

Assessing Your Potential For Success

Tourism Assessments and Surveys

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/crawford/cnred/index.html>

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Conducting Tourism Assessments

Adapted from the Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu>

Assessments are tools that can be used to help your organization or business:

- Better understand the environment in which you work.
- Know how the tourism community or broader community feels about an issue and what they think needs to be done about it. Getting the opinions of community members, while at the same time mapping the resources and limitations of the area, gives a holistic view of the issue.
- Make decisions about priorities for program or system improvement. Once you have assessed the community, it is much easier to make improvements that community members will notice and benefit from.

Brainstorm. Good assessments start with good questions.

- Which issues or questions are of particular interest to our organization. Why are those the most important questions?
- What don't we know about these issues, questions, and behaviors? What questions do we need to have answered?
- What outside resources can we tap into to help us understand the issues?

Start with what you know.

- What do we already know about the needs and available resources?
- Have other studies of this topic been done? Can we rely on this other work to give us insight and answers?
- Are there a few selected experts in the community who can answer some of our questions before we finalize our questions? (Their input may narrow the remaining questions you need to ask)

Decide what you still need to know, and finalize the questions you will ask.

Identify your target population.

Decide how to collect information.

Regardless of the method you choose, it is important to take into account: The amount of time available, the number of people assisting you, available resources, the size and characteristics of the target population(s), your relationship with the target population(s).

Listening Sessions/Focus Groups. Listening sessions are public forums you can use to learn about the community's perspectives on local issues and options. They are generally fairly small, with specific questions asked of participants. They can help you get a sense of what community members know and feel about the issue, as well as resources, barriers, and possible solutions.

Public Forums. Forums tend to be both larger in number of participants and broader in scope than listening sessions. They are gatherings where citizens discuss important issues at a well-publicized location and time. They give people of diverse backgrounds a chance to express their views, and are also a first step toward understanding the community's needs and resources. A good public forum informs the group of where the community is and where the members would like to go.

Needs assessment. A needs assessment is a way of asking members of the community what their most important collective needs are. This type of assessment stems from dissatisfaction with the status quo, or current situation, and is focused on the outcomes rather than the process of improving the dissatisfaction. A needs assessment can also be conducted at the organizational level.

Asset Mapping. Asset mapping focuses on the strengths of the community rather than the areas that need improvement. Focusing on assets gives the power back to community members that directly experience the problem and already have the resources to make change. If the changes are made by the community and for the community, it builds a sense of cohesiveness and commitment that makes initiatives easier to sustain.

For more information

The following assessment resources were compiled by the University of Wisconsin Extension Tourism Development Team.

- **Assessing and Developing Tourism Resources.** Free resource guides the user through a six step process of inventorying, evaluating and developing community tourism assets. University of Illinois. http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/tourism/assessment_resources.html
- **Retention and Assessment Program for Travel and Tourism Businesses.** This seven-part survey is designed as a self assessment tool for retaining travel and tourism businesses in a community. University of Illinois. <http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/retention/>
- **Tourism Assessment Handbook.** Nine-step guide designed to facilitate the process of determining whether Tourism Development is right for a community. University of Montana. http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/pub_5885350.pdf
- **Tourism Capacity Index Online Assessment Tool.** Provides a framework for communities to benchmark or evaluate the impact of tourism development initiatives. University of Illinois. http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/tourism/tc_index.html

Laura Brown
Crawford County Community & Economic Development Educator UW-Extension
225 North Beaumont Rd
Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin 53821
E-mail: laura.brown@ces.uwex.edu
Ph: 608-326-0223

