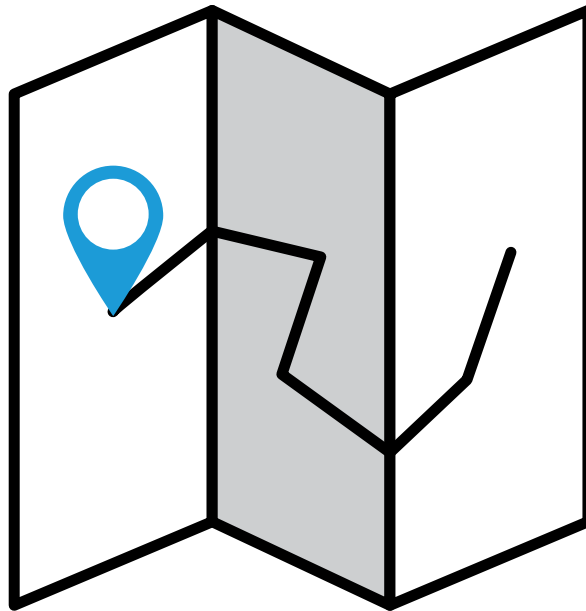


Participatory Asset Mapping



A
**COMMUNITY
RESEARCH
LAB**
TOOLKIT

What is Participatory Asset Mapping?

Imagine moving into a new **neighborhood**. As a new resident of this neighborhood, you may want to know the location of the closest major grocery store or the largest library, the best local restaurant or elementary school. You may have many options for finding this information but your best option would be to ask someone who lives there. Your new neighbors could direct you to the location of the grocery store or elementary school, as well as offer a wealth of information, contacts, and personal experiences about them.

Now, imagine working with a group of your neighbors to identify the locations of these local resources and places on a map, with information and personal experiences about each. This would be the beginnings of your own Participatory Asset Mapping activity. Participatory Asset Mapping combines the concepts of participatory mapping and asset mapping. **Participatory Mapping** is the process of creating a tangible display of the people, places, and experiences that make up a **community**, through community members themselves identifying them on a map. **Asset mapping** is the general process of identifying and

providing information about a community's **assets**, or the status, condition, behavior, knowledge, or skills that a person, group, or entity possesses, which serves as a support, resource, or source of strength to one's self and others in the community. Together, these two concepts inform **Participatory Asset Mapping**, a process where community members collectively create asset maps by identifying and providing the information about their own community's assets on a map.

In Participatory Asset Mapping, community members specifically identify community assets. **Community Assets** include citizen associations and local institutions. Citizen Associations reflect informal and formal institutions found within a community, such as social groups, recreation programs, churches, and block clubs.ⁱ Local Institutions reflect institutions that reach into the community, such as non-profit organizations, businesses, social service agencies, health services (hospitals and clinics), libraries, schools (children and adult schools), colleges or universities.ⁱⁱ

Community members can provide knowledge about their individual assets and community assets. Participatory Asset Mapping is a process where they specifically identify Community Assets, which include citizen associations and local institutions.



WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER AN “ASSET”? WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR COMMUNITY ASSETS?

Why Should You Do Participatory Asset Mapping?

Participatory Asset Mapping can support strategic planning efforts by building on existing community strengths. It recognizes human capital and the capacity of individuals to use their own hearts, heads, and hands to build and create positive structures in their communities. As a Community Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) process, it promotes community involvement and participation. It can build community cohesion and empowerment, bring community members together to generate a shared awareness and understanding of community assets, as a method of facilitating community involvement in research, decision-making, and action.

Community assets can be easy to identify, locate, and map, especially when community residents are the sources of the information. For example, you can plan and hold a Participatory Asset Mapping event that brings together a group of community residents to identify and discuss the assets in their community. The discussion may begin with community members defining the term “asset” or confirming and enhancing a proposed definition. Using their definition and through facilitated dialogue, they can identify the places that fit this definition on a map, in the process, finding out about assets they may not have been familiar with or that their neighbors have similar perspectives about. See Appendix C: Community-Engaged Mapping: Planning an Asset Mapping Event on page 23 for information about planning this type of event.

