

Guide to a basic method for doing a
Community Portrait

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WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is designed to provide a general methodology for creating community portraits. It will be used in each community chosen for the community portrait project, but any group that wants to experiment with it can use it in a community in their network!

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY PORTRAIT:

- ✓ To better understand the community's overall vision of its potential and its current situation
- ✓ To bring together key community actors around issues that spur to action
- ✓ To produce a clear, easy-to-consult document presenting the community to citizens and other community stakeholders

A FOUR-STEP PROCESS:

➤ **STEP 1: Gather data on the community**

Do your homework first before holding a community consultation. Gathering data beforehand will help you spur discussions during the consultations with citizens and other community stakeholders.

➤ **STEP 2: Organize a community gathering (consultation) with a broad range of community actors**

The goal of this step is to solicit input from citizens and other stakeholders on their vision and perception of their community during a single community gathering.

➤ **STEP 3: Produce a summary of the community portrait**

Once the two main activities have been completed—the statistical portrait and the community gathering—you can draft a summary of the community portrait (approximately two pages).

➤ **STEP 4: Get feedback on the portrait**

There are various ways to get feedback on the Community Portrait depending on available time and resources. At the very least, we suggest you meet with a group of community members to present and discuss the final portrait. Be sure to include regular citizens, but you may also want to include strategic partners, municipal employees, health services personnel and other people who have an interest in gaining greater insight into the community. This could be an opportunity to ask questions about the information gathered and find ways to get involved in future actions. You can then decide whether to design a project to address issues raised by the portrait, or whether to do more research into a specific issue. You may want to draft an action plan, you may want to do more detailed research, you may want to broaden the scope of the community portrait, or you may simply choose to do a small, pragmatic project.

STEP 1: Gather data on the community

PURPOSE: to bring together various data that can be presented the community to stimulate discussion.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED: anyone with an interest in numbers can do this, but we suggest having a small group work on it together to discuss what statistics are most meaningful to the community and best reflect its reality.

WHERE TO FIND DATA:

Statistics Canada “2006 Community Profiles”: Data on communities is available online :

<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E>

The municipality or borough

CHSSN Baseline Data Reports

CHSSN Socio-economic profiles

Your regional DSP, Agence or CSSS

Any surveys or reports you have done!

We strongly recommend using existing local documents or portraits to avoid unnecessarily replicating work that has already been done!

	Items to Document
History of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origins, settlement patterns, demographic shifts, important events • Political history, economic base, religious institutions, social life
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there existing by-laws, regulations, policies or programs that affect community development?
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total population • Population by age group (click on “Figure” for quick access to the graph) • Population by gender (%) • Change in the population since the last census • Other, such as ethno-cultural groups or linguistic groups (country of origin, language spoken at home)
The Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment rate, population 15 and over • Median income, population 15 and over • % of low-income earners (after taxes), by gender • Employment and unemployment rates • Population 15 and over with less than a high school graduation certificate
Social Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people not living in common-law • Number of people separated, divorced, or widowed • Number of single-parent families • Total population at the same address for five years • Other, such as number of youth protection cases
The Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Means of transport for commuting • % of occupied dwellings in need of major repairs • Analysis of built environment (INSPQ)
Health status	<p>http://204.187.39.30/surveillance/Maps.aspx</p> <p>Health Regions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancer incidence (2003) • Asthma prevalence (2005) • Diabetes prevalence (2005) • Blood pressure (2005) • Depression (2003)

STEP 2: Organize a community gathering

PURPOSE: to bring together a broad range of community actors to have them discuss their vision and perception of their community; to provide an overview of the community's strengths, achievements and successes that foster sustainable community development.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED: community members, local volunteers (ex.: working in the areas of literacy, seniors, food security, thrift shop, firefighting, homework help, youth group, library, etc.), people who work in the school system, representatives of regional associations, community organizations, health services, and religious institutions.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- A leader
- A designated note-taker
- A chair/coordinator/timekeeper
- Chart paper and felt markers

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE (*see separate document on holding a community gathering)

1. Extend the invitation emphasizing the following elements:
 - a. The context and the possibility of the gathering
 - b. Who will be invited
 - c. Attendance is a choice
 - d. This is an opportunity to join in a new conversation
2. Plan the gathering, including:
 - a. Setting up the room, ideally in a circle, with room for small group conversations
 - b. Some food and drink
3. Opening greeting:
 - a. Welcome people and greet them personally
 - b. Restate the invitation (why we are here, in simple language, from the heart)
 - c. Create connection, possibly by having people answer an opening question, such as "what led you to accept the invitation?"
4. Whole group discussion (20 minutes)
"What do you like and what do you value in your community?" (What is a source of pride for you, what sets the community apart, what are its achievements, strengths, etc.?)
5. Small group discussions (approx. 45 minutes)
Break into small groups with each group responsible for a theme: the environment, social and community life, the economy, politics/policies, and personal health and well-being
 - a. For each theme, what resources and activities contribute to sustainable community development?
 - b. What are the issues (strengths and challenges) related to this theme?
6. Return to whole-group discussion (45 minutes)
Representatives of each group take turns sharing their conclusions

