

ACTIVITY LEADER:

Share with your club the importance of completing a community assessment.

Why a community assessment is important

Sometimes people with great intentions end up doing more harm than good if they don't fully understand a situation. Here are a few reasons you should do a community assessment:

- Get to know your community and understand its needs.
- Create more meaningful projects with a greater impact.
- Learn how others wish to be helped, instead of assuming you know what's best.
- Meet new people and learn different points of view.
- Gather knowledge for future projects.
- Learn about other organizations that are making a difference (good information to have if you need a partner for a future project).

Community needs — getting started:

For this example, let's imagine our club wants to build and stock a food pantry for our school and community. We think it's a good idea, but we want to test that theory and check our assumptions with local data. Where do we begin?

- *Possible sources for community data:*
 - Your local United Way. United Way's nearly 1,800-plus nonprofit organizations around the world work to address local issues and can be a great source of information.
unitedway.org/find-your-united-way#
 - For United States clubs working on youth issues, Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count surveys provide valuable data and insights, including health and wellness data.
datacenter.kidscount.org/
 - The World Health Organization (WHO) is the global source for data on health topics.
who.int/data
 - The United States Department of Agriculture provides local and global data on food insecurity.
ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/june/who-are-the-world-s-food-insecure-

identifying-the-risk-factors-of-food-insecurity-around-the-world/

- *Still need data? Create your own survey.* Partner with your school leadership, nearby Kiwanis clubs, community nonprofits, local media outlets and others. Design your survey with simple questions to be answered yes or no; limit open-ended questions so that you can quantify and see trends in responses.
- *Now that you have the data and confirmed a need in the community, ask who else is doing similar work.* One great source to find local nonprofits is GuideStar. GuideStar's website (guidestar.org) includes most nonprofits' 990 form. Register for FREE to search for local nonprofit organizations and learn more about their mission and impact. You also can search your local United Way's website to learn more about the community nonprofits and issues that they support.

To determine where your club can make a real difference, use the **SWOT analysis worksheet**.