

PB Long Beach Tools for Field Research

Field Research is one of the best ways for Budget Delegates to gather the information necessary to put together proposals that most meet the needs of the community. Committees can visit different neighborhoods to assess needs, schedule meetings with local groups, create community maps, conduct site visits and go on different sorts of excursions, depending on their projects. The guide below will help you prepare for successful field research!

I. Types of Field Research

Delegate committees may benefit from one or more of these types of field research:

- a) Needs assessment neighborhood visits:** To understand which neighborhoods and communities in the district are most underresourced and to get a picture of their most urgent needs, you may want to select particular neighborhoods to visit by using the district data maps. You can then walk the neighborhood, talk with residents and try to assess the scope and depth of their needs.

- b) Site visits:** To learn more about a specific type of community need, you may want to visit locations relevant to your committee's issue area, such as parks, housing developments, transit hubs, police precincts, community centers, etc.

- c) Community mapping:** To identify types and locations of a particular community problem, need, or resource. (e.g. Which area is most in need of a green space? Where are the public basketball courts in the neighborhood and what condition are they in?)

- d) Community Group Meetings:** To learn more about the needs of specific groups or to gather project ideas, you may want to attend community group meetings such as PTA meetings or neighborhood association meetings.

II. Preparing for Field Research

In order to plan effectively for your field research, it's important to clarify ahead of time what information you want to gather, how you want to do that, and where you will go to find it. The questions below are intended to help you identify these things.

a) How can you identify the communities in your district that have the greatest need?

You can use the data maps of your district to locate where low-income areas are and where residents use various public programs, including housing and food assistance. Prepare to visit those areas and look for signs of unmet needs generally, and then connect these to your committee's issue area.

Checklist:

- lack of open space
- lack of community meeting spaces

- lack of public transport
- lack of grocery stores with healthy & affordable food
- lack of recreational facilities
- problems of disrepair in public housing developments
- problems with facilities and equipment in local schools
- environmental hazards
- safety issues for particular population groups
- etc.

b) How can you identify what the most urgent and deepest needs are?

General checklist: What specific things do you see in this neighborhood that pose a barrier to

- access to quality education
- access to jobs
- access to healthy food
- access to safe & healthy housing and a safe living environment
- access to things that help keep us healthy (e.g. open space, recreational facilities, health centers, healthy water & air)
- access to spaces for community meetings (particularly for women, young or old people)
- securing physical safety
- access to transportation
- etc.

c) Make a list of questions or observations relevant to your committee for field observations.

Examples:

- Education: Are there conditions at a school that make it hard for students to learn?
- Parks: Does the park have adequate recreational space?
- Streets: Are the streets in disrepair?

d) Visit the areas you identified in a) and b) (Section 1) and observe based on the questions from c). See worksheet below.

e) Discuss your observations with your committee: which of the general barriers to meeting people's needs could you help tackle through a project in your issue area?

For example, if you are on the parks & recreation committee, and you found that young people in the area do not have a safe space to meet, socialize and exercise, you may want to help address this need by considering funding for a basketball court or similar recreational space for young people, perhaps in collaboration with the housing committee.

f) Discuss with the committee: Are there other things we could do in the neighborhood to address the barriers identified in question b) above?

Make a general list of things the neighborhood might need most urgently, and share these with the other committees. This could also help us in next year's budget process.

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III. Field Research Tips

- **Discuss how you can apply the needs criteria.** What information should we collect to ensure that we can prioritize projects that benefit the most underresourced communities and that address the deepest and most urgent needs?
- **Brainstorm specific questions beforehand, guided by the criteria,** either with your committee or individually, and use the checklists provided above.
- **Capture what you see using photos, video,** or other documentation.
- **Speak to locals.** How do they understand community needs? What ideas, in addition to those proposed at the Neighborhood Assemblies, might address their needs? Seek out a variety of opinions to see where there may be conflicts between groups. For example, students and parents may have different views on problems in local schools.
- **Take Notes!** You'll be giving your committee a report-back on your field research, and you'll need to refer back to your findings later. It's important that you have a good record of the experience! Keep track of new questions arising from the research that you and your committee will need to address.

Field Research Planning Worksheet:

Which areas will I visit to conduct observations?

What information will I be looking for when I'm there?

What else do I need to find out in order to assess the needs of the district that relate to my committee's issue area? Where can I go for this information? Who might I speak with?

Observation notes: