provides guidance to determine what kinds of analysis can best tell your story.

I hope you will find this document helpful as you move forward in your community planning efforts to best serve the adult learners in your community.

With Literacy in Mind,

Anne Serino
Massachusetts ABE State Director
Why a Toolkit?

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Adult and Community Learning Services division, encourages the use of data to guide community planning efforts. The Toolkit is designed to accomplish the following:

- Achieve a better understanding of the universe of data sources—their relevance, value and limitations
- Highlight community assets and demonstrate need
- Support further needs for technical assistance
- Incorporate into requests for grants or other possible funding sources
- To better “tell a story”

Potential Uses

While there are many potential uses for examining data relevant to a program, there are some resources that can document the uniqueness of specific communities and provide support for planning. This Toolkit is designed to help programs:

- Identify, understand, locate and access existing data sources that are relevant to a community.
- Review and synthesize existing data about who in a community is unserved, underserved or inappropriately served.
- Take into account the relationship of community indicators with geographic and demographic trends.
- Identify short-term and long-term strategies for improving engagement with community partners and specific populations.
- Facilitate data sharing with community agencies that are likely functional partners: Workforce Development, Family Literacy, Community Health, Public Safety, Transportation and others.
- Facilitate data sharing with interagency partners: Workforce Development, Family Literacy, Pathways to Family Success, Community Planning, and the ABE Transition to Community College Program.
Using data is like putting together pieces of a puzzle. The puzzle needs to be complete; otherwise essential pieces are missing. The Data Toolkit has been designed to identify current links to the most useful data for a community and its planning needs. The Toolkit contains links to data sources from Federal, State, and Local sources that assist with the identification of such community characteristics as age, ethnicity, immigration patterns, level of homelessness, educational levels of parents, number and grade levels of school going children, poverty indicators, employment levels, number of dislocated workers, health indicators and more.

These data sources provide access to comparative data locally and nationally allowing for “nested” analysis within larger public policy and societal concerns. Last, the Toolkit will provide examples of charts, how to extract data for various reports, and guidance on statistical methods and chart-making.

Getting Started!

First, there are a variety of data sources available from which to choose. Some of these sources are readily available, others more difficult to access. Accessibility to data is a critical factor if time is an issue. The more readily available the data, the easier it is to construct a story about a community’s needs and/or assets. Time permitting, multiple data sources should be used; otherwise pieces of the puzzle may be left out. Statistics are one way, but interviews, focus groups, surveys, document reviews, community mapping—all contribute to a fuller, more accurate context from which federal, state, and local data can be interpreted. Multiple sources also give a more complete picture of a community. Identifying what is needed and for what purpose and the strategies to collect that information is presented in the next section.
To determine a community’s needs and assets there are generally two types of information available: Primary and Secondary. **Primary** data sources help to identify needs that are perceived to be the most critical to a community through the use of key informants—that is, those individuals who are most likely to have the most up-to-date information about a particular community and its relationships. Key informants can also identify other individuals who may have important information that can inform a particular issue or concern. These individuals also are often in charge of critical agencies that may be critical partners or who may provide services to common customers. They might include workforce development agencies or community based organizations, health councils, libraries, faith-based organizations, businesses or business organizations, the mayor’s office, economic development agencies and others who are able to contribute to an understanding of the historical changes in the community, its current condition, or future plans.

**Secondary** data sources contain information that has already been collected about a community. It is information that another source has compiled. These data take the form of community profile information and include such things as labor market conditions, employment and unemployment rates, immigration patterns, literacy needs, education statistics, demographic information—and other sources that can provide a “snapshot” of one or more communities at a particular point in time and compare it to other “like” communities, or regions, state-wide and nationally.

Used together, both of these data sources will complete the puzzle! While primary data collection strategies tend to be more labor intensive, they have the benefit of capturing the nuances of a community that may otherwise not be revealed in a secondary data source.

This **Toolkit** focuses primarily on pertinent secondary data sources and takes a cursory look at some of the primary data collection techniques most often used. The links herein provide a wide range of available information from which a community story can be told. It is important to create a story
that illustrates all the forces that influence a community’s growth and sustainability. These would include information about:

- **Population and Birth Changes** (by race/ethnicity and age category)
- **Employment Changes** such as labor statistics, unemployment rates, per capita income
- **Immigration, Language and Poverty Changes** particularly native and foreign born populations, languages spoken in the home, immigration patterns, and populations below poverty level
- **Changes in Education** including educational attainment, adult and family literacy patterns, dropout rates (by age), and MCAS English language results for grade 10
- **Housing Changes** such as homeless counts, housing authority residents, and rent averages
- **Transitional Assistance, Child Care, and Crime Rates** including average caseload for needy families, child care capacity, and crime rates
- **Economic Development** information to include changes in local, regional industry, occupational forecasts, access to transportation (particularly relevant for rural communities), and strength of linkages between social services and other agencies

**Exploring Secondary Data Sources**

**Public Records**

The easiest and quickest way to obtain information about a community is through **public records**. Public records are records of a public body that are open to U.S. citizens by law. These records most often are those that correspond to the government and branches of the government at the local, state and federal level. You will not have access to any records that have the potential of breaching personal privacy. Access to public records is protected by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Public records are often **free** and **accessible online** and provide numbers that may be difficult to obtain elsewhere, such as income, immigration information, housing, or other relevant demographics.
Often community information is **benchmarked** against other communities for the purpose of comparison. This technique illustrates the relative importance of various issues.

One reason why free and accessible information is important is that it frees up time to collect other information via other sources, such as surveys or focus groups, which are more labor intensive.

Some **ways to use** public records include to:

- Demonstrate the need to strengthen existing programs to increase student access
- Demonstrate the need to add new programs
- Identify community assets
- Demonstrate the need for added capacity
- Inform policymakers
- Educate the public
- Seek additional funding through grants
- Energize community planners/leaders/organizers

**Data Routinely Collected by Agencies or Programs**

Often programs and/or agencies collect routine student or customer/client information that can be used to assess trends in program growth and usage. Participant characteristics such as gender, age, and ethnicity can help to document who is using the services provided and how participation has changed, or is remaining the same. For example, by reviewing enrollment records in adult basic education over a three-year period, it is possible to identify such trends as changes in average age of participants, or differences in percentages of males vs. females participating. This can be useful in understanding the breadth of a particular program and help set goals to target specific populations that need services and that the numbers reveal aren’t being reached.

Be aware, however, that confidentiality of student records is essential. Often, it is necessary to ask students for waivers to utilize information and
assure them that data will be used in aggregate form, that is, individual student data will not be used and individual students will not be identified.

Identify: (1) what is needed to tell the story that needs to be told, (2) for whom, (3) for what purpose, and (4) how much time is available to accurately collect and report the data!

There are a variety of ways to collect, synthesize and report data. Answering a specific community question, such as “how many homeless families are there in “x” community” will take less time than answering the question “what are the educational needs of students of homeless families in “x” community”. It will save time to focus specifically on what the question is. Identifying the question will make selecting the appropriate data sources easier and more efficient.

First, the techniques available...then, the analyses!
Possible Techniques

First rule of thumb...the quality of information about a community or program is only as good as the technique, or combination of techniques used.

Federal agencies provide detailed statistical information, research, surveys and complementary information on those areas vital to community planning efforts. Most databases also contain profile data by state, region, or community.

- **The Census and Vital Statistics**
  The Census is conducted every 10 years and is the most comprehensive source of information available for consumer use that is publicly available and easily accessible.

    Following are some common links that can be used to access community profiles. Either click directly on the link to connect to the internet, or use the Ctrl+click function to access the link. If both of those fail, simply highlight the url and paste it into the browser.

1. **General** link to the 2010 census:
   http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2012_release/

   *The American Community Survey (ACS) is conducted five years after census data is collected to provide additional community profile information. The last ACS was conducted in 2012.*

2. To search the census data base **alphabetically**:
   http://www.census.gov/main/www/a2z/

3. Link for data on **population, housing, economic** and **geographic** data: http://factfinder2.census.gov/

4. To access **State and County quick facts**:
   http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/
(5) To answer questions about educational attainment: http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/

(6) All business-related data, by location: http://bhs.econ.census.gov/bhs/

(7) State and local finance reports: https://www.census.gov/govs/local/

(8) Specialized information, such as Model-based Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) for School Districts, Counties, and States  
http://www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/

National Center for Education Statistics
This is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education. It annually publishes The Condition of Education, a report that summarizes important developments and trends in education using the latest available data.

