Components of a Situation Analysis
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Analysis of Trends

1. ***Definition:*** To develop a statistical picture of our community based on currently available information by using secondary data to:
    a. Identify trends
    b. Describe trends
    c. Compare the community with others in the region, state or nation

2. ***Extension and an Analysis of Trends***
    a. Connect community to University and state data sources.
    b. Help the community interpret the meaning and implications of the analysis of trends.
    c. Emphasize the importance of an analysis of trends as part of planning or development process.
    d. Provide information for community grant writing efforts.

3. ***How to Do an Analysis of Trends***
    a. Decide on focus of analysis
        i. Points in time
        ii. Change over time
        iii. Distribution across space (e.g., residence) or within categories (e.g., age, gender, family type)
        iv. Comparison with other geographic areas (e.g., counties, states) or groups (e.g., race, poverty)
    b. Identify appropriate sources which depends on:
        i. **What** do you want to know
        ii. **Why** do you want to know it
        iii. **How** do you want to know it

4. ***Cautionary Notes on Trend Analysis***
    a. When using secondary data it is easy to get and give different impressions depending on the data used
    b. You need to consider:
        i. What are they counting? What are they not counting?
        ii. How are they counting it?
        iii. The effects of definitions and measurements
        iv. The time frame that is being used
        v. The influence of small numbers on percent change

5. Common Sources of Secondary Data

Data	Common Federal Sources
Population	Census or State Data Center
Economic	Bureau of Economic Analysis Census County Business Patterns
Housing	Census Housing and Urban Development
Health	Health and Human Services Vital Statistics Centers for Disease Control
Workforce	Census Bureau of Labor Statistics Dept. of Labor See: http://www.fedstats.gov

Other Sources of Secondary Data	
American Fact Finder	http://factfinder.census.gov
Regional Economic Information Service	http://www.bea.gov/bea/regional/reis
Quick Facts	http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd
Census of Agriculture	http://www.nass.usda.gov/census

SWOT Analysis

1. ***Definition***
    a. A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is a scan of the internal and external environment of a community or an organization
    b. It is one of the most frequently used methods for situational assessment

2. ***Why Do a SWOT Analysis***
    a. Explore possibilities for new efforts or solutions to problems.
    b. Identifying opportunities for success in context of threats to success can clarify directions and choices.
    c. Determine where change is possible by inventorying strengths and weaknesses to see priorities as well as possibilities.
    d. Adjust and refine plans mid-course. A new opportunity might open wider avenues, while a new threat could close a path that once existed.
    e. But also, the SWOT framework is a great way to organize communications about an initiative or to organize information gathered from studies or surveys.

Key Informant Interviews

1. ***Definition***
    a. Key informant interviews are conducted with selected individuals in a community who have unique perspectives on the issue to be studied
    b. Key informants are persons who are either involved with the issue as a regular part of their job or as part of their volunteer activities or, because they are knowledgeable about the community, its citizens, and its history

2. ***Why Do Key Informant Interviews***
    a. Key informant interviews are a way to get “insider information” about an issue, problem, need, or the assets of a community
    b. Some uses of key informant interviews in general:
        i. To determine what people think are the important issues or problems
        ii. To understand how different groups understand or give meaning to an issue
        iii. To assess what people identify as the causes or roots of the issue or problem
        iv. To identify strategies or actions that people believe are possible or effective

c. Some purposes of key informant interviews in community development:
    i. Define the nature of an issue confronting the community -- how do people in the community define the issue, the nature of its roots, its consequences for the community
    ii. Enumerate the community groups or organizations interested in or involved with the issue -- who in the community has a “stake” in the issue or its resolution
    iii. Identify community-based resources that can be mobilized to address the issue -- what assets -- economic, social, cultural, human -- are available to respond to the issue
    iv. Identify action alternatives that reflect community preferences and “fit” community assets -- what do community members define as appropriate and possible strategies

3. Extension and Key Informant Interviews

a. Extension can:
    i. Help identify key informants related to particular areas of life within the community
    ii. Conduct key informant interviews as partners with other community organizations
    iii. Help the community interpret the results
b. Agents can use key informant interviews to:
    i. Learn about the taken-for-granted way of life in a community
    ii. Establish relationships with community influentials

4. How to Do Key Informant Interviews

a. Determine the critical information you need to gain
b. Develop open-ended questions
c. Identify key informants (Positional leaders & Reputational leaders) using a snowball approach
d. Conduct interviews
e. Evaluate responses by looking for:
    i. Key phrases
    ii. Commonalities/differences in ideas discussed
    iii. Ideas/issues not addressed

5. Cautionary Notes on Key Informant Interviews

a. Time intensive but relatively inexpensive
b. Assuring consistency in the interviewing process: Need to insure that if more than one person is doing the interviews, all have received some training in how to remain neutral and how to probe for more depth in answers
c. Managing the data results
d. **Remember** what you learn is only as accurate and comprehensive as your sampling of key informants.
e. So, you must seek key informants who represent the diversity of interests related to your topic.

f. In many communities, there are often multiple spheres of influence (e.g., youth, economic development, tourism, agriculture) and cross-cutting issues require key informants from all spheres of influence in the community