7. As a whole group (20 minutes)

öIf you were asked to imagine a positive future for your community, what possibilities do you envision?ö

öWhat do we want to create together that would make a difference?ö

8. Closing

a. öWhat are your doubts and reservations?ö

b. öWhat promises are you willing to make to your peers?ö

c. öWhat gifts have you received here today?ö

d. Thank people for coming

e. Discuss possibilities for follow-up:

i. Are there issues that we feel we need to know more about, to understand better before taking action?

ii. Is there a small, do-able project that we feel could be set up?

iii. Do we need an action plan?

iv. Do we want to form a core group to work on a specific project?

v. How engaged are we willing to be, or plan to be?

vi. How has this conversation shifted our thinking?

vii. How could this conversation be continued?

GLOSSARY OF THEMES USED

Theme	Definition	Sample Indicators
The Environment	<p>There are two types of environment: <u>The built environment</u>, comprising every aspect of the physical environment produced by humans. <u>The natural environment</u>, comprising all physical elements that have not undergone intentional human transformation. We can exploit the natural environment (e.g., resources), appreciate it (e.g., outdoor activities), and satisfy our basic needs (air, water, food, land).</p>	<p>Public spaces, parks, physical structures (housing, schools, etc.), transportation infrastructure (bike paths, roads, etc.), and the general properties of the city (sprawl, residential enclaves, central and peripheral areas)</p> <p>Water, air, soil, wildlife and plant life</p>
Social and Community Life	<p>The social environment refers to the characteristics of people, families, and groups who make up the community, and the ties that link them in their daily lives.</p>	<p>The various groups observed (children, adolescents, young men, mature men, seniors, ethnic groups, religious groups, etc.) and their particular situations; mutual cooperation observed (Among whom? Why?); associations, cooperatives, clubs, community organizations, volunteer groups, etc. Local media outlets, playhouses, libraries, concerts, festivals, events, educational activities, movie theaters, special interest clubs, extracurricular activities, schools (general classes), etc.</p>
The Economy	<p>The economic aspect here refers to the economic resources present in the area as well as to the distribution of these resources among different actors (the abundance of opportunity at various levels in the community, the robustness of trade, the population's access to essential resources and services necessary to thrive, etc.).</p>	<p>The main economic activities in the area; local employers; the number, type, and quality of jobs available; job requirements (e.g., education); private, public, and community services necessary to survive and thrive; availability of loans to undertake projects; access to recognized training and education, presence of economic development agencies, etc.</p>
Policies	<p>The politics and policy theme encompasses municipal government and elected officials's community engagement through public policies that foster health.</p> <p>The politics and policy theme also encompasses the quality of relations between citizens and decision-making institutions.</p>	<p>This takes the form of concrete activities such as drafting resolutions, building infrastructure, implementing programs, enacting legislation and regulations, etc.</p> <p>Communication with elected officials, citizens's committees, promoting citizen participation, building and maintaining partnerships, political commitments (long-term vision), projects arising from citizen initiatives, democracy, domination and powerlessness, a concern for making decisions that promote health and well-being, etc.</p>
Personal Health and Well-being	<p><u>Health</u> is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease. (WHO)</p> <p><u>Well-being</u>, on the other hand, is something you feel: only you can determine your level of well-being in a given situation.</p>	

STEP 3: Produce a summary of the community portrait

Proposed Template for the Community Portrait Executive Summary (2 pages)

- Name of the community
- Brief history of the community
- Short description of the process used to compile the portrait. Include the *who*, *when*, and *how*.
- Main findings from the gathering and statistical analyses conducted
 - Choose certain positive elements such as the potential, what is liked, and what makes the community healthy
 - Identify the issues (strengths and challenges)
 - Introduce the community in A FEW FACTS AND FIGURES. A small graph could be used.
- Introduce the desired outcomes and action strategies that emerged from the community portrait process

DETAILED RESULTS OF RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENTS			
THEMES	POINTS RAISED	THEMES	POINTS RAISED
The Environment		Social and Community Life	
Assessment of the natural environment		Assessment of social and community life	
Assessment of the built environment		Resources and activities that promote health and well-being	
Resources and activities that promote health and well-being		Issues (strengths and challenges) related to social and community life	
Issues (strengths and challenges) related to the environment			
The Economy		Policies	
Assessment of economic factors		Assessment of policies	
Resources and activities that promote health and well-being		Resources and activities that promote health and well-being	
Issues (strengths and challenges) related to the economy		Issues (strengths and challenges) related to politics and policies	

DETAILED RESULTS OF RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENT (cont.)			
THEMES	POINTS RAISED	THEMES	POINTS RAISED
General Assessment		Looking Forward	
Recommended Followup		Comments on the presentation of the overview	

