Rediscovering your community

Objective: To find out how the club can better serve its community

Purpose: To clarify what the community needs and how your Kiwanis club can help

Goals: To gain information that will help the club assess the potential for new partnerships, sponsorships and service projects

Audience: Membership committee, with participation where designated from club members

Community surveys help clubs gather data about what the community needs from people who care. They also help to identify how the club might partner with others to address those needs and strengthen relationships with community leaders.

A step-by-step process

This tool is designed to systematically lead you through a survey process designed to reveal information about your club’s service impact, partnership opportunities and possibilities for expansion. Schedule this survey annually—or any time the club has experienced significant changes in membership demographics or service interests.

Step 1: Create contact lists

Brainstorm to identify community members who could provide the most useful information. Consider these people:

- Club partners
- Members of other groups with which the club already has a relationship
- Community leaders
- Government officials
- Public safety officials
- School administrators
- Service Leadership Program faculty advisors and students
- Chamber of commerce leaders
- Librarians
- Members of the local media
- Hospital directors
- Members of faith-based organizations
- Key business owners
- Representatives of other organizations serving children (e.g., Boys & Girls Clubs)
- Residents or commuters (to gauge community needs in an impromptu interview)
Step 2: Identify team members

- Choose a partner or put together small teams for conducting interviews. Going in pairs can make the interview more comfortable, but also ensure detailed notes are taken.
- Keep impromptu interviews between five and 10 minutes, and scheduled ones under 30. Before conducting an interview, introduce yourself, your club and the purpose of the interview. Let them know that all questions are optional and they can take as much time as they wish to answer.

Step 3: Schedule and conduct interviews

Determine which team members will contact which people/groups—and the time frame in which interviews should be completed. How you conduct the interviews may take a number of forms. You could ask questions by email, over the phone or in person. When it’s over, ask for, but also offer, contact information so that you can follow up.

Whatever you choose, be prepared. Anticipate how the interview should go, and keep it focused. Capture their responses in one place, whether it’s in a notepad or on a voice recorder, tablet or laptop.

Below are some sample scripts and questions to guide you.

Introducing yourself:

Hello, my name is _____________________, and I belong to the ____________________ Kiwanis Club. It’s good to meet you. Our club is very active in the community. We do projects like ___________________________________, but we want to see whether there are needs that we don’t know about. To do this, we are trying to gather opinions about what’s good about our community, as well as how it could be improved. Would you have five minutes to give me your opinion?

Great! Don’t feel like you have to answer every question, and take as much or as little time as you need to answer.

Potential questions:

- What do you think our community does well? What do you like best about the community?
- What would make our community a better place to live, work and play?
- What are some unmet needs of our community? What things should we be most concerned about as a community?
- Which organizations or groups do you feel like are working to make our community better? Which are helping to improve children’s lives?
- What is your “wish list” for our community?
- On a scale of one to five with one being the lowest, how involved with the community would you say you’ve been in the last three years?
- How do you see yourself getting involved in improving the community?
- What do you feel are the greatest barriers to community involvement for you personally (if applicable) or for our community members?
- What do you feel would get people excited about volunteering in the community?
- Who do you feel are the most respected and influential people in our community?
- Who else would you recommend that we talk to about what we can do to help the community?
- Do you have any short-term needs that our club can assist with?
- Are there any long-term needs that you need community assistance or support with?
• What, if anything, is currently being done to address those needs?
• Do you have any questions, comments or final thoughts?

In closing: Be sure to offer a Kiwanis business card!

Thank you, ____________________, for your time. We really appreciate it. I’d like to exchange contact information so that I can follow up with you about [anything interesting or left unanswered]. If you think of anything, any need that we may have in the community that we didn’t talk about, please call me. Our club meets ______________________. We’d love for you to join us so we can fill you in on the ways Kiwanis is already active in the ________________________________ area.

Follow-up notes

Community events that club members need to attend:
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Media and marketing ideas:
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Fundraising ideas:
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Other people and/or organizations to contact:
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Step 4: Debrief and reflect

Collecting the opinions and needs of community leaders does little good if they aren’t put to use.

After completing community surveys, make time for a debriefing session. Collect the input from the interviews and discuss ideas for potential new service projects or fundraisers, partnerships or sponsorships, and even potential new members at a membership committee meeting. Questions to keep in mind:

Was any information obtained suggesting need(s) for club action?
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
Does the club have the interest and financial means to pursue new projects? (Take a look at Analyzing your impact for a few ideas on how to weigh the costs and benefits of potential and current projects.)

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

Was there feedback about past Kiwanis service that should be addressed?

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

How might the club contribute to resolving frequently noted community concerns?

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

Are there people or organizations with whom you might create relationships? (Take a look at the tool Developing community partnerships for additional ideas about how to cultivate sponsorships and partnerships.)

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

If you find that some of the issues warrant further discussion between community leaders and organizations, consider hosting a community forum bringing together a cross-section of influencers. Develop open-ended questions from the areas of concern identified during the community surveying. For example, “How can we engage our children in community improvement?” or “What do you believe is the top issue concerning our youth?”
DREAM BIG!

Based on the needs and the ideas you’ve generated, think about this:

If you could give your community anything, what would it be?

What would that service project look like? Is this the “signature service project” in which your club is currently engaged?

If “Yes!” – Can you make it even better?

If “No,” what steps can your club take now to see your new signature service project come to fruition by this time next year?