

# Mapping Local Youth Resources

Michael E. Wonacott

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At times, it's necessary to take a good look at the resources available in your local area that can help achieve desired outcomes for WIA youth.

- What resources exist?
- What services do those resources provide?
- Are existing services effective and used?
- Are there gaps in services?
- If so, which gaps in services are the most important to address?

## Determine What Resources to Map

Mapping all the youth resources available for all purposes in your local area would be far too big a job. To make the project feasible, you should narrow your mapping effort to a specific focus such as these.

- A specific target population
- A smaller geographic section of your local area
- A particular activity or purpose

You might narrow your focus as part of a larger system assessment or system-building effort. Or, you may identify a critical need for resource mapping in ongoing planning and delivery of your local WIA youth program. You should narrow your resource mapping effort to 2-3 priority areas.

## Determine What Information to Collect

You gather information on local resources so that you can make an informed judgment about the availability and effectiveness of programs and services. To make such a judgment, you need information on the organization, program, and program outcomes as shown in the table below.

Information to Collect		
Organization	Program	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name</li> <li>• Address</li> <li>• Contact person</li> <li>• Phone</li> <li>• E-mail</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Geographic area served               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Entire local workforce investment area</li> <li>◦ Smaller geographic section                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ County(s)</li> <li>▪ Township(s)</li> <li>▪ ZIP code(s)</li> <li>▪ Census tract(s)</li> <li>▪ School district(s)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name</li> <li>• Description of services or activities</li> <li>• Youth served               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Age</li> <li>◦ In-school/out-of-school</li> <li>◦ Gender</li> <li>◦ Race/ethnicity</li> <li>◦ Native or primary language</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Target populations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Basic skills deficient youth</li> <li>◦ Dropouts</li> <li>◦ Homeless or runaway youth</li> <li>◦ Foster youth</li> <li>◦ Pregnant youth</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term outcomes achieved by program participants</li> <li>• Evidence of outcomes reported               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Program data on participant outcomes</li> <li>◦ Program data on changes in participant knowledge, skills, behavior, or attitudes</li> <li>◦ Use of evidence-based approach documented by literature or experts</li> <li>◦ Anecdotal evidence from participants or staff</li> <li>◦ Literature documenting a sound underlying principle</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School building(s)</li> <li>▪ Other</li> <li>• Referral and service policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Accepts referrals from other agencies</li> <li>○ Open access – free services</li> <li>○ Open access – fee for service</li> <li>○ Application and admission required for services</li> <li>○ Other</li> </ul> </li> <li>• WIA youth program status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Current WIA youth program provider</li> <li>○ Former WIA youth program provider</li> <li>○ Interested in being a WIA youth program provider</li> <li>○ Other</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parenting youth</li> <li>○ Offenders</li> <li>○ Youth with a disability</li> <li>○ Requires additional assistance per local area policy</li> <li>○ Faces serious barriers per local area policy</li> <li>○ Youth 1 or more grade levels level appropriate for age</li> <li>○ Migrant youth</li> <li>○ Indian or Native American youth</li> <li>○ Children of incarcerated parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Data on participant satisfaction with program or outcomes</li> <li>○ Other</li> </ul>
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### Design a Database to House Data Collected

The information on local resources that you collect will need to be entered into a database for later analysis. The database will contain fields to capture specific information about local resources; those fields must be identified before the information can be collected so information can be collected uniformly.

To design the database and identify fields to include, local area WIA youth staff should work with database and data management experts. In designing the database of information on local resources, do not try to design a database that will capture all possible information on all possible resources in the local area. For now, your database design should only accommodate the data to be gathered now; you can expand or modify the database later for future data collection efforts if need be.

Local WIA youth staff and database experts should follow these guidelines.

- Identify fields that require respondents to select one of the multiple choices supplied to ensure meaningful, consistent data.
- Customize fields as necessary to capture data on the specific resources and services you are targeting in your resource mapping effort.
- Include fields with two different kinds of information.
  - Information gathered directly from local resources
  - Information supplied later by workgroup members after analysis of information gathered from local resources

### Determine a Method for Collecting Resource Data

Local WIA youth staff and database experts should jointly determine how data will be collected. Surveys are the recommended format for collecting data. However, you will need to determine whether you want to collect survey data by phone, by mail or e-mail, in person, or online. It is highly advisable to involve experts in evaluation design from local universities or economic development or planning agencies.

