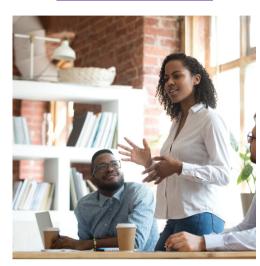# KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY

Overview: Knowing and understanding your community's history, current context, and long-range vision are essential for courageous citizenship, community engagement, and community organizing.

KEY TERMS

Courageous Leadership

Courageous Leadership strives to examine truths, seeks to understand others, exposes and tackles inequities, promotes innovation, and encourages and supports new courageous leaders' development.

Community Engagement

Community Engagement is an intentional process that brings together community members for involvement in relationship building and decision-making for improving outcomes for individuals and the community. Community engagement occurs on a spectrum, beginning at the low end with informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and directing.

Community Organizing

Community organizing is an iterative process to resolve problems or reckon with injustices and inequities. The process begins by assessing community histories and present context, listening to and honoring the voices of community members as an essential step to clarify common goals, build new leaders, and galvanize the community to solve problems.

Where to start?

• Use basic information sources – Quick Fact Census data, Google, and Wikipedia. 1 *
Make note of those things that stand out, surprises, doubts, and questions?
• Conduct interviews with elders (at-least three people) in your community. Consider talking with neighbors, retired teachers, barbers and farmers, business persons, pastors, elderly elected officials, etc. "Family life, schooling, and work" are common topics to anchor a conversation. Ask about significant changes in the community, lifestyles, and the country. Try and ask the same questions to everyone to compare and contrast responses.
• Identify a pressing community issue and other congregation members and faith anchored organization members concerned about the issue.

Creating a Community Profile

Having specific community information and data in one document is useful when engaging community and organizing. Consider the following areas in which to collect data:

Education

The N.C. Department of Public Instruction offers a comprehensive report on local schools' basic information and performance data
https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/

The U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection provides data on specific school harassment or bullying; discipline; restraint or seclusion; school staff; and school expenditures.
https://ocrdata.ed.gov/

Health

North Carolina County Health Departments produce a county-wide health assessment periodically (every 3 to 4 years). Search for Community Health Assessments under county health directors.
https://www.ncalhd.org/directors/
North Carolina Public Health (NCPH) works to promote and contribute to the highest possible level of health for the people of North Carolina.
https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/
County Health Ranking and Roadmaps examines opportunities to ensure economic security and health for all through a living wage, fair pay for women, accessible child-care, and well-resourced schools.
https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/
Kids Count Data Center at Annie E. Casey Foundation provides premier source of data on children and families.
https://datacenter.kidscount.org/

Economic Development

North Carolina Budget and Tax Center
https://ncbudget.org/
United States Census
https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045221
North Carolina Department of Commerce shares economic development reports and resources.
https://www.commerce.nc.gov/data-tools-reports/economic-development-reports

Click here for an example of LtW cohort developed county profile.
Once the County Profile is created, it helps community members better understand their community and builds their capacity to analyze community issues and raise important questions.

* Wikipedia information is not always accurate or unbiases.