

Understanding your Local Community

In this step the main task is collecting information to develop a 'community profile' — a picture of the local community. This could include information about demographics but might also include anecdotal information from within the community.

Below are a list of activities and resources you could use to help understand your community. You might like to bring your church together to talk about your local community and the opportunities that exist within it.

Having done this work, think about how you might synthesize and present the profile so that the information is in a format that can be easily understood and shared with those inside and outside the church. This could include using pictures, stories, infographics and statistics. Consideration should be given to what information is important and what can be left out.

Community Audit

Compile a profile of your neighbourhood. Include information about local organisations and amenities. Use Census data from the ABS to profile the population.

Phone a Friend

Encourage church members to ask friends and neighbours about the needs of the local community and how the church might help serve the local community. Also talk to local politicians, business people and service workers.

Say 'Cheese'

Ask church members to take a photograph of something that speaks about their church community. Come together and ask people to share why they took the photo and what it means.

Interview and Focus Groups

Interviews and focus group discussions with people and organisations can help you understand the needs, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses of your area through the eyes of people who don't normally come to church. Think about who might have important knowledge of your community including politicians, school principals, local doctors and community welfare workers.

NCLS Community Social Profile

The NCLS Community Social Profile (CSP) is a 28 page profile of your local community, showing key information about the people living in your neighbourhood, using data from the 2016 National Census. The CSP identifies what's changing in the social make-up of your community, helping your church or organisation to understand the people around you, in an easy to see format.

<https://www.communitysocialprofiles.com>

Australian Bureau of Statistics

The ABS is a huge source of demographic data about your local community. This includes information such as age profiles, ethnicity and religious affiliation.

<http://www.abs.gov.au>

Supplementary Resources

Mission Planning: A guide for local churches