**Why use surveys?** Surveys have a number of advantages for collecting the data you need.

- Get answers to exactly the same questions from larger group
- Relatively short time commitment from respondents
- Can be given to larger groups of people
- Can be written or oral
- Can be conducted by phone, by mail or e-mail, in person, or online
- Can be done at the respondent's leisure
- Usually closed questions, though some open-ended questions should be included

**3 Developing surveys.** A survey form must be developed for all surveys, whether they will be written or oral. Tips for developing surveys include

- The survey form should include items only for information to be gathered directly from local resources.
- Most survey items should be multiple choice.
- Survey items should include sufficient choices for respondents to make an appropriate answer.
- Written surveys should have a reading level that is appropriate for respondents.
- Choices should include open responses like *Other, please explain*.
- Include opportunities for additional comments.
- Be sure to define any terms that may be confusing for respondents. It may be helpful to include a glossary of terms with the survey.

**Snowballing to identify other respondents.** One technique to identify possible respondents in your data collection is snowballing – that is, asking one respondent to identify another program that provides services or activities that target your priorities. You can include items on a survey form that ask respondents to identify other potential respondents.

**Pilot testing.** Survey forms need to be pilot tested before they are used. For survey forms

- Identify a small group of individuals who are
  - Like those who will be included in the sample
  - Not familiar with the specifics of the data collection effort
- If you plan to use a written survey by mail or e-mail, have those individuals complete the survey forms in writing.
- If you plan to use the survey by phone or in person, conduct a phone or in-person interview using the survey form.
- If you plan to use an online survey, have individuals complete the survey online. It is vital to test the functionality and ease of use of the webpage as well as the appropriateness of the survey items.
- Review the results of the pilot survey to determine whether the form elicited the data you desire.

Pilot testing also gives staff the chance to practice using the survey forms. Staff should not use questions or forms cold without rehearsing first.

**Using youth to collect data.** You may want to consider involving current or former WIA youth participants to help with the collection of data. If you choose to involve youth, you will need to ensure they are fully trained to administer the survey and they practice calling or conducting in-person interviews of respondents. You want to make sure they are comfortable with the survey and are able to handle any issues that may come up when administering the survey.

## Establish a Data Management System

Working with local database experts, you identified fields to include in a database to capture the specific information on local resources to be collected. Now, you should work with database experts and other WIA youth system stakeholders to establish a data management system including

- A database shell with
  - Fields of appropriate type (e.g., alphanumeric, limited text, unlimited text) to store data gathered
  - Report formats to retrieve data
- Administrative issues
  - Staff assignments for database development, data gathering, data input, quality control, and report generation
  - Database access and privileges
  - Host server for the database

**Developing the database shell.** Developing a database shell from scratch can be very expensive and time consuming. If possible, you should try to find an existing database shell that can be adapted for your resource mapping; database experts may be able to help find an existing database to adapt. Adapting an existing database shell also takes some time and money, but it may give you a head start. You can make inquiries with local

- United Way headquarters
- Family and Children First Councils
- Chambers of Commerce
- 2-1-1 information and referral systems

Providers of local 2-1-1 call centers or other information and referral related sites can be identified by searching at <http://www.211.org/ReferWeb/MainForm.aspx>.

Local database experts should perform the work of developing a database shell or adapting an existing database shell for use under the guidance of local WIA youth program staff.

**Making administrative arrangements.** With guidance from local database experts, WIA youth program staff should play a lead role in resolving administrative issues. Those include

- Enlisting support of key organizations and staff for ongoing data management
  - Youth council
  - Key local area WIA stakeholders
  - Local administrative entity
  - Current WIA youth service providers
  - Other youth-serving organizations
- Obtaining agreement on staff and organizational responsibilities for
  - Data gathering
  - Data input
  - Quality control
  - Report generation
  - Database hosting

### Collect Data on Community Resources

Now, all the planning is complete, and data can be collected on local resources available to help in the 2-3 resource-mapping priorities.

Local WIA youth staff should take primary responsibility for directing data collection, including coordination and communication of data collection activities. In addition, local WIA youth staff should work with database experts to prepare data collection staff to conduct the surveys.

**Conducting phone surveys.** Use these steps to plan and conduct phone surveys.

1. Identify the individuals you plan to interview.
2. Practice the interview several times. Make sure everyone who is administering the survey is clear on the definition of all terms. It may be helpful to include a glossary of terms with the survey. You will want to ensure that respondents base their answers on the same understanding of a term as other respondents do.
3. Call the interviewees and conduct the interview or schedule an alternative date to conduct the interview.
4. Always ask the survey questions exactly as written. Even slight changes in the wording of questions or the way questions are asked can make the survey results unreliable.
5. Note any issues related to the interview process in the margin of the interview.
6. Interviewees should answer the questions as best they can.
7. Encourage the interviewees to complete all questions but remember they have the right to refuse to participate or not to answer any question.
8. Send a letter to all interviewees thanking them for their participation.