(1) Digest of Education Statistics:  
http://www.nces.ed.gov/programs/digest

(2) The School District Demographics System:  

The U.S. Census Bureau, with support from other Federal agencies, created the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program to provide more current estimates of selected income and poverty statistics than those from the most recent decennial census. Estimates are created for school districts, counties, and states. The main objective of this program is to provide updated estimates of income and poverty statistics for the administration of federal programs and the allocation of federal funds to local jurisdictions.

The primary purpose of this site is to provide a compilation of statistical information covering the broad field of American education from prekindergarten through graduate school. It includes a selection of data from many sources, both government and private, and draws especially on the results of surveys and activities carried out by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Data are presented for enrollments, teachers, schools, student performance, graduates, and expenditures.

The School District Demographics System provides access to school district demographic and related geographic data. The site’s purpose is: to provide access to information about demographics, social characteristics, and economics of children and school districts from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education; to enable users to directly access school district geographic and demographic data; and, to provide information about school district demographic concepts, uses, and applications to facilitate effective use of these information resources.
(3) Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System:  
http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/

(4) Common Core Data: Annual, national statistical database of information concerning all public elementary and secondary schools and school districts:  
http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/

(5) NCES digest of articles about literacy and adult basic education with supporting statistics:  

➢ United States Department of Labor  
General information about workforce related issues, including workplace safety:  
http://www.dol.gov

➢ United States Department of Labor Statistics  
Provides statistical information about occupations, wages by occupation, occupation outlook, employment situation, and other databases:  
http://www.bls.gov/

(1) Statistics by region:  
http://www.dol.gov/dol/location.htm

(2) To locate workforce services in your area:  
http://www.dol.gov/dol/location.htm

➢ United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration  
Includes annual Workforce System Results, WIA:  
http://www.doleta.gov/Performance/

Provides all regional and state data for the New England states:  
http://www.bls.gov/ro1/
United States Department of Health and Human Services
The United States government's principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services:
http://www.hhs.gov/

Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health and Human Services, Poverty Guidelines, Research and Measurement
Current information about poverty guidelines, research, and resource centers: http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/

Massachusetts Department of Health
A wide variety of statistics, including community health profiles:
http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eohhs2constituent&L=2&L0=Home&L1=Researcher&sid=Eehohhs2

United States Bureau of Transportation Statistics
http://www.bts.gov/data_and_statistics/

Massachusetts Department of Transportation

Additional Resources—Data Tools, Institutes, Specialized Reports, and other links of interest—National and Local

Data Tools

(1) Provides assistance building tables for your reports through the National Center for Educational Statistics:
http://nces.ed.gov/datatools/index.asp?DataToolSectionID=4

(2) Help with conducting surveys to assess community needs:
http://bhs.econ.census.gov/bhs/
(3) **Survey item pool** for anything that has to do with public education: [http://nces.ed.gov/help/sitemap.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/help/sitemap.asp)

**Making Charts in Excel**


**Institutes**

(1) Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies: [http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/](http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/)

(2) University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute: [http://www.donahue.umassp.edu/](http://www.donahue.umassp.edu/)

**Reports**

(1) MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Statistical Reports: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/)


(3) Community and Technical Colleges Academic Year Reports: [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/d_acad.aspx](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/d_acad.aspx)

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*An item pool contains survey questions that you can use to build your own survey instrument.*
Additional Links—Massachusetts

(1) Massachusetts Regional Planning Agency, Regional Profiles:  
http://www.nearc.org/web-content/html/state_direct/mass/mass_index.html

(2) Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Massachusetts community data,  
including population estimates:  http://www.mapc.org/data-services/available-data

(3) Metropolitan Area Planning Council, regional growth projections:  

(4) Massachusetts Municipal Association. 330 “official” municipal sites  
containing city and town demographic information:  
http://www.mma.org

Second rule of thumb...multiple sources of data always tell a better story  
about a community.

