

Peoples Search Survey

A Journey to Better Understand Your Community

You are embarking on an exciting journey! Few things are more rewarding than seeing your community from a spiritual perspective. It is easy for us to think we already know our communities and the people living in them. However, things often change around us without us even realizing it. That is why it is important to regularly explore our neighborhoods, looking for unmet needs and determining if there are churches pursuing every person. A process developed at the North American Mission Board called *Peoples Search* can help you answer those questions. The following pages outline the Peoples Search process and are tailored specifically for churches like yours.

Most of us usually assume that new churches are only needed in an area where we do not see any church buildings. This idea prevents us from seeing our communities as mission fields that have many diverse groups of people living in them—many who are not being evangelized by any church. So the first thing we have to do is identify the unreached peoples in our community and specific ministry opportunities.

Fortunately, this is a relatively easy task. The process will help you gain a better idea of whom God may be leading you to start a church or a small group for. It is divided into two main sections—an **Internet Survey** and a **Community Survey**. The focal point of the process is the **Community Survey**. It is here that members from your church will have the opportunity to go out into the community to discover unreached peoples and see the needs firsthand.

INTERNET SURVEY

The focus of this survey is on gathering census data to quickly identify nationalities, languages, and economic groups who are in your community. This takes about an hour.

- A. **Identify nationalities, languages and ancestries in the ZIP code area of your church.** (You may choose to research ZIP codes that are different from your church's ZIP code.)
 1. Go to *www.peplegroups.info*.
 2. Click on the “Advanced Search” button.
 3. Select “Nationality” in the “Search Options” box
 4. Of the four visible tabs, select the far right one labeled “ZIP.”
 5. Click on your state in the “Select State” box.
 6. Find and click on the ZIP code you wish to study in the “Select ZIP Code” box.
 7. Highlight “All” in the “Select Country” box.
 8. In the “Top Selected” choose “25” and click on the “GO” button.

9. Print out a copy of the findings, once the data is returned beneath the “GO” button.
10. Create a *Peoples Search* folder, file, or notebook and place a copy of the data in it. You will use this data in the Community Survey.
11. Repeat steps 1-10 for collecting both language and ancestry data.
12. List the top 10 by population count for all three categories in the ZIP code.

ZIP CODE: _____

#	Population	Nationality	Language	Ancestry
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

B. Identify economic groups in the ZIP code area of study.

1. Go to the U.S. Census Web site <http://www.factfinder.census.gov/>.
2. Under “Fast Access to Information,” enter the ZIP code, and click “Go.” This will take you to the “Fact Sheet” on the ZIP code.
3. Scroll down to “Economic Characteristics” and click on “Show More.”
4. On the new page, scroll down to “Income in 1999.”
5. List the Household population total for each category in the boxes below.

ZIP CODE: _____

Income	Upper \$150,000 or more	Upper Middle \$75,000 to \$149,999	Middle \$35,000 to \$74,999	Working \$15,000 to \$34,999	Lower \$0 to \$14,999
Household Population Total					

C. Identify locations of race, foreign born, language, and economic groups in the ZIP code area of study.

1. Go to the U.S. Census Web site <http://www.factfinder.census.gov/>.
2. Under “Fast Access to Information” enter the ZIP code and click “Go.” This will take you to the “Fact Sheet” on the ZIP code.
3. For *race* data and locations, look under “General Characteristics” and look for “One Race.”
4. To identify locations of a *race*, click on “map” next to the specific race that you want to locate (e.g., White, Asian, African-American). The map will show you the locations of several percentages of the racial group that lives in that ZIP code.
5. When viewing the map, use the zoom tool above the map to identify street locations of the racial group.
6. Print out data and maps and place in the *Peoples Search* folder, file, or notebook.
7. For *foreign born, language* data, and maps, look under “Social Characteristics” on the “Fact Sheet.” Repeat steps 4-6.
8. For *income group* data and maps, look under “Economic Characteristics” on the “Fact Sheet.” Repeat steps 4-6.

You have completed the **Internet Survey** portion of *Peoples Search*. You will now use the material you printed out and the information you wrote in the boxes above to help you do the **Community Survey**.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The **Community Survey** is designed to engage participants in a process that will help them discern what God is doing in the community. It is a spiritual exercise of prayer and observation. It is a way for God to reveal different types of people in your community that your church is not reaching. It should also bring to light ministry needs that can serve as connecting points for your church. During the process, participants will interview individuals in the community. The questions provided will help you better understand the people who live in your community and their needs, and to find *persons of peace*.

