



Grow Your Impact by Understanding Your Community

ACTIVITY 1: ASSESS YOUR COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

Introduction

Performing an environmental scan is an essential step for organizations to build a strong value proposition. It involves systematically studying the external environment in which the organization operates to identify opportunities and potential threats. Conducting an environmental scan involves assessing your **community's needs**, understanding the **policy context** of your program and organization, and **assessing potential partners** for your work.

Strong value propositions reflect and emphasize how your program responds to the needs of your community. This exercise will guide you through crafting a community needs assessment focused on disability. It leverages SparkMap, a tool developed by the University of Missouri Center for Applied Research and Engagement Systems that allows you to look across counties and various indicators to understand your community and potential areas of need.

Instructions

1. Open the SparkMap Community Assessment tool: [Make a Community Needs Assessment](#)
2. Select your state and a county your program serves from the county list.
3. Proceed to the *Data Indicators* step, select *Population with Any Disability* from the *Demographics* section, and generate the report.
4. Write a one-paragraph summary of your community needs assessment report. Consider comparing the disability rate in your county versus statewide and national rates, noting areas in your county with higher disability rates, and including compelling or surprising demographic characteristics of people with disabilities in your county.

Example: Our program serves Pinellas County, FL, home to over 146,000 people with disabilities, or 15% of the total population. Disability rates are even higher in South Saint Petersburg. These neighborhoods are also characterized by greater socioeconomic disadvantage (as measured by income, education, employment, and housing quality).

5. What other topics could you include in your community assessment that are available in the *Data Indicators*?
Examples include chronic disease prevalence, Area Deprivation Index scores, and households without a vehicle.