

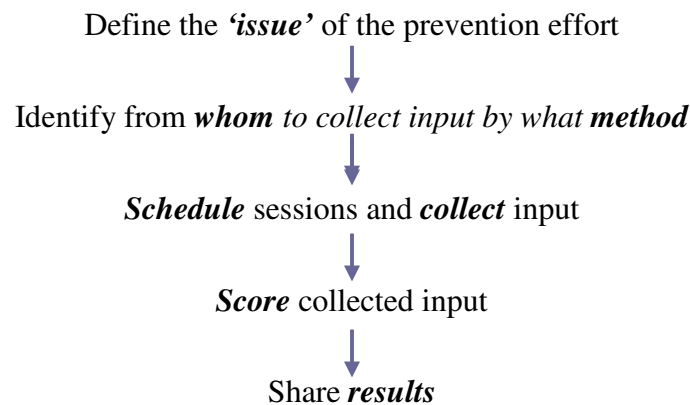


## ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY READINESS FOR POLICY-FOCUSED ENVIRONMENTAL PREVENTION

### Introduction

The process of conducting an assessment of the readiness of a community to engage in policy-focused environmental prevention can be represented by the general steps shown below. This process should be familiar to those with experience in collecting community input on public health and safety issues through one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. For those with little experience in these mechanisms for collecting data, more details are provided for each step in the following sections.

### DATA COLLECTION PROCESS



The process described on the following pages will lead the preventionist through the process of assessing a community's readiness for engaging in policy-focused environmental prevention, as represented graphically in *Attachment 1*. Generally, a series of questions will be asked to help determine the relative readiness "level" for each of the five components of the Environmental Prevention Implementation Model. These components are: *Intentional Organizing, Enforcement, Applied Data, Media Advocacy and Policy*. Because of the subjective nature of this exercise, it is recommended all interviews and discussions be observed and scored independently by two project team members when possible.

A baseline readiness assessment, conducted prior to beginning of a project provides the local strategy team valuable considerations as they develop a project strategic plan which recognizes and is based on the unique starting point of a community. Replicating the readiness assessment several years into the project or at project conclusion can provide meaningful insight into the increased capacity of a community to apply an environmental prevention approach to modify unhealthy and unsafe community norms.





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### Data Collection Process

#### 1) *Define the “issue.”*

It will be important to define the specific issue you plan to address with the environmental prevention effort. Knowing what issue the project will address will be important in identifying the right community members to interview.

*Hint: Don't make your 'issue' a specific policy objective or other solution. Your issue or problem should be broad enough to make strategic changes in direction if needed as you collect data. For example, if you think you want to pass a social host ordinance to address underage drinking at house parties, the community issue or problem is “**underage drinking**” or “**youth access to alcohol**”, not social host ordinance.*

#### 2) *Identify how to collect input and from whom.*

##### Key Informant Interviews.

The primary mechanism for community input is via one-on-one or small group (2-3 people) interviews, also called Key Informant Interviews. The following discussion pertains to this mechanism of data collection; a section follows on Focus Group interviews, which can be used to supplement information gathered from key informants.

The purpose of Key Informant Interviews (KII) is to obtain information from a community resident who is in a position to know the community as a whole, or a particular portion you are interested in. Some important advantages to this mechanism of information collection include:

- Opportunity to establish rapport / trust and get an insiders view
- Can provide in-depth information about causes of the problem
- Allows you to obtain information from many different people, include minority or “silent majority” viewpoints

Guidelines for using Key Informant Interviews:

- Take time to select who you will interview. Pick someone who knows what's going on in the community and is articulate enough to share that knowledge.
- Particularly with policy-focused environmental prevention work, it is critical to interview a solid base of community leadership, even if they are not directly involved in or concerned with the issue at this time. Community leadership is comprised of formal and informal leaders. Formal leaders are those who are leaders by virtue of their elected or appointed position (e.g., mayor, sheriff, police chief, tribal council or elders, county commissioner or supervisor, judge, spiritual/religious leader). Informal leaders are individuals who carry influence within the community based on who they are not what position they hold.



