

Ministry Advancement Plan (MAP)

Workbook for Churches

One of the first tasks of connecting with your church's community is to know as much as possible about the people you want to reach. Ministry planning, marketing, web design, message content and relevance, branding, and all sorts of other service and communication solutions flow from knowing your community.

MissionInsite Information for My Area

The information found in the ExecutiveInsite report offers important details about connecting with your community. Let's summarize some of that information here:

What is the total population within a 10 minute drive (or 20 min walk) of your church property? Is it growing, stable or declining?

What is the racial/ethnic makeup of the area by percentages?

What is the most prevalent age group (phase of life) in that target area? And the average age?

How many children are in the area under the age of 18?

What is the average household income? And the per capita income?

What percentage of single and married households with children are in the area?

What is the prevailing marital status (widowed, married, divorced, etc.)?

What is the most prevalent education level (high school, graduate school, etc.)?

What are the percentages of blue-collar and white-collar workers?

What are the top three Mosaic segments and what are the top three communication tools* for each of them?

Mosaic Segment	Top Communication Tools (mail, text, social media, etc.?)
1.	
2.	
3.	

*as indicated by the index numbers for “Channel preference” in the Mosaic USA guide

What are the top three life concerns from your MinistryInsite report?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Any other concerns that you find interesting? Any that your church already has ministries to address?

What percentage of people in the area claim no religious affiliation (found in the ReligiousInsite report)? How does that translate into population numbers (*hint: it sometimes helps to translate percentages into people to help church members see beyond numbers to neighbors*)?

Total Population _____ x _____ percentage = _____ unaffiliated persons

Other Information for My Plan

Knowing your MissionInsite information leads you in some ways, but successful community ministry depends upon approaching audiences with messages that truly connect with their interests, needs, and life concerns. Ongoing, local neighborhood research can make or break that effort. To confirm assumptions and conclusions in the data you've compiled from MissionInsite, you will want to engage in some one-on-one conversations with people in your community. The questions in each section below may give you some ideas to explore.

About the Demographics:

What information in your MissionInsite reports surprised you?

What information do you question or doubt? Why?

How might you apply this data to plans to minister with your community?

What information do you want to explore in greater detail?

How will you go about getting that information?

What else do you know ... or want to know?

What kind of information (about the neighbors as well as about the neighborhood itself) do you want to confirm or disprove through conversations with people in your area?

What do you know about the community that's not in the "official" demographic reports (observations, parts of town where things happen, thought/influence leaders, life concerns, etc.)?

About the Neighbors:

What else do you want to know about your neighbors?

What are your neighbors' interests, hopes, and needs?

What specific questions could you ask people to determine those needs, interests, and hopes (*hint: check out Appendix B at the end of this document*)?

How will you meet people to talk to them? Who might be willing to introduce you to conversation partners and/or make a list of prospects with you?

What three organizations will you approach to learn more about the needs in your community (*hint: we have some suggestions... see the column at right →*)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Other sources to explore

1. Township Trustees: These are elected people in each township who help the poor obtain certain necessities, such as shelter or housing costs, utility bills, food, clothing, medical needs, burial expenses, or school supplies (often as a "last resort"). They would have data about current trends.
2. Chambers of Commerce
3. Police and other first responders
4. School systems
5. Medical professionals and social workers
6. Community organizations and service clubs (Rotary, Lions, Sertoma, etc.)
7. Government organizations (city/county commission, surveyors, building permits office, historic preservation commissions, etc.)
8. Non-profit and social service organizations (Habitat for Humanity, United Way, Meals on Wheels, MADD, etc.)
9. Your neighbors (businesses and individuals)
10. Social networks (online and in-person)

About the Community:

What else is happening (besides worship) on Sunday mornings in your community? Be specific about what and where...

What types of community activities, groups and events do you host in your church building?

What types of community activities COULD you host in your church building (something you're not already doing)?

What are the top ten places where people gather in your community (be specific – local dive; soccer field; dog park; tattoo parlor, performing arts center, etc.)? What do these places tell you about how people spend their leisure time?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

About your Church:

Describe the persona of your congregation members (age, marital status, education, income, openness to change, etc.).

How does your church family respond to people who are different from them?

Let's think about your church's place in the community... Who do people say you are?

What sets your church apart from the neighboring churches?

What difference is your church making in your community? How do you know?

What do your church's neighbors (businesses, residents, government, etc.) say about your church? Do they know who and where you are? How do you know?

What ministry opportunities do you offer that other churches do not? If you don't readily identify something unique, what does that mean for your church's potential engagement with the community?

How has your exploration of MissionInsite helped you see your community differently?

So many needs... Where to begin?

What are the five biggest unmet and/or growing social services needs in your community?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Where might you partner with other community organizations already serving these needs (*be specific about organizations*) ?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

About your Ministry:

How does your church's unique way of loving God and neighbor address your community's interests, hopes, and needs?

How can you express the uniqueness of your church in words that will interest your focus population? How will you know what messages work—testing, tracking, trends (be specific)?

Who are the kinds of people with whom you most easily relate, and/or which energize you? Write a paragraph or two describing your personal affinity group(s).

What kinds of people will you need on your team to help you understand and connect with the people groups you want to reach (e.g., someone in the people groups, a communications/marketing expert, social worker, etc.)?

Where do you find these people in your church, if at all? Where are they in your mission field?

Now that you've explored all this information, what next?! Read on... Appendix materials will help you compile a Ministry Advancement Plan (MAP)!

Appendix A: Ministry Advancement Planning Tool

In coaching circles, a favorite axiom says, “Without action there is no coaching.”

What is the desired outcome for your community analysis and ongoing exploration? We’ve provided space below for three possible outcomes. Your team should name at least one desired outcome and you probably don’t want to take on more than five at a time to keep leaders from being stretched too thin. Be specific about what you want to accomplish and remember to keep the outcomes outwardly focused instead of inward or operational.

(Examples of possible outcomes: We want our congregation to make an impact on [a social concern that turns up in your research]; We will be intentional about building relationships with young families in the area; We plan to engage in ministry with single parents in the community; We will plant a new site for our ministry in a growing area of town; We will help young adults interested in buying homes in the area learn how to prepare for home ownership; We will help newcomers become well established and connected to the community; We plan to launch three new fresh expressions meeting at area businesses ...)

Desired Outcomes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How will we know when we’ve achieved these outcomes? What measures will we use to define success (e.g., attendance tracking, amount of money shared, church members serving, new connections made, new partners identified, etc.)?

To reach these desired outcomes, what additional information will we gather, from whom, and by when?

Information needed:

People with whom to discuss this information (specific names and/or types of people):

People from our team who will be gathering that information:

Appendix A (continued)

What is our deadline for gathering and summarizing information from one-on-one conversations?

What people groups do we want to engage through these conversations?

What do we want to learn from these conversations?

What three actions will we implement to better engage with our community? And when will we do them (be sure to specify a date for each)?

Action Steps:

By What Date:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

How will we communicate these plans to the public?

Why are we choosing these methods and why do we think they will work?

How will we evaluate their effectiveness?



Appendix B: Questions for one-on-one Conversations

The purpose of this activity is to learn from your church's neighbors what others believe are the community's strengths and weaknesses, and to hear about their hopes for the area.

These conversations may also reinforce or supplement the information learned through your MissionInsite exploration. Use this interview guide for your conversations and share it with leaders from your church who will help with this research project by doing their own one-on-one interviews.

Prospective conversation partners:

- police chief or community relations officer
- school principal, team coach, or guidance counselor
- owner of a local business within your 10-minute drive time from the church building (closer proximity to your church is preferable)
- service club officer (Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.)
- director of a social service agency (family support services, affordable health services, affordable childhood education services, etc.)
- editor, reporter, or columnist for a newspaper, radio, or television station; host of a local-interest program or podcast
- mayor or town council representative or business association/chamber of commerce leader
- people who live within 10 minutes of your church but do not have any affiliation to a faith community: one who has been in the community for 30+ years and one who is new to the community within the past 2 years
- other religious leaders, especially those who have been in the community for a long time
- others recommended by these people (referrals can be very helpful and informative)

Getting Started

Introduce yourself and briefly share your story, especially if you've not met this person before. Let the person know what you're seeking to learn from the conversation and (if necessary) who recommended that you talk to them. Assure them that you're merely seeking information from them, not trying to sell them anything or convince them to donate money or visit your church.

Explain that you and your church want to be better neighbors by gaining a greater understanding of the needs, concerns, and challenges of the community. Answer any questions they have about the purpose of the conversation before you continue.

Appendix B: (continued)

General Questions

How many years have you lived in the community?

(If they have lived in the community for less than a couple of years, find out where they came from... maybe there's a pattern of where people are moving from to come to your community. If they are new to the community, ask why they moved here. See the section on the next page specifically for questions for newcomers to the community.)

- What do you believe are the strengths of this community?
- What are some of the needs of the community?
- What do you think would benefit the people of the community?
- What have you heard people say about their struggles, hopes, and dreams?
- What do you believe would help address those concerns?
- What do you think are the community's challenges? In what areas would you like to see improvement?
- Are there specific needs in your own life or for people like you in the community for which you would like assistance?
- How do you think the Church – ours or others in the community – could be a meaningful and helpful partner in the community?
- Have you heard of our church? If so, what (if anything) do you know about it? What would you say is the church's reputation in the community?
- How can I pray for you? (Be prepared for pastoral care needs to be expressed... and be sure to pray with them before you end your conversation.)
- What questions do you have for me?

