



PMI Community Demonstration Sites

CONDUCTING AN ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILE

What is it?

Decisions relating to defining target audiences and behavioral objectives will be based on a variety of factors relating to **risk of HIV transmission** and **program viability**. Program viability depends on how realistic and appropriate the proposed activities are for a given community. The environmental profile will provide information to help you determine program viability. Information collected as part of your environmental profile will initially help you to make programmatic decisions, and after some key decisions are made, the information will help you to better design your activities. It will report on the environment in which the target audience lives, works and plays, and in which the program will operate.

The environmental profile, together with the community resource inventory, will:

- # help to make the five key programmatic decisions by providing information on issues of viability;
- # ensure that program activities or interventions that you develop take advantage of and/or complement existing programs and services.
- # help to determine if the audience segment(s), behavioral objective(s) and proposed activities are realistic and appropriate in the community;
- # forecast possible controversy, so it can be better managed in advance or avoided.

Specifically, the environmental profile will collect information on:

- # Geography;
- # Politics;
- # Socio-economics;
- # Schools;
- # Health resources; and
- # Media

as they may relate to HIV prevention.

Should we do an environmental profile?

Definitely. However, you may have already done much of this information-gathering as part of your site's Situation Analysis.

How complicated is an environmental profile?

Not very. Essentially, it involves talking to key community members, and collecting a lot of familiar information in a *systematic way*. The organization of the information should lead to insights to help guide your planning process.

Compiling the environmental profile may not be a "one shot deal." As you move ahead with your planning, you might find you need more information on a few specific aspects of your environment. So don't try to collect every possible piece of information that may be relevant. You will be able to go back and collect further information as your needs become clearer.

What methods are used?

You will primarily conduct *key informant interviews* and gather existing information from resource lists and databases, newspaper indices or clipping services, library or on-line databases, etc. Key informant interviews are guided conversations with community "experts" -- people who you think can reliably assess some aspect of their environment. These "experts" don't need academic degrees, nor do they need to be elected officials or official representatives. They do need to be knowledgeable in some particular area of interest, or represent a vital point of view. Interviews can be in person or over the phone, and would loosely follow a prepared question guide. This guide should be developed before making phone calls or conducting interviews, to assure an organized conversation.

How is the environmental profile different from the community resource inventory?

There are not necessarily clear lines of distinction between the environmental profile, the community resource inventory, and in some cases, the condom audit. All three look at "what's out there" in the community. Together, they help you weigh the *importance* and *feasibility* of choosing particular audiences, behavioral objectives, and activities.

Specifically, what kind of information should be collected?

Below is an outline of the categories of information that a PMI committee might collect:

Environmental/Climate Profile

How is the target audience affected by their surroundings?

Geographic Environment:

residential and commercial areas; schools; recreational areas (including "hang out spots," bars/nightclubs, parks, etc.); etc.

Political Environment:

Characterization of general political environment; recent trends or changes; local office holders' beliefs toward issues related to youth and HIV prevention; policies related to condoms and condom distribution; policies related to sex and HIV education; religious right organizations and individuals; local neighborhood leadership structure (politician, business person, etc.); etc.

Socio-economic Environment:

average income; household information; educational attainment; social services; housing assistance; etc.

Educational Environment:

number and types of schools; school board issues; school policy regarding sex education and HIV education; in-school vs. out-of-school and drop-out rate, etc.

Media Environment:

number and position of articles and editorials with mentions of key words, such as HIV/AIDS, adolescents, sexual behavior, condoms, etc. in mainstream and alternative press (gay and minority); number and type of advertisements and PSAs (including CDC spots); etc. [This is an ongoing effort through local media monitoring.]

Health Resources:

types of institutions and organizations providing health services in the community; consent issues relating to care; other.

Next Steps

- # Set your research objectives. Review your Situation Analysis to see what information has already been collected. Identify what additional information is needed. Be specific. Write down how or where you will get this information, and who is responsible for collecting it. Some information might only need updating from the situation analysis; other information will need to be collected from scratch. ACSP is available to help design or review you plans.

- # Set a schedule or deadline. The environmental profile will be needed in time for the audience profile working session, so should be completed by this time, if possible. It may also be helpful when developing the marketing mix.

- # Review logistics and costs of conducting the research, and the resources needed.