

Conducting a Community Landscape Analysis

What is a Landscape Analysis?

A Landscape Analysis outlines the strengths, resources, and needs of a particular community. It provides a framework for designing a service and ensuring that it is embedded directly in the needs of the community.

Why should you conduct a Landscape Analysis?

Prior to starting any type of community program — whether a tutoring program or any other service — you should confirm that there is a need and a desire for the proposed program in the community you aim to serve. The information you gather through a Landscape Analysis will allow you to thoroughly map these community needs and desires, ensuring that they remain paramount when you design your program, set priorities, and make strategic decisions. A Landscape Analysis will enable your program to keep the actual needs of the community in mind at all times, rather than your own hypotheses about its needs. Doing this essential groundwork will aid in designing an effective tutoring program that the whole community values.

Who should be considered in a Landscape Analysis?

While there are no strict limits regarding who can be involved, here is some basic guidance about whose needs should be prioritized:

- Students and families who will likely benefit from the tutoring program. Ensure that you hear from a wide range of voices so that you can holistically understand the needs of the community of potential beneficiaries.
- Other stakeholders beyond students and families, such as teachers and school administrators, who will have a solid expert understanding of students' needs for additional tutoring services.
- Other community members, or like-minded organizations that have a history operating in the community and can help you to carry out the assessment itself or assist with program design planning.

How do you conduct a Landscape Analysis?

The qualitative and quantitative data you collect will help you define your tutoring program's necessary inputs, benchmark outputs, and desired impact. Here are some of the sources from which you may want to collect information:

- Interviews & Focus Groups: Solicit direct input from both the beneficiaries of tutoring (families and students) as well as other stakeholders (such as school administrators and teachers) to understand what needs they observe and experience. This will help you understand students' academic context and where a tutoring program might fit in.
- Public Forums: Seek out public forums already happening that relate to the needs you have identified. Attend local school board meetings and other community gatherings to better learn the local political landscape.

- **Observations:** Directly observe and speak with those on the front line. Visit tutoring programs or similar services that already exist and see what they look like in action.
- **Needs Surveys:** Collect an easily-parsed set of data points by having community members rate proposed services and answer a few open-ended questions to help you understand the aggregate needs of the community.
- **Existing Quantitative Data:** Review and synthesize available data from sources such as: research studies that have already been conducted (e.g., recent research related to learning loss); publicly available resources such as US Census data about the community; and local school district records on student achievement and graduation rates.

Analyzing Your Findings

As you analyze findings, look for trends. Consider the following:

- **Strengths:** What are the existing assets of this community?
 - For example, you may find that the community already has robust services for literacy programs in early elementary school that have supported students both in school and, with family participation, at home.
- **Gaps:** Where is something missing from this community's support structures?
 - Identifying gaps will help you design your tutoring program to fill them. For example, you may find that there are limited programs or services available to students who struggle in math in the secondary setting. If so, this may be where tutoring would be most beneficial.
- **Needs:** What specific problems and unmet needs has this community shared?
 - For example, you may have heard that there is a lower rate of involvement in after-school programs in secondary settings due to time constraints for youth that have taken on part-time work. This can help inform the design of your program. How will you ensure tutoring is available to students at a time when they can actually be involved?
- **Opportunities:** What specific resources in this community can you leverage to help solve its problems?
 - For example, you might learn that there are many university students in the area who have interest in working in the community, but there is no formal relationship between the school district and the local university. Your tutoring program could bridge this gap and leverage this local talent; accessing low-hanging fruit like this will help your program meet community needs efficiently.
- **Threats:** What are some potential threats to your program that you will need to consider?
 - For example, you might learn that another tutoring program is starting up in the community or that state policy was just enacted that requires tutoring to be done by certified teachers. Identifying and taking into consideration any threats will help you both design and pitch your program.

Sharing Your Findings

You should produce a simple report you can use to present your findings both to the community and to additional stakeholders (such as funders). This report can serve as a summarizing tool to help you

advocate for your tutoring program, directly connecting the development of your program to the needs of the community. A report typically includes the following:

- An overview of whose needs you considered in your Landscape Analysis.
- A description of the methods your program used to collect qualitative and quantitative data.
- A summary of the number and demographic characteristics of the individuals who contributed to the dataset, such as the number of individuals who completed a needs survey and a demographics overview of survey respondents.
- An outline of the process, including both its strengths and any challenges you may have faced. Openness about challenges is particularly important so that the reader has a holistic understanding when reviewing your report. For example, did you have difficulty achieving high completion rates for a survey? How might that skew your findings?
- A synthesis of key findings. This is where you would address the actual results and insights gained from the analysis you conducted, articulating the strengths, gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the community.
- A set of recommended next steps. Based on the Landscape Analysis, what are your recommendations? How should the design of the tutoring program adapt to address the specific needs of this particular community?

Additional Resources

The Community Toolbox, developed by the University of Kansas, lists a number of resources to support programs in developing a robust Landscape Analysis, sometimes referred to as a [Community Needs Assessment](#).