

# Fundamentals Course Homework Responses

## Session 1

In this session, we've talked about utilizing a community profile within a BR&E visitation program. The profiles that we've examined mainly dealt with economic issues within the study community. Given your perceived goals for the program that you anticipate beginning in your community, please describe the elements of a community profile that you would anticipate using in your program. Do not attempt to assemble this profile; simply describe the types of elements that you would ideally include in the profile and provide a concise description of why you would include each of these elements.

Due by the beginning of the June 4, 2020 session.

### Response 1

As a Small Business Advisor in a Rural Community, I anticipate utilizing community economic profiles as an educational tool for beginning entrepreneurs looking to open a business. A community profile can be beneficial in the research process of starting a small business. These profiles can give the entrepreneur valuable insights into the community that they are considering opening their business. Reviewing levels of education, populations, and salaries in the area are all things a new entrepreneur should review.

As a Board Member for the Poteau Area Chamber of Commerce, a community economic profile would help us to begin a BR&E Program and to better understand the community that we live and serve in. The chamber would look more into our jobs and what sectors they are located in. This can better help us identify industries that may need support or assistance in developing a workforce. A community profile can also help to assist in identifying your largest employers in the area. Some of the larger industries in our area are sometimes overlooked because they are government sector or hospitals.

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### Response 2

When making an assessment you need to include the demographics of the area, which is the study of a population based on certain factors, such as family income levels, parents' level of education, employment, race, sex, births and death rates. Taking all of these factors in account can give you all the information that you need to see what that community is all about.

Education provides children with the knowledge and skills necessary to advance themselves. Education could be an element as to why a population rises and falls. Some towns have colleges and universities that makes up the number of people in that town if the educational system in that community is lacking it can also cause the decrease of population. But if the education is exceptional it can rise the population in that area.

The major components of social structure are statuses, the roles people hold within the community, social networks, groups and organizations, a commitment to individual and societal well-being, and the

opportunity for citizens to determine their own and their society's needs and to influence decisions that affect these.

When you have a community that has a great financial structure usually the whole community benefits from it, when people have money to spend they want to spend it. Small businesses need the help of the community because without their money they cannot survive.

There are all different kinds of religion in communities, this is your own belief whatever religion you chose is your own free choice. In every community there are always several churches for you to attend. But, without a good financial grounding a church can not survive, so the community needs to be prosperous to help the church.

If companies or corporations provide good protection of property rights and are favorable to productive and entrepreneurial activities, natural resources are likely to benefit the economy by being a source of income, new investment opportunities, and of potential positive spillovers to the rest of the economy. Government plays the essential role in putting into place policies that ensure that resources contribute to the long-term economic development of nations, and not only to short-term revenue generation.

All of these elements work together for the community or can work against a community it just depends on what outcome the town is wanting. Working hard to keep the community thriving or not.

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### **Response 3**

The elements I would use in a community profile would be population size, education level, poverty, average income, unemployment rate, diversity, workforce eligibility vs. those who are not working, and those who commute in/out of the region for work. The reason for choosing the elements above correlate to the work we will be doing within the 10 ½ counties of the Choctaw Nation. We need to look at this information to target our high poverty communities to emphasize small business development and bring in economic opportunities. In 2014, Choctaw Nation's boundaries received the designation of a Promise Zone by President Obama. Receiving this distinction allows Choctaw Nation access to specific grants and tax incentives that we could use to address some of the elements above. Choctaw Nation believes that the tide raises all ships. With our partners at the local, state, and federal levels, our department will raise the tide for our communities that will lift the region into economic prosperity.

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### **Response 4**

1. Economic Sector - The largest employer in Choctaw District 11 is the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant. MCAAP has 1,400 plus employees performing mission ready related operations. Its mission is to produce and renovate conventional ammunition and ammunition related components. The plant stores war reserve and training ammunition. McAlester performs manufacturing, industrial engineering, and production product assurance. The plant also receives, demilitarizes, and disposes of conventional ammunition components. The plant is

the largest, in terms of storage, housing close to one-third of the Department of Defense's munitions stockpile.

2. Demographic Sector - District 11 in the Choctaw Nation (Pittsburg County) has maintained roughly the same demographic for the last 80 years. The population has been stagnated with 45,000 persons with little variance. In most cases, once a student graduates from high school, that person moves away from the area to school or with a new job and live in other parts of the state or country. While some of the population stays in the area their entire lives, others relocate back to Pittsburg County after achieving a degree of success in their lives.
3. Natural Resources - Within District 11 is the largest lake in the state of Oklahoma, Lake Eufaula. Lake Eufaula is a man-made lake that encompasses 102,000 acres and 600 miles of shorelines. Created in 1964 to provide flood control, hydroelectric power, water supply, navigation and recreation. Since it's beginning, Lake Eufaula has been underutilized in terms of recreational tourism and promotion with not much thought or attention given to its resources.

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#### **Response 5**

The community profile is an essential part of developing a BR&E visitation program because of all the elements that need to be considered. There are many elements I would include in the development of this program. One of the most important elements that must be considered is the amount of workforce and workforce talent in the area. It is hard to have economic growth if there are not enough workers for business owners to hire especially in larger corporations. Next, we need to look at the type of industries in the area and see if the education levels meet the needs of industries in the area. Getting members of the community focused and involved on industry needs will be most beneficial for economic growth. The community could then come together and partner with these industries to develop some type of training that will benefit all stakeholders of the area.

Texas schools have implemented an education structure that places each student in a career path starting their freshman year. Students can choose social work, law enforcement, IT, and or many other career fields. The students continue in their career choice all through their high school careers. I believe a program like that would help keep local talent for local industries rather than risk leakage to other metropolitan areas. A gradual reduction in workforce or workforce talent can cause a business to shutdown or move to another location.