Participatory Asset Mapping can also lead to discussions and maps that not only reflect community assets, but also barriers to accessing them. During the Participatory Asset Mapping events discussed in Appendix A (pg. 19), many residents stated that they did not go to local grocery stores because they felt they were unsafe. This reveals how organizations can use this research method to identify places that can become assets through targeted improvement.

Participatory Asset Mapping can help communities:ⁱⁱⁱ

- + BUILD ON AND EXPAND EXISTING COMMUNITY STRENGTHS
- + FACILITATE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN RESEARCH AND ACTION
- + GENERATE A SHARED AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY ASSETS
- + ARTICULATE AND COMMUNICATE SPATIAL KNOWLEDGE TO EXTERNAL AGENCIES
- + MANAGE RESOURCES, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND PLANNING
- + IDENTIFY AND POTENTIALLY INCREASE CAPACITY WITHIN COMMUNITIES

When Should You Do Participatory Asset Mapping?

Strategies that involve Participatory Asset Mapping allow communities to take a strengths-based and place-based approach to community development.^{iv} In your work or organization, consider the following:

Are you:

- WORKING IN/EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF YOUR WORK INTO A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD?
- WORKING IN A NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE THERE APPEARS TO BE A LACK OF QUALITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES?
- INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT WHICH COMMUNITY RESOURCES RESIDENTS USE AND CONSIDER ASSETS AND WHY?
- SEEKING TO IDENTIFY WHICH RESOURCES ARE MISSING FROM THE COMMUNITY?
- ENGAGING AND WORKING WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO IMPROVE EXISTING RESOURCES?

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions above, Participatory Asset Mapping can provide critical research and information that can benefit your strategy.

Asset maps created through a Participatory Asset Mapping process can identify and illustrate the existing or potential connections between groups, organizations, and institutions. The following section highlights three specific strategies that have used these types of asset maps:

Using Asset Maps in Advocacy and Policy

Maps that highlight the availability or lack of community assets can present a powerful tool, when trying to make a case for needed policy, whether locally or on a state level. Such maps can focus on community assets, how to strengthen them and in turn how this would help address community needs. Other supporting community **data** can be presented on a map alongside your mapped assets, such as charts or personal narratives. The case study in Appendix A highlights one example of an organization that used participatory asset mapping to support policy changes in the communities that they served.

Using Asset Maps in Community Outreach

Mapping your community’s assets helps visualize the networks of service organizations, community organizations, neighborhood associations, and other groups that exist to serve the community. Community organizations can use these maps to network among each other and create a database of assets that community members can access and maintain. These new connections can also serve as a means to outreach to a wider span of the community to further strengthen community resources. If an asset map was combined with data showing other community information (such as where most people live or the number and locations of parks and recreation spaces), organizations can use asset maps for targeted outreach to residents that represent specific neighborhoods or demographics.