Each possible data source has both advantages and disadvantages.  
Consider, for example, the links provided above. While this information is  
readily available and accessible - and more importantly - compiled by  
someone else(!), it has both advantages and disadvantages. For example,  
government generated data only contains information that individuals are  
willing to share. It also tends to be descriptive and requires that the user  
has to sort it, customize it, or make correlations between two sets of data.  
Tables or figures may represent estimates or projections and not  
necessarily actual data, so the user must beware. Finally, often, there isn’t  
a geographical context—or, rather, a way to understand what a community  
values or why current trends are happening regionally, locally, or state-  
wide.

So, what are some other techniques that can help tell a strong and valid  
story?
**Content Analysis** A content analysis involves examining documents historically to get a sense of change over time in public attitudes or to better understand underlying causes of dissatisfaction. Typically newspaper accounts, editorials, reports of meetings, minutes, photographs, public records or other accounts are used to get a general sense of what has happened in a community and why. This information may be useful in helping to better interpret the statistical trends uncovered through the collection of these data.

**Case Study** This is a needs assessment technique that provides in-depth information that deeply describes a program or set of services. Typically, it is a narrative description of a program or set of services’ history and background, policy history, present circumstances, relationships with customers and partners, and any other information that illustrates strengths and weaknesses.

**Surveys** This is a technique that potentially can gather information from all relevant constituencies. If a survey is well developed and implemented, it can produce results that are generalizable to an entire population. Its implementation, however, can be time consuming as can analysis.

**Interviews** Interviews provide opportunities to gather information one-on-one. This technique allows for more intensive exploration into a particular issue. It can be a useful technique to identify more fully the perceived needs of particular populations. This technique can also help to identify issues that can be further examined via focus groups or surveying. The purpose of this technique must be clearly identified so that the appropriate number of interviews is conducted to yield the most useful information. Consider the following interview administered to a representative sample of 1,260 homeless men and women who were interviewed in New York City’s municipal shelters for single adults. While this may seem exhaustive and relies upon skilled interviews, it provides insight into the power of the interview to gather data.
The purpose of the study is to determine the perception of the needs of homeless men and women in New York City. The interview covered 20 items, each indicating need for help in a particular area. Most respondents identified multiple needs. The need for help in finding a place to live and having a steady income were the most commonly cited needs overall, closely followed by the need for help in finding a job and improving job skills. Compared to women, men more often reported needs for help with drinking problems, drug problems, learning how to handle money, getting veterans benefits, problems with the police, getting along better with other people, and finding a place to live. Women more frequently reported needs for help with health and medical problems and learning self-protection skills. The evaluators pointed out that for programs to be truly responsive to these multiple needs, they must have the capacity to deliver or broker access to a comprehensive range of services.


**Focus Groups** Focus groups are often used to further explore data collected in surveys, or other descriptive statistics. Focus groups often examine attitudes, beliefs or values and may provide explanatory information not readily available through other forms.

**Community Asset and Resource Mapping** A valuable exercise that assists you in better understanding the assets and resources that are valued in a community. The link below will provide you with detailed techniques and resources to conduct a community mapping exercise: [http://www.policylink.info/EDTK/Mapping/](http://www.policylink.info/EDTK/Mapping/)

The second phase of the work involves identifying **WHAT KINDS OF ANALYSIS** can best tell the story.

There are a variety of ways to conduct analysis and choosing begins with a few basic questions:

- ✔ What do you want, or need to know?
- ✔ Why do you want to know it (for what purpose)?
- ✔ Who is the audience?
✓ How will the information be used?
✓ What information will best tell the story?
✓ What useful information already exists, and what needs to be collected?
✓ Who should be involved in gathering the data?

**Remember, primary analysis is labor intensive and is best used in combination with secondary analysis!** It is always best to use multiple sources of data when establishing the story that illustrates the needs of a community. Relying only upon primary sources of data may not be as reliable given that there are multiple influences within a community that can bias perceptions. These data may also be suspect if an objective researcher or evaluator is not used to assure objectivity. However, when coupled with hard numbers, primary data analysis can provide context to a particular issue or concern.
Consider the following example:

You have reviewed local demographic information and determined that the MCAS scores in your community for students in 4th and 8th grades are particularly low. You have interviewed local school officials about the availability of after school programs and learned that there is a significant number of latchkey children in your community. You have located one afterschool program in an economically depressed area that uses its facilities for free afterschool care for children in the neighborhood. The goals of the program are to enhance school performance through academic enrichment. Knowing that adult literacy is critical to community vitality, you believe that intervening early will increase literacy rates in your community. But, you aren’t sure what the true need would be for additional programs. These are the questions you might ask:

How many latchkey children reside within a radius of 1.5 miles of the school? (Community profile information)

How many students attend the existing program? (Afterschool records)

What proportion of the students in aftercare are actually latchkey children? (Latchkey definition: Students in elementary school that lack adult supervision at least 1-2 times per week during the school year.)