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#### **Response 6**

Elements to include in a community profile would be demographics, social, religious, educational, financial, economic, and the natural resources that are found in a community. Demographics are the components that give us the structure of populations. Demographics

would include data on age, race, ethnicity, gender, marital status, income, education, and employment. With this information, you can get a good general idea of a population. The social element to a community profile would provide more information about the characteristics of a society. That would also include data such as age, gender, ethnicity, education level, income, and types of occupations. This set of data can help you understand the inter-workings of a community. Religious factors can affect the makeup of a population and understanding how those beliefs fit in the dynamic of a community is an important role to consider when looking at creating a profile. Correlation between levels of education and how a society is thriving is directly influenced by the makeup of the education level within a population. Understanding how a population is educated and to what level helps to create a better plan for building a community profile. This information also helps understand labor participation rates and the employment-population of a community. The financial aspect of a community profile is where you can find the information on household income, median home price, what type of labor force, and the average earnings per job. This information is most important to new businesses coming into a community. Companies can use this information to decide if and when they start up or move into a prosperous place. There are many different factors to look at when building a community profile, and those factors are dependent on each other. As all the different fractions of the community as a whole are identified and then dissected, the makeup of the population becomes a little clearer. The clearer the profile, the better the information is for economic development.

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## **Response 7**

Firstly, I believe that a community profile should be completed at the beginning of any BR&E project, even if all of the project members have lived and worked in that community all their lives. If there are more things under Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in Horatio's philosophy, then we can all be surprised by aspects of our communities.

In my community profile, I would like to see two general groups of information: population and industries present in the community; there are a number of factors that would play into each of these categories, and I would like to see population, population trends, education levels, unemployment rate, occupational data, and household income data inside the population section. As for the Industrial portion of my community profile, I believe that an industrial and job-type breakdown, proximity to rail, interstate highway, seaport and airport data, and average commute time. I believe that, armed with this information, we can begin to see businesses that we will need to attract or expand in our community.

In Durant, OK, which is effectively a border town with Texas, we could see that a large number of our available workforce are, for instance, primarily employed in the food processing industry, and have a commute into Texas to work at Tyson or Ruiz. This could provide the data that would assist community leadership in attracting a food processing facility to our area. We would have an experienced labor pool

ready-made to reduce their commute time, increase municipal tax revenue, and potentially increase their incomes.

My favorite thing about data is that its honesty sometimes defies the preconceived notions of community leadership. I see a lot more mid-tier foreign vehicles in Durant than ever before. If I were to propose a Mercedes dealership in Durant, I would get laughed out of any room in the community, but by sifting, collating, and connecting data points, there may be a very real opportunity for something to be successful that “conventional wisdom” may deem as an absurdity.

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### **Response 8**

A community profile is a very useful tool for any community to utilize when working with current companies within your area as well as recruiting new companies. The purpose of the profile is to showcase important information and statistics within your area that would be important to anyone that is currently in your community or looking to move there. I believe the most important information is the information that tells the story of who you are and why your community would be the best place to locate. A combination of statistics that are important for business decisions and marketing photos or facts that show off your community as a desirable place to live.

The most important factor is the community and business environment assessment and statistics that include area population, average earnings, cost of living, labor force and labor participation rate. These statistics give companies the ability to see if your community can support their industry and the type of business they are wanting to locate or if their current company located there can expand. This can also include natural resources and available transportation options within your community.

The second part is more of the community profile that explains more detail about workforce development, partner organizations, current industry segments in the area and any other information that can highlight the strengths of your community.

When it comes to creating a quality community profile there are a lot of factors to take into consideration, but the community needs to focus on their strengths within the profile and work on their weaknesses. This way communities can recruit or retain industries that fit their profile and allow for better long-term solutions on retaining and expanding current industries.

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### **Response 9**

Because one of our goals is opening a Chahtapreneur Center, I would assume we would need most of the elements that were used in the Mandan Community Profile as well as some elements from the others. Population, Population specifically for Choctaw Tribal Members, Education and Labor Force, Workforce Educational Attainment, and Median Income are just a few elements that I think would be essential for opening a Chahtapeneur Center. I think we could go on and add additional elements, but

with this information we would be able to provide adequate room for adults in the area who are qualified to rent. I would also think getting the population for tribal members would be important to contribute to the 1<sup>st</sup> strategic goal of increasing employment of tribal members. Finally, I think income would be important, when figuring out potential cost of renting a space in our area.

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## **Response 10**

As a small business advisor we currently look at community profiles to help clients with their business plans and overall understanding of the opportunity they may have in their chosen area. One key marker I look at is the working population and percentage of labor participation. In McCurtain County, and I am sure many counties across Oklahoma, workforce is a major issue for small business owners looking to hire. Many businesses have closed their doors due to exhaustion from not finding or maintaining qualified hired help.

Another element of the community profile we discuss in detail is the traffic counts and heat map. 10,000+ tourists come through the county from a multitude of routes. We review their chosen location(s) and compare to the traffic data. Another aspect we discuss is the commuter traffic and other areas they could look for qualified employment.

Though we review all aspects of the community profile and research, one more must be mentioned: population trends. For most of the small towns the populations have been trending downward. For example, the county seat of Idabel is losing nearly 500 residents a year. This is alarming if you are creating a business that thrives on local spending and local employees. Many clients don't realize that the population is dropping by that amount. They see the same neighbors and haven't had many in their demographic move. This means deaths are outperforming births and that younger generations, the heart of the workforce, are leaving for education and opportunity.

With all of these brought to light to our clients, and other industry leaders, it helps to gain a deeper sense of reality and urgency to create jobs and opportunities that would attract younger generations to stay or other demographics to travel for work or relocate.