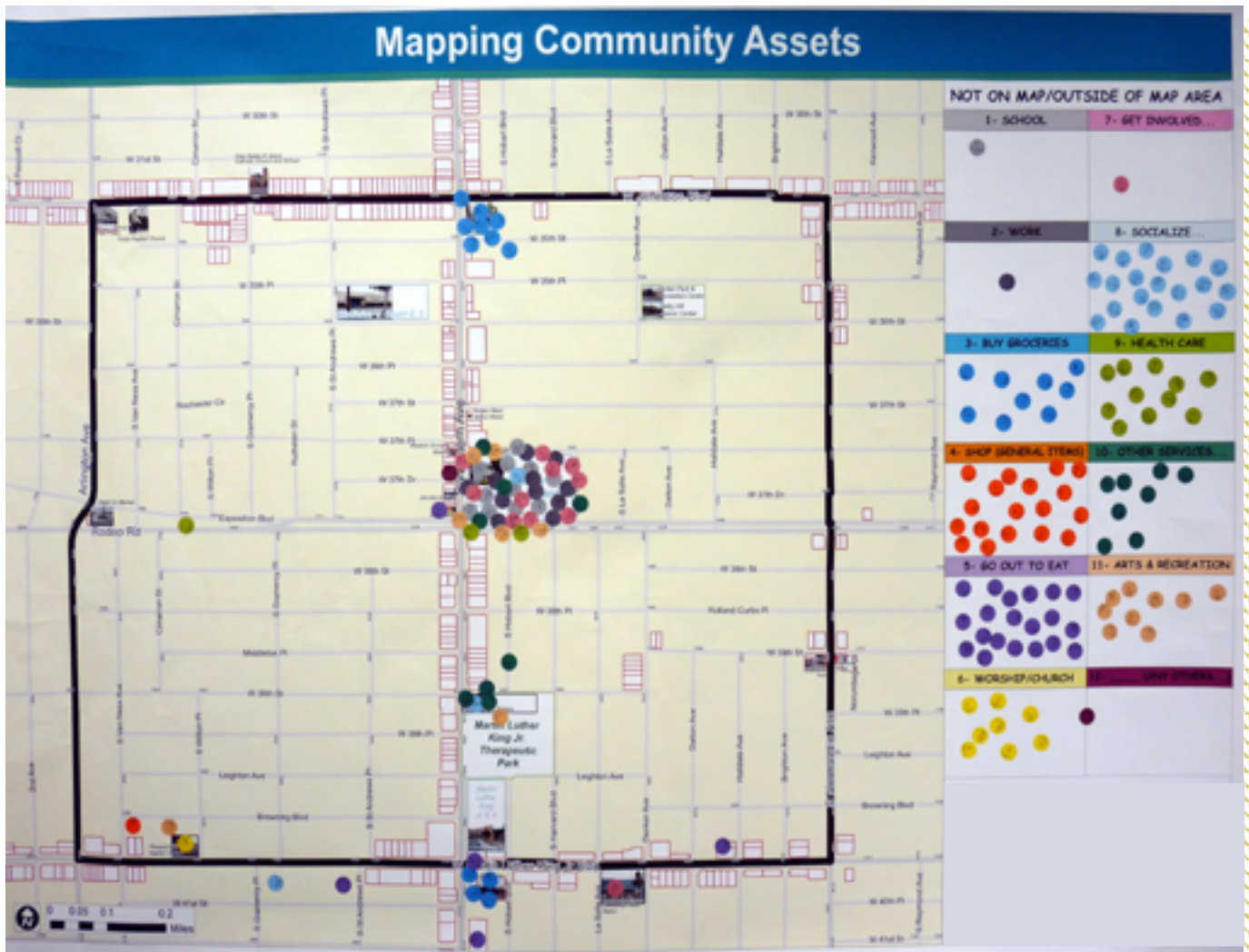
Using Asset Maps in Community Organizing

By involving community members in the creation of asset maps, the process itself can be an organizing tool. In addition, the asset maps themselves can serve as useful tools for organizing.^v The “Mapping Community Assets” map below provides an example of asset maps created as a result of and to inform community organizing. Community organizers and residents engaged in Participatory Asset Mapping to identify local assets by specific community asset categories such as grocery stores, churches, and so forth (the Asset Mapping Worksheet at the end of Appendix D was used as a guide for the map below, where the color **coding**, represents different types of resources). Through these activities, the community confirmed that organizing to improve one particular unsafe and unused local park could transform it from a deficit to an asset.

By engaging community residents in a process of identifying existing or missing community assets, organizations can paint a clear picture of the overall status of the community and organize around the cause of strengthening

community resources. Participatory Asset Mapping can also be used as a tool to raise community awareness and empowerment and show the impact of these organizing efforts.^{vi} For example, many community members identified the school that is located in the center of the map below as a major asset because, in addition to education, it offered other services for families such as a health clinic.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER WAYS YOU/OTHERS HAVE USED ASSET MAPS?



How Do You Do Participatory Asset Mapping?

Now that you are familiar with what Participatory Asset Mapping is, why it is useful, and instances when it can be used, you may be interested in how to do it.

First, start with your **research question**. Think about the issue or project that you are working on. Think about the types of community assets that you are interested in capturing or the specific information that you need about these assets. In conducting a participatory asset mapping activity, typical research questions may include:

- + Which places (such as parks or businesses) do residents go to most in the community? Do they consider these places assets?
- + What types of '_____ ' assets exist in this community? Examples of '_____ ' could be 'health' assets, 'educational' assets, or 'arts and recreation' assets.

Appendix D (Asset Mapping Facilitation Guide, pg. 26) includes a list of different types of assets that may be helpful in creating a research question about assets. You can also refer to the Community Research toolkit for details on how to create a research question.