A *person of peace* is someone like Cornelius or Lydia in the book of Acts. They are individuals with a good reputation in the community. God has prepared them to have a receptive heart to the gospel. Upon conversion they recommend others to the gospel; thus, being foundational for a new church start.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

9:00 a.m. Arrive at predetermined meeting place. (Church, Starbucks, Community Center)

9:10 a.m. Explain how to use the Community Survey and review expected outcomes.

9:30- 2:30 Teams of church members drive or walk through the selected survey area to observe the peoples, pray for them, interview some, find persons of peace, and record findings.

2:30 p.m. Return to the meeting location and allow teams to report what they learned.

3:00 p.m. Finish in prayer.

The time frame for using the **Community Survey** is very flexible. You can make it a half-day event or a daylong event. The time of day you conduct the survey is related to when you think the most people can be observed in the selected area of the community. Above is a sample schedule for doing the **Community Survey** in a half-day.

Most likely, you will need to do several **Community Surveys** to determine among whom you believe God is leading you to start a new church. Print out the survey that follows and provide each person a copy whenever they participate.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Instructions: This survey is designed to be used by church members who have volunteered to spend time in a community looking for needs, unreached peoples, and persons of peace. The pastor or other designated leader distributes copies of the survey to each volunteer and explains how to use it. The questions and instructions on the survey itself provide participants the direction they need. When the surveying activity is completed, the participant records all observations, and returns the completed **Community Survey** to the pastor or other designated leader.

Prayer: As you do the survey, ask God to lead you to those whom He wants you to see, meet, and build bridges for the sake of the gospel. Ask the Spirit to open your eyes to the spiritual and physical needs of the community.

A. Observe the peoples of the survey area.

1. What racial groups do you see here? (Asian, White, African-American, Hispanic, etc.)
2. What nationalities and languages are evident in this area? (Indicators include ethnic restaurants, grocery stores, artwork, phone cards, flags, etc.)
3. What affinity groups do you see? (Homeless, bikers, gangs, artists, cowboys, college students, etc.)
4. What businesses or occupations do you see? (White-collar, blue-collar, schools, etc.)
5. What economic groups do you see? (Upper, middle, or lower)
6. What non-Christian religious groups do you see? (Islam, Mormon, Hindu, Jehovah's Witness, etc.)
7. What types of physical and/or spiritual needs do you see?

B. Pray for the peoples of the survey area.

Include time to stop and pray for the neighborhood and the various groups of peoples that you are observing. Perhaps buy a coffee or soda somewhere, sit in the park, eat at a local restaurant, or hang out in a public place. Note any insights God gives you or your team as a result of praying.

C. Interview individuals you meet in the survey area.

As you survey the area, look for some individuals to interview. Note which group of people in Section A of the **Community Survey** (nationality, language, affinity, economic, etc.) the individual most closely represents.

The following are some questions to help you conduct several interviews. Adapt these as needed. Develop your own style of questions as needed to achieve the goals of the interview. Keep the interview informal and conversational. Record the answers to these questions after each interview is over to avoid unnecessary apprehension by the person with whom you are talking.

Introduction: Hello. My name is _____. I am trying to better understand our community and people who are different than me. I have seven questions. There is no right or wrong answer. I just want to know your opinion. Would you please help me?

1. How would you describe this community?
2. What do you like best about our neighborhood? What do you like least?
3. What are the community's greatest needs (crime, poverty, recreation, etc.)?
4. What languages are spoken here?
5. Who do you go to if you have a deep problem?
6. How do people in this community view God?
7. Would you be interested in discussing spiritual issues with me/us in the future? [If yes, ask him or her to give you contact information for follow-up.]

NOTE: For each person interviewed, write a summary of the interview on a separate piece of paper. Attach these summaries to this copy of the *Community Survey*.

D. Record Persons of Peace and Unreached Groups and Needs

During your interviews with individuals, some will show greater interest in spiritual things than others. Their interest and openness to you may be an indicator that the individual is a person of peace. Write below all of the potential persons of peace you have met during the **Community Survey**.

#	Name	Address	Group	Phone or E-mail
1				
2				
3				

What groups of people stood out to you as the least sought after with the gospel?

#	Name	Description	Location
1			
2			
3			

What needs in the community did you observe