Appendix B: (continued)

New Mover Questions

How many years have you lived in the community?

(If they have lived in the area for less than a couple of years, use these questions specifically for newcomers.)

- What was the best part of your move to this community?
- What has been the most difficult part of settling into this community?
- Where have you found the most support and assistance in getting established in this community?
- What has been most surprising to you about this community?
- What do you miss about your former home/community?
- What could the Church (ours or others in town) do to help people moving into the community?
- Where are you and your family spending social and recreational time? *(hint: helps identify “third places” in the community – possible locations for starting fresh expressions and meeting other new people)*
- Have you heard of our church? If so, what (if anything) do you know about it? What would you say is the church’s reputation in the community?
- How can I pray for you? (Be prepared for pastoral care needs to be expressed... and be sure to pray with them before you end your conversation.)
- What questions do you have for me?

Compiling the Responses

Work with a team from your church to compile the information you’re learning about the community. Schedule time for a conversation with your church’s leaders to discuss what you’ve heard and to identify needs, trends, and ideas for ministries to address community concerns. Pray together to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit for your congregation to discern next steps. The Scripture discussion in Appendix C may be useful for that time with your leaders. Use the discussion questions to frame the conversation in a biblical context from the early Church.

Appendix C: Acts 17 Scripture Discussion for Leaders

To the Leader: When he encountered the people of Athens, the Apostle Paul deviated from his pattern of going first to the synagogue to share about Jesus with new people groups. Even in 21st century America, we often start faith-sharing conversations with people who have similar characteristics to us rather than reaching out to people very different from ourselves. To illustrate this point, you might consider using this Acts 17 discussion guide. You can create three subgroups among your leaders as you lead them through a quick discussion of this passage in Acts before launching into a conversation about what you all learned from one-on-one conversations with people in your community.

Facilitator says: “We want to find common ground with those outside the church by immersing ourselves in the culture, forging partnerships, and building bridges. By mastering the languages of other cultures, we can invite collaboration and begin to help others learn the language of ‘church’ as we love and serve the community around our church.”

Acts 17:1-34

What do you see Paul doing in Acts 17 to engage the cultures of Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens? Take a few minutes to read the chapter and take some notes in the area provided below.

Thessalonica (v. 1-9)

Berea (v. 10-15)

Athens (v. 16-34)

Questions for group discussion:

What do you see Paul doing in Acts 17 to engage the cultures of these communities?

How does he use the same “playbook” and where does he change it up a bit?

Where did he start to share the gospel in each community?

Appendix C (continued)

Questions for group discussion:

What was different about Paul's approach to Athens compared to the other cities?

Why do you suppose he changed his pattern here?

What did Paul say that opened a conversation in Athens? How did the people respond?

How might this example influence our approach to communication with our community?

Now that we've had a chance to see how Paul approached things in each community, let's talk about our community.

How long have you lived in the community? What is the average length of time our leaders have lived here (tally the responses to create the average)?

What do you consider to be the community's strengths? What are others telling you?

What do you think are the community's challenges? What did you hear during your one-on-one conversations?

Appendix C (continued)

Questions for group discussion:

In what areas would you like to see improvement in the community? What did others say?

What difference is our church making in our community?

Name some specific ministries that you think the community would miss if we stopped them.

Name some specific ministries and impacts that others mentioned to you (if any).

How is God prompting you to get involved in making the community better? What is the Holy Spirit stirring up inside you?

How do you think our church can make a difference in this area in new ways?

Who among your connections in the community could help us with information or partnership opportunities?

Next steps:

Compile the responses from leaders and pray for guidance and inspiration as you consider next steps. If obvious next steps emerge during the conversation, identify the options and the leaders who will pursue them. Set target dates for actions and updates.

If no consensus arises, commit to sending the discussion notes to leaders and praying over the information until your next meeting. Set that date before you close the session.

Pulling it Together

You've reached the end of the document but the beginning of the action!

Ministry Advancement Plan (MAP) Summary

Community Profile Information (Who are we trying to reach?)

Ministry Information (What are we going to do with this group of people?)

Who will lead this effort?

When do we start?

Desired Outcomes

What do we want to happen as a result of this ministry?

When and how will we know our results?

For more information and assistance:

The MissionInsite & Ministry Advancement Team of ACS Technologies created this resource and stands ready to consult with your team if you need us or want more guidance! Contact information:

Emily Reece

Strategic Consultant

MissionInsite & Ministry Advancement

emilyr@acst.com

317-224-3277 (m)

Rev. Charles (Chuck) Salter

Vice President

MissionInsite & Ministry Advancement

chuck@acst.com

904-316-8784 (m)

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acstechnologies.com/missioninsite

180 Dunbarton Drive · Florence, SC 29501