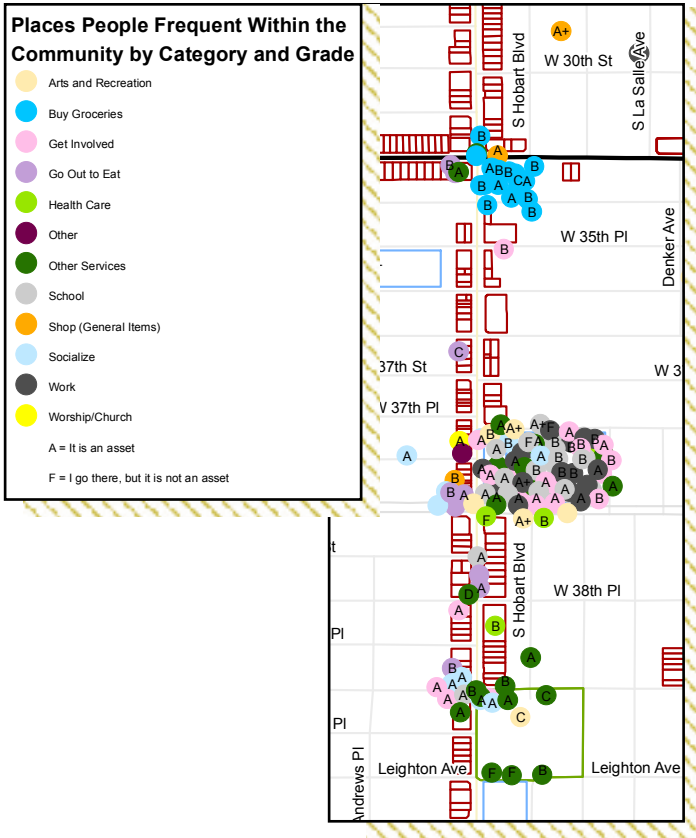
Next, choose a method and tool to collect information about assets. The method is how you will collect this information; it's the process by which you collect it. The tool is what you use to record or document the information that you collect. You can combine any of the following methods and tools to collect community assets. Use the methods as the means for collecting the information and the tools as the place to document and record this information. Many methods and tools exist to help organizations and communities apply Participatory Asset Mapping to identify the locations of and their experiences with community assets. Here, we highlight a few.

Methods

Community-Engaged Mapping (CEM)

Community-Engaged Mapping (CEM) is a group mapping exercise designed to answer specific research questions and gather feedback from community members (who live, work or attend school in the area), for the purpose of developing place-based planning, policy, and interventions.^{viii} It can be described as a **focus group** around a map. It involves community dialogue over maps of a particular **place** or geographic area (such as a neighborhood) about community members' experience with the physical environment of that place. With Community-Engaged Mapping, community members are formed into small, **breakout groups** that allow them to collectively discuss and map their communities (for this exercise, when using large paper maps, breakout groups should be no more than 10-12 people per group; when using computers and maps online, they should be no more than 4-5 people per computer).

Community-Engaged Mapping can be used to have community residents identify locations of: local assets; assets that they travel outside of their neighborhood to access; resources that community members believe can be improved or developed to become assets; and resources that are missing. The map on page 11 shows results of a Community-Engaged Mapping event focused on Community Assets; it is a digitized version of all of the maps created at the event combined (which included the map on page 9). Community members identified places in the community that they frequented and whether or not they were assets by giving those resources grades (for information about the asset categories listed, see the Asset Mapping Worksheet on pgs. 35-36). Appendices C (pg. 23) and D (pg. 26) provide step by step instructions on planning, implementing, and facilitating a Community-Engaged Mapping exercise or event.



Social Investigation

Social Investigation is a broad term that encompasses many different methods of gathering community knowledge through a community-engaged approach. With Social Investigation, community members collect and map information on an individual basis, which may be combined at a later time. Organizations may conduct social investigation before or as an alternative to a group mapping session such as Community-Engaged Mapping to effectively identify community assets and create asset maps. These methods differ from traditional information gathering methods in that they focus on gathering information directly from people and communities, instead of about people and communities (from secondary sources). Widely recognized and used methods of social investigation include interviews, surveys, and community walks, which are further described below.

