MissionInsite

MissionInsite is an online system that assembles research about local community demographics, as a way of offering local churches more detailed information about their surrounding communities and the ministry opportunities around them. The Virginia Annual Conference subscribes to MissionInsite, so that all churches within the conference have access to this system for free.

1. New Users: Click here to fill out a new user request form
    a. User Guide
    b. Video Tutorial
2. Returning Users: Click here to log in
3. Sample QuickInsite Report
4. Sample ExecutiveInsite Report

Listening Practices[1]

1. Neighborhood Walk
    a. With a team of key leaders and stakeholders, schedule a day and time to go out into the immediate neighborhood and/or community. In groups of 3, divide up the areas of the neighborhood and each group will spend 30 minutes walking through that area. Ensure safety procedures for any children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
    b. In groups of 3, begin your walk with a prayer. As you walk, pray "Open my eyes, ears, and heart, Lord". Consider and reflect on the topics below during the 30 minute walk
        i. People
            1. Who is here?
            2. What ages, sexes, nationalities, races, languages are represented?
            3. What activities are people engaging in?
            4. What might your observations lead to learning more about? Think of family make-up, work-from-home, homeschoolers, retirees, shut-ins, etc. Beyond just the surface-level demographics.
            5. What other cultural markers do you see that might tell you more about the diversity within the community? Flags, art, food, festivals, businesses, signage, etc.?
        ii. Land-Use
            1. What kind of residences are here?
                a. Apartments, mobile/manufactured homes, Affordable housing, income-based, military, primarily renter vs. owners, etc.
            2. Transportation - What do you observe?
                a. Look for public transit, bus stops, school bus stops, transportation for older and/or disabled persons.
            3. What do you notice about the green space or public spaces?
                a. Look out for community gardens, forest areas, parks, playgrounds, dog parks, sidewalks, curb cuts, accessible street crossings, bike access.
            4. What kind of stores are here?
                a. Actual grocery stores or dollar general-like stores? And do they sell fresh produce and meat?

[1] Adapted from Rendle, Gilbert R, and Alice Mann. 2003. *Holy Conversations : Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*. Bethesda, Md: Alban Institute.

b. Are there places to buy clothing, shoes, auto parts?
c. Do you see barber shops, hair salons, etc.?

5. Financial Institutions - Do you see more banks or check advance/payday loans shops?
6. What kind of educational institutions are available? Think public schools, charter schools, colleges, trade schools, etc.
7. What public services are here? Is there access to early start, pre-k, after-school programs, youth programs, senior services?
8. Where is the closest library? Libraries are vital to communities as they provide access to books, internet, communal space, and much more.
9. Do you see signage or places regarding civic involvement? Including voting polls, neighborhood meetings, community boards, etc.?

iii. Condition

1. What are the conditions of residences?
2. What are the conditions of streets and public spaces?
3. How heavily traveled are the streets here?
4. Is there a bike lane or dedicated walking sidewalk?

c. After the neighborhood walk, gather together for a time of conversation and reflection.

i. If you have lived in the community for a while, what has changed since you first moved here?
ii. If you are new to the community, what was surprising to you during the walk?
iii. What did you see on the walk that you wouldn't have noticed if you traveled through that area by car?
iv. What did you learn about the neighborhood?
v. What observations are significant to the connection between your church and the community?

2. Community Leader Interviews
   a. With a team of key leaders and stakeholders, make a list of 4-7 community leaders from different sectors of the community. Think about who makes decisions in the community that impact and influence the community. Examples could be, but are not limited to: school principal, police chief, neighboring religious leaders, head of social services, preschool director, head of assisted living facility or retirement community.

b. In groups of 3, schedule a 30 minute meeting with each community leader. When you schedule your meeting, share that you are seeking to learn more about the community. Do not ask, “what should our church be doing?”.
c. Ask these questions:
    i. What trends are you seeing in our community?
    ii. What are our communities’ biggest strengths?
    iii. What is your favorite thing about our community?
    iv. What challenges do you see in our community?
    v. What unmet needs are in our community?
    vi. What breaks your heart in our community?
    vii. Who else should we talk with?
d. After all of the interviews have been completed, gather together as a group to reflect on and consider your experiences and learnings.
    i. What patterns do you see around the strengths of our community?
    ii. What patterns do you see around the challenges and needs in our community?

Community Mapping

1. With a team of key leaders and stakeholders, list all of the community organizations, services, and possible connections that are within a 10 mile radius of your church.
2. Next to each named asset, list the area of need that the asset aims to address or an asset this organization is trying to strengthen.
3. Next to each area of need, list the gaps that the organization, service, or connection might have or does have.
4. Resources to help develop this community map:
    a. https://www.findhelp.org/
    b. https://www.dss.virginia.gov/
    c. https://211virginia.org/community-resources/

Asset (community organization, services, connections)	**Area of Need**	**Resources**	**Gaps**
Ex: NeedFoodVA	Food	Food to distribute, warehouse to keep food, community partnerships, positive reputation in community	Need volunteers to pack food, need place to distribute food, need financial support
Ex: John Wesley UMC (church down the road that is in our Micro-Community)	Food	Volunteers, preschool and summer food ministry	Need small commitment sponsorships for families, difficult location to access

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