**Conducting in-person surveys.** In-person surveys should be planned and conducted as follows.

1. Identify the individuals you plan to interview.
2. Practice the interview several times. Make sure everyone who is administering the survey is clear on the definition of all terms. It may be helpful to include a glossary of terms with the survey. You will want to ensure that respondents base their answers on the same understanding of a term as other respondents do.
3. Always ask the survey questions exactly as written. Even slight changes in the wording of questions or the way questions are asked can make the survey results unreliable.
4. Note any issues related to the interview process in the margin of the interview.
5. Interviewees should answer the questions as best they can.
6. Encourage interviewees to complete all questions but remember they have the right to refuse to participate or not to answer any question.
7. Send a letter to all interviewees thanking them for their participation.

## 5 Using mail or e-mail surveys. These guidelines will help you use mail and e-mail surveys effectively.

1. Identify the individuals you plan to survey.
2. Write a cover letter to include in the mailing.
  - a. It is important to consider your response rate and identify the most effective community leader to write the letter.
  - b. In the letter, explain the purpose of the survey and ask the respondents to answer the questions as best they can.
  - c. Encourage the respondents to complete all questions, but explain they have the right to refuse to participate or not answer any question.
  - d. Include a deadline date for survey completion.
3. For mailed surveys, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with the mailing to increase the response rate.
4. Close to the requested return date, consider sending a reminder e-mail or phone call to encourage respondents to complete and return the survey.
5. Once the requested return date has passed, consider calling or sending an e-mail to respondents who have not yet returned the survey.
6. Send a letter to all respondents thanking them for their participation.

**Using online surveys.** Similar guidelines apply to using online surveys.

1. Identify the individuals you plan to invite to complete the online survey.
2. Determine which online service you will use to administer the survey. Some options include, but are not limited to, Survey Monkey, SmartTrack, and Zoomerang.
3. Enter the survey into the website.
4. Before sending the link to respondents, test the survey to ensure all of the questions and responses are entered correctly.
5. Write a cover letter to include in the e-mail requesting participation in the survey and including the link to the online survey.
  - a. It is important to consider your response rate and identify the most effective community leader to write letter.
  - b. In the letter, explain the purpose of the survey and ask the respondents to answer the questions as best they can.
  - c. Encourage the respondents to complete all questions, but explain they have the right to refuse to participate or not answer any question.
  - d. Include a deadline date for survey completion.
6. One week prior to the deadline, send a follow-up e-mail encouraging respondents to complete the survey.
7. Once the requested completion date has passed, consider calling or sending an e-mail to respondents who have not yet completed the survey.
8. Send a letter to all respondents thanking them for their participation.

### Analyze Resource Assessment Data

Data collected must be entered into the resource database. Data entry procedures should be developed jointly by the database expert and local WIA youth staff; local WIA youth staff can take primary responsibility for coordinating and monitoring data entry and quality control.

**Data entry.** Data gathered directly from local resources during interviews should be entered into the resource database. In addition, the local WIA youth staff may generate other data that need to be entered in database records.

- The 2-3 priorities that drove the data collection
- WIA youth staff analysis of data collected from resources, such as
  - WIA program activities under which the programs or activities would qualify
  - Other analyses driven by local data needs

**Quality control.** It is vital to ensure that data gathered are accurately entered into database records.

- Before entering data, check paper forms for impossible or illogical data like Feb. 30 or a male youth who is pregnant.
- Proofread database printouts against original paper forms.
- Have supervisors do spot checks on data accuracy and completeness.

**Analysis of resources.** Database reports should be analyzed by the resource analysis workgroup. The resource analysis workgroup should answer questions like these.

- Do services exist to achieve the 2-3 resource mapping priorities?
- Are available services effective in achieving desired participant outcomes?
- Are effective services available to youth in target age groups?
- Are effective services available to youth in target smaller geographic sections of the local workforce investment area?
- Are effective services available to youth in target populations?

The outcome of this analysis is a comprehensive list of gaps in services available to meet the 2-3 local resource mapping priorities. Local WIA youth staff should involve other WIA stakeholders and local evaluation experts in analyzing resources and gaps in services. In addition, it may be helpful to engage other key WIA stakeholders to maximize involvement, participation, and ownership of the resource mapping process.

**Gap analysis.** Finally, you should analyze the comprehensive list of gaps in services and rank those gaps. Each gap identified is described and then ranked in order of its importance in the comprehensive list of gaps in services.

Once again, local WIA youth staff should involve the other key WIA stakeholders as appropriate to maximize involvement, participation, and ownership of gap analysis as part of the overall resource mapping process.

### The Final Result

As a result of your focused resource mapping process, you have a good list of local resources available in 2-3 priority areas and specific gaps in services in those areas. Now, you can move on to the next step, which is to fill the gaps by releasing a request for proposals specifying the outcomes, geographic sections, and populations you want to target and contracting with providers to achieve the targets.

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Center for Learning Excellence  
The Ohio State University  
1900 Kenny Road  
Columbus, OH 43210  
614.292.8665  
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