Is the program well-designed? That is, are there well defined educational goals and anticipated outcomes? How are they measured?

Is there a sufficient number of staff positions in the program?


**Historical Trends** Typically a trend analysis looks at a particular area of interest over time. There is no hard and fast rule to this, but generally it is a minimum of three years and no more than five. Trend analysis can be tricky, particularly if there has been a significant economic change in a community, or other impact that may affect the interpretation of a multi-year glimpse into an issue. Trend analyses are particularly useful when examining such things as industry patterns, immigration patterns, housing patterns, or the history of a policy issue surrounding a particular area of concern. Another reason to look at community patterns is to better understand changes in need—education, housing, health, employment, safety. Understanding changes in community assets over time can also
help identify areas for concern. The following is an example of a trend analysis.

![Graph showing unemployment rate]

These kinds of trends analyses can yield very important information when a community is trying to target services to specific populations or establish need. Consider the following labor market information. How might these trends impact your community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Labor Force</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Unemployment</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>304,507</td>
<td>286,374</td>
<td>18,133</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>296,551</td>
<td>271,660</td>
<td>24,891</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>289,299</td>
<td>265,307</td>
<td>23,992</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>287,066</td>
<td>267,080</td>
<td>19,986</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>286,004</td>
<td>268,809</td>
<td>17,195</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>293,781</td>
<td>277,847</td>
<td>15,934</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>295,132</td>
<td>281,244</td>
<td>13,888</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>299,256</td>
<td>286,537</td>
<td>12,719</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>300,048</td>
<td>289,584</td>
<td>10,464</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>301,896</td>
<td>291,680</td>
<td>10,216</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>304,205</td>
<td>294,967</td>
<td>9,238</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>306,823</td>
<td>294,126</td>
<td>12,697</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>304,801</td>
<td>286,803</td>
<td>17,998</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>298,342</td>
<td>279,089</td>
<td>19,253</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>290,610</td>
<td>273,942</td>
<td>16,668</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 Annual Avg.</td>
<td>289,512</td>
<td>274,327</td>
<td>15,185</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>293,823</td>
<td>276,520</td>
<td>27,303</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Demographics**  These kinds of analyses examine the particular characteristics of individuals who live in a community. So, breaking down information by category helps you understand what a community looks like currently. It also is a way to look at changes in demographics from year to year, or in comparison to other communities. Typical demographic categories include race, ethnicity, gender, income, employment status, family size, education level. So for example, when examining race/ethnicity levels in a community, a chart can be prepared to look like this:

Race/Ethnicity 2010—“X” city

![Pie chart showing race/ethnicity categories]

Or, if percentages tell a better story, the chart may look something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2000 census</th>
<th>2010 census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below poverty level</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brazilian</th>
<th>Central &amp; South American</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Haitian</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>Puerto Rican</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POVERTY STATUS**

**Tools, Tips and Techniques**: An Easy to Use Data Toolkit to Identify Community Needs & Assets
**Sector Analysis**
Examining an issue by sector—such as education, health, housing, etc.—may be important if other data sources reveal changes in the economic vitality of a community.

Changes in **education** are particularly relevant because education impacts the economic vitality of a city or region. Educational analyses involve several steps because it is important to break down degree of educational attainment, risk potential, and target populations, by age and ethnicity. In other words, it is important to target services to those populations who are most in need.

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2000 census</th>
<th>2010 census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school grad</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school grad</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors or higher</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Or, a chart could look something like this:
Housing is another potential area that could lend insight into the economic health of a community. Access, availability, affordability and the condition of housing are particularly relevant since homelessness can have serious implications for the provision of services for specific populations within a community.

Figure 27

Some Neighborhood Median Sales Price for All Sales^* 1990 - 2006*

^All Sales = all homes selling for more than 100 dollars
*2006 statistics are based on sales from June – July 2006.
Source: The Warren Group, Town Stats, Free Market Statistics

Additional Areas to Identify include important information about:

Health issues are also important because they can help you identify potential threats, be proactive to impending threats, allocate or re-allocate resources, and plan for education and prevention. Information that identifies populations likely to be affected, geographic areas and rates of incidence are critical as is the availability of health care options.

Last, vital to economic development and health is understanding business and industry patterns in your community, as well as employment histories, their role in community giving and support and changes in workforce needs.
How To Access Information and Display the Data?

Here are a few examples to get started...

Example #1: Identifying Age Data for a Particular Community Using the U.S. Census

First, the easiest way to use the U.S. Census Data site is to the alphabetical. Link. Using ctrl + click, open the following link:

http://www.census.gov/main/www/a2z/

Once the link is open, it will direct you to an alphabetical listing. Click on “Age Data”. To access data for a particular community, click on “By Geography”.

Since the 2010 data is still being uploaded, click on “Census 2000 Gateway”.

This page has a variety of options, but the quickest way to get age data is to click on “State and County Quick Facts”.

Once on this site, a prompt will ask you to identify the state from which to access age and other demographic information. Using the dropdown box, select “Massachusetts”. At this point, there is a variety of data points from which to choose.

As an example, choose “Persons under 18 years old, percent, 2009”. Comparative statistics for Massachusetts and the United States are readily available. To delve more deeply into more specifics, click on the information button to the left of the category and that will open another screen. Click on the following link for additional information:

http://www.census.gov/popest/
On this page are a variety of county characteristics that will be valuable to “tell a story”. The interface is user friendly and depending upon what is needed, a variety of information is available.

Following is an example as to how to make a chart taken from the website listed in the Making Charts section of the Toolkit.

Follow these simple instructions to create a chart in Excel. Using the example above and data from an appropriate source, enter age population data into Excel.

1. For example, this chart lists age of population, in percentages, for people under the age of 18 for the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 in the communities of Pittsfield, Springfield, and Holyoke.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pittsfield</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holyoke</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After entering these data in Excel, click the Insert button on the Home page and select the Chart button. A variety of choices are presented. The most
commonly used are: column, line, pie, bar and area. Select column. This is what will appear...

To view changes in one chart, city by city, select 2D pie, and this will appear...

To be comfortable with the different options available, try selecting various charts. Excel is a very user friendly format, and it will take no time at all to become familiar with the various chart options available.
Example #2: Examining student enrollment in grade 12 by county in the state of Massachusetts for the years 2007 through 2011.

Several of the websites provided allow building a table from within the website. The Common Core Data Set is one such site and is a very efficient and user friendly site. Go to the following link to access this website (it will go directly to the build a table window):

http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/bat/

Once there, instructions are provided in the yellow sidebar to the right, but practice makes perfect, so select from the drop down box that asks “each row of the table should be:” select “County”, then select the years, “2007-2008; 2008-2009; 2009-2010”.

Click “Next” and “Accept the terms” in the pop up window. Make sure state and county are checked and re-select the years 2007-2008; 2008-2009; 2009-2010”. Click “next”.

Select only the state of Massachusetts in the next box and click View Table in the upper right hand corner. This is what will appear...

<table>
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<tr>
<th>State Abbr (School)</th>
<th>County Name-most recent year (District)</th>
<th>County Name-by survey year (District) [2007-08]</th>
<th>County Name-by survey year (District) [2008-09]</th>
<th>County Name-by survey year (District) [2009-10]</th>
<th>County Number-by survey year (District) [2007-08]</th>
<th>County Number-by survey year (District) [2008-09]</th>
<th>County Number-by survey year (District) [2009-10]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers reported represent valid responses.
There are a variety of tables that can be developed utilizing the instructions provided on this website.

A final point...

Take time to peruse each of the links to learn more about the capability they contain. It is important to understand what types of data that are most needed and identify those links that most closely provide the most accurate data available. While initially a bit time consuming, using data accurately and wisely will result in a stronger and more reliable community story.