Focus Group

1. ***Definition***
    a. A **focus group** is a semi-structured interview with a small groups of participants (8-12) that encourages flexible and creative discussions built around a limited number of questions
    b. Focus groups engage participants in discussions of issues more effectively than one-on-one interviews because something unique happens when people discuss an issue as a group
    c. Each person can react, contrast, or build upon what others have said, and they come to appreciate that what they say is important

2. ***Why Do a Focus Group: Focus Groups are Useful When:***
    a. Creative group thinking is required and/or desired
    b. The issue or problem under consideration is complex
    c. New perspectives on differing proposals for action are needed
    d. Ideas, perceptions, and assessments are needed quickly
    e. It is important to obtain background information on a topic or issue, or to understand how different groups within the community view an issue or situation
    f. There is a need to set priorities, or to identify problems, constraints, costs or benefits, or potential impacts of potential actions.

3. ***Extension & Focus Groups***
    a. Existing Extension groups (e.g., Homemaker's clubs, advisory councils) can serve as a focus group or, Extension can convene a focus group from its constituents
    b. Help community plan a series of focus groups
    c. Facilitate a focus group
    d. Network for assistance in interpreting results

4. ***How to Do a Focus Group***
    a. Define the desired information outcome
    b. Determine what is the best mix of persons to help produce this outcome through discussion
    c. Develop 3 to 5 questions that will be used to guide the discussions
    d. Identify a facilitator or, train local facilitators
    e. Conduct focus group and record discussion
    f. Interpret results

5. Cautionary Notes on Focus Groups

a. Selecting participants is critical to the success of a focus group. The selection criteria must reflect the purpose of the focus group discussion.
    i. Purpose: How the community in general thinks,THEN select participants to reflect the general population.
    ii. Purpose: The action preferences of particular interest groups within the community, THEN do several to reflect diversity of interest
    iii. Purpose: The priorities for action or perceptions of potential impacts of action, THEN participants should differ in their interest in the issue
b. Quality of information generated depends on selection criteria and participants' willingness to participate
c. Deciding on how to capture the content of the discussion
    i. Use of "thinking" note cards
d. Need a skilled facilitator to:
    i. Maintain control of discussion and keep it focused
    ii. Probe for explanations

Network Analysis

1. Definition

a. Social networks are:
    i. The web of social relationships that link organizations through individuals who occupy positions in several organizations
    ii. At the heart of decision making, authority and power in the community
b. Involves diagramming social relationships within a community:
    i. At the individual and organizational level
    ii. And the relationships that link community outside its boundaries
c. You chart these linkages by identifying who serves on what boards or who knows whom.

2. Why is a Network Analysis Useful: A network analysis is useful when you need to:

a. "See" graphically the social relationships in the community that are assets for development
b. Understand how webs of social ties make individuals' decisions about participating interdependent
c. Use the social relationships in which individuals are embedded to influence a wide range of individual and social outcomes

3. Extension and a Network Analysis

a. This is a very effective way to understand the underlying dynamics of social relationships and social influence in the community. County Extension agents new to a community have used this method to identify critical individuals related to their area of work
b. Can help community understand what is a network analysis and assist in conducting one

4. How to Do a Network Analysis

a. Identify the board members of an organization
b. Interview with following types of questions:
    i. What organizations do you belong to?
    ii. What leadership positions do you hold in these organizations?
    iii. Who else do you know who has a leadership position in any community organizations?
    iv. If you want to get information about (name an issue) who do you talk to?
    v. Do you ever seek advice from this person?
    vi. Do you act on this advice?
    vii. Do others act on the advice of this person?
    viii. If you wanted to make something happen on (name issue) in this community, who would you contact first?
    ix. Do you belong to or serve on the boards of regional or state organizations?
c. Chart relationships

5. Cautionary Notes on Network Analysis

a. Time involved in interviews
b. There may be some resistance to the revealing of underlying networks of influence
c. ***But*** an important way to identify local influentials and those with extra-local networks. E.g., a person interested in starting a local arts group used this method to identify persons with connections to regional and state arts groups

Summary on Uses of Situational Analysis

1. ***Defines assets and resources available for community development***
    a. What skills and resources do we have as a community and a people?
    b. What do we do? What is produced here? What do people know how to do?
    c. What do we need that we might be able to provide for ourselves?

2. ***Identifies the cultural and social capital that can be mobilized for development.***
    a. What is our history; what do we value?
    b. How do people, organizations, and local governments interact here?
    c. How do we see ourselves? And, how do others see us as a community?
    d. How do we solve problems? How do we deal with opportunities?

3. ***Locates community influentials:*** Individuals who have connection power based on their ability to network and build coalitions helpful to the organization or their followers.

4. ***Identifies networks that link …. persons ….. within organizations …… as well as between organizations and institutions***

5. ***Provides a context for discussing public issues and making public choices***

6. ***Additional Resources:***
    - Situational Analysis. University of Wisconsin Extension http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/progdev/sitanalysis.html
    - Situation Analysis by Roger Rennekamp, Martha Nall and Julie Zimmerman *www.ca.uky.edu/agpsd/word_documents/**Situation**%20**Analysis**.doc*
    - The Community Toolbox http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/
    - Useful Community Development Toolbox http://www.useful-community-development.org/index.html