+ INTERVIEWS

Conducting **interviews** is a very common way of collecting information from all types of audiences. When conducting interviews with community members, it is important to keep in mind that they

are not research subjects, but participants in the research process. During interviews, it is important to simultaneously develop a positive rapport and gather useful information. A positive rapport refers to a harmonious relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, thus building trust and allowing for the free flow of information.^{ix} There are several different types of questions you may want to include in your interview, but mainly you'll be focusing on descriptive questions, which are meant to gather information about a particular topic, such as community assets, and many times will be open-ended to allow for the interviewee to speak freely. Remember that if you're focused on developing an asset map, you'll need to gather geographical information, such as addresses or ZIP codes during the interview process.

+ SURVEYS

If you decide to do a **survey** asking residents and organizations to identify assets in their community, you have many different options—in person, telephone, e-mail, etc. You will have to choose the type that is right for you and the audience you're trying to reach. For example, in communities with low literacy rates written surveys may not be ideal and you may want to turn to other methods (For more detailed information on surveys as general data collection tools, please refer to the "Community Research Toolkit").^x

+ COMMUNITY WALKS

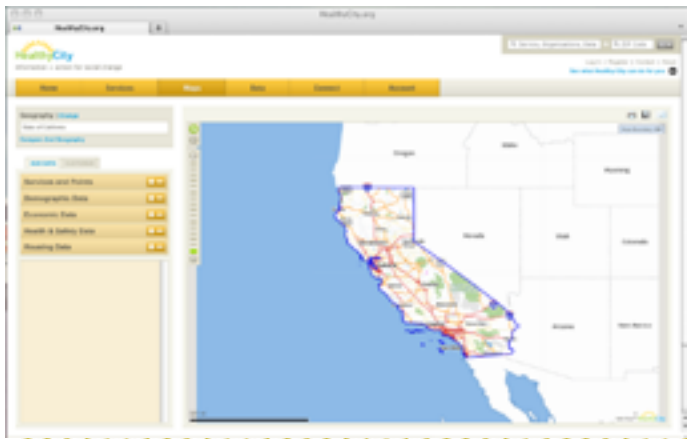
A **community walk** is a method where you walk through a neighborhood of interest to map out and collect information about that neighborhood's resources and dynamics. It provides a first-hand view of the community, its people, and its assets and can naturally provide all the location information you need to put your assets on the map. A small map can be used as a tool to directly record asset locations, as well as a guide for your walk. You can combine the walk with interviews of community members along your walk, to find out more about specific assets in detail. A community walk also offers the opportunity to take pictures and video of local assets, that can be placed on a map using the tools outlined on the next page.

Tools

Online Mapping

Online mapping is mapping software that is available on the internet through various sources and organizations (such as Healthy City, Google Maps, etc.). As a tool for Participatory Asset Mapping, it can be used to work with community members to plot, map, and view their assets with just the click of a button. Multiple users can access the same map to add points that represent assets and information about them. Although different mapping tools are available both on and off the internet for a variety mapping purposes, we have highlighted two online mapping websites because of their cost (free!) and usefulness in facilitating Participatory Asset Mapping. The HealthyCity.org and Google websites offer mapping with different features, yet both allow you to create, save and share maps, mapping features needed most for Participatory Asset Mapping.

Healthy City— “Wikimaps” (formerly “Live Mapping”)



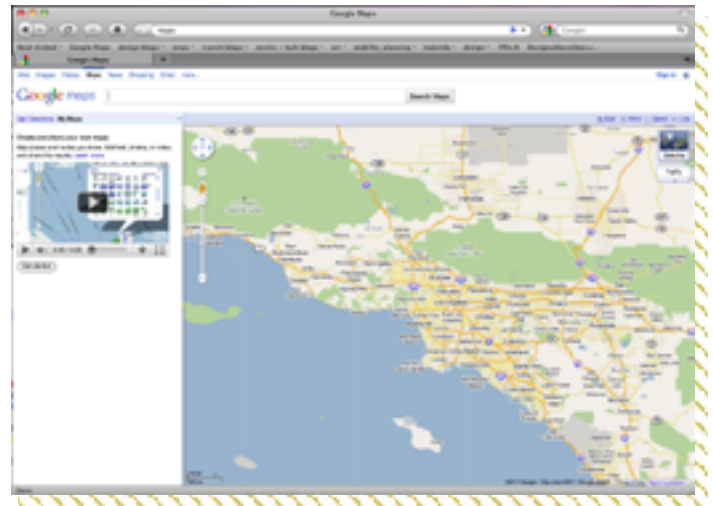
<http://www.healthycity.org>

The Healthy City data and mapping website is California’s information + action resource for service referrals and social change. Healthy City provides a free platform for community organizations without access to specialized software to create and manipulate professional maps. Organizations can use their own data or choose from an extensive list of administrative, **secondary data** available from many reliable and widely used sources for various geographies throughout California such as census tracts, cities, counties, and so forth (Note: the data and mapping

is available for the state of California).^{vi} You can also search for community services, research and share community data, or create charts.

HealthyCity.org’s “**Wikimaps**” feature (formerly “Live Mapping”) allows communities to place points and draw lines and shapes on a map. You can use Wikimaps to facilitate a participatory mapping process and easily add points, pictures, video, and detailed information from community members about the places they consider assets. The added benefit of comparing the asset maps that you create with the secondary data available on the website makes it a powerful asset mapping tool. For step-by-step instructions on using Wikimaps, see Appendix B: HealthyCity.org Wikimaps User Guide (pg. 21) and visit <http://www.healthycity.org>.

Google Maps—“My Maps”



<http://maps.google.com/maps>

Google is a website known for its search feature that enables searches for information, including places (such as businesses), web pages, images, videos, across the world. It offers free mapping capability, particularly as a guide for on-the-ground navigation of places and routes. It also provides the ability to create personalized maps through the “My Maps” feature.

The website’s My Maps feature allows you to create countrywide maps of places and routes and add text, photos, or video. You can share the maps with others, who can either view the map or make edits. You can add local businesses and other locations to your map by searching near a location. For further directions, on how to navigate Google Maps, please visit their maps support page at: <http://maps.google.com/support>.

Ethics in Community Based Participatory Action Research

Research Ethics are the principles and rules that guide how people should be treated, when they are participants in a research process or project. It might be difficult to anticipate all of the research ethics that may arise during, but it is important to be sensitive to the people involved in your research. Here are some ethics to consider:

Accessibility of findings

Are the findings presented in an accessible and meaningful way for community members?

Benefits to the Participants

How will you ensure that the participants in the community are not harmed during the research and gain as much benefit as possible through their participation?

Community Voice

Who is the community? Who represents the community? Who speaks for the community? Do participants come from only some of the areas you are working in? Do they represent only some of the social identities in the community overall? Are there institutional, organizational or other social dynamics that privilege some voices over others? Will some portions of the community benefit more than others as a result?

Credit

How are the results represented? Whose voice(s) are heard and represented? Who receives credit for the work conducted?

Data ownership

How will you responsibly make the data available to the different community and other stakeholders?

Division of labor

How does 'equity' in the process translate into divisions of labor on the project/process? Is the work divided equitably among partners?

Justice

Do all members of the community have equal

opportunity to participate in the research? Are there some participants who are unfairly impacted by the research? (Ex. The U.S. Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee included only poor African American men, who were not treated for the disease even when a cure was found; the study was also conducted without the benefit of their informed consent. For details about this study, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/tuskegee/index.html>).

Privacy

Will it do any harm to the community or individuals to report the findings? How can you protect privacy in the data collection and sharing process? Did you get adequate permission from participants? Do they understand and agree with the way you plan to use the data?

Representation of local communities

Does the presentation (or presenter) of findings in any way reinforce negative social stereotypes in presenting communities? Be mindful and transparent about how representative the findings may or may not be of the community based on participation.

Respect

How do you maintain respect for a person's ability to engage/not engage in the research without coercion?

Rigor of research and fidelity to findings

Are the findings being presented accurately? Are they presented with any bias or in a way to make people hear what they want to hear?

If you are conducting research involving community members and this research will be published, you may want to consider an ethical review board. For more information on this topic, see the University of Southern California's Office for the Protection of Research Subjects brochure "Is Your Project Human Subjects Research?" at www.usc.edu/admin/provost/oprs/training/brochures.html.

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Advancement Project – Healthy City

1910 West Sunset Blvd. Suite 500
Los Angeles, CA 90026
(213) 989-1300
www.advancementprojectca.org
www.healthycity.org