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- Ensure you talk with a mix of people – people of different ages, ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliation, education level, etc. While there is not a specific number of community members that must be interviewed, the number should be great enough to provide a good representation of community sectors who are directly or indirectly impacted by, involved with, concerned with or otherwise interested in the issue. Generally, it will require 5-10 interviews to ensure adequate input from various sectors of the community. Consider interviewing individuals from the following:

City / County or Tribal government  
Law Enforcement  
Spiritual / religious leaders  
Community members at large  
City / County Planners

Medical Field  
Business Owners  
Social Services  
Education Leaders  
Newspaper or radio reporters

**Attachment 2** provides a worksheet to help you identify key informants to interview for your Community Readiness Assessment.

### Using Focus Group interviews.

An alternative to interviewing key informants to collect input for the Community Readiness Assessment is to use Focus Group interviews. A focus group can be defined as a group of interacting individuals having some common interest or characteristics, brought together by an interviewer, who uses the group and its interaction as a way to gain information about a specific or focused issue.

Generally, focus group interviews will

- Give information on how groups of people think or feel about a particular topic
- Give greater insight into why certain opinions are held
- Help improve the planning and design of new programs

Focus group participants should be systematically and purposefully selected. The following provides some guidelines in selecting potential participants:

- Purpose of study should guide who to invite. You want participants who have knowledge and opinions on the issue to be discussed.
- Focus group participants should be characterized by homogeneity, but with sufficient variation to allow for contrasting opinions. Homogeneity is most often sought in terms of occupation, educational level, age, education, or family characteristics, and gender.

For purposes of gathering input for the Community Readiness Assessment, focus group interviews may be useful for population groups such as college or high school youth, or individuals employed by social services or nonprofit organizations familiar with the issue.



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- Participants should not be overly familiar with each other (those who know each other tend to form small group discussions).
- Size of the group is typically around 7-10. Groups of over twelve have often proven to be too big while under four have shown that not enough total experiences exist.

The greatest challenge with using focus group interviews is that it requires a carefully trained interviewer who is knowledgeable about group dynamics. Otherwise the interviewer may knowingly or unknowingly bias results by providing cues about what types of responses are desirable.

If you are considering utilizing Focus Group interviews, please contact Brenda Simmons, at 406.600.0607 for more information on question development, etc.

### *Other input from the community environment.*

It is not unusual to conduct an environmental assessment as part of the start-up of an environmental prevention project. For example, an environmental prevention project considering binge drinking and drinking and driving might collect data on the community's activities and norms relative to retail availability and accessibility of alcohol, social availability of alcohol, alcohol advertising practices and the criminal justice system. If such data exists, it is a prudent and appropriate step to cross check your final Readiness Assessment levels with the results from such an environmental assessment.

### ***3) Schedule interviews and collect input***

Each Key Informant interview will consist of the same questions related to each of the components of environmental prevention implementation model. Key Informant Interview Questions are provided in ***Attachment 3***.

Each interview will require 30-60 minutes (do not schedule less than 60 minutes for each interview). Interviews should be scheduled at a location where the interviewee will be comfortable discussing this issue. Expect to schedule interviews several weeks in advance.

Two staff should be involved in each interview.

- One person will be responsible for reading the questions. Avoid discussing the issue with the interviewee; simply read the question. You may clarify the question for the interviewee and ask for clarification to responses when necessary. Avoid interjecting personal biases or values.
- The second person will be responsible for recording the responses. Record responses as accurately as possible for scoring.



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In addition, a more in-depth interview may be conducted with the Project Officer or Prevention Specialist. This interview provides meaningful insight into the experience level or readiness of the project team or Local Strategy Team. Typically this interview would be conducted by an IPS staff or someone very familiar with the application of the environmental prevention implementation model. The results of this interview should be included in and scored along with all other Key Informant Interviews for a specific community. Project Officer Interview Questions are provided as *Attachment 4*.

#### ***4) Score collected input.***

Interviews will be scored by two scorers. All interviews for a particular community should be completed before scoring any of the interviews. The Instructions for scoring interviews, the Anchored Scores for each component, and the Scoring Sheet are provided as *Attachments 5, 6, and 7*, respectively.

#### ***5) Share assessment results with community***

Understanding a community's readiness for environmental prevention can be useful information on several levels. First, understanding the overall readiness score for each component of the implementation environmental prevention implementation model provides insight into which components of the implementation model should be focused initially upon project start-up. Understanding the overall readiness score is also useful as a baseline measure community capacity for policy-focused environmental prevention work. Comparing this score with those obtained when replicating the readiness assessment again at a later date in the project can indicate the increased capacity of the community for policy-focused environmental prevention work.