

STEP 1

Conduct a Community Analysis



Advocacy begins with listening. For library advocates, this requires ongoing engagement with the community, understanding the community’s needs and priorities, and examining how the work of the library connects to those priorities. Ultimately, advocating for libraries is about advocating for stronger communities. What does that mean for your advocacy?

1. **Describe your community**—geography, demographics, and defining characteristics.

2. Identify **key issues** facing your community.

3. Identify **trends** impacting the community and informing library service.

4. Where do the priorities of the community **intersect** with the work of the library?

There are several ways to collect information about your community. Here are some of them:

- **Community reference interviews.** Tapping into the librarian’s expertise in conducting interviews, these one-on-one conversations in the community center on identifying key issues facing the community, including those of imminent concern; and what success looks like for the interviewee.
- **Community audit.** A research approach that examines community priorities and assets, in order to leverage and build from a place of strength.
- **Community survey.** Customizable analysis that allows library to gather feedback from a large number of individuals and can be delivered in-person or virtually; surveys are often done in conjunction with strategic planning.

Undoubtedly, your association, consortium, institution, or library has already done some of this work. Other information sources can add to your understanding of the community:

- Strategic plans
- Community development plans
- School improvement plans
- Town hall meetings
- Community meetings
- Governance meetings
- Media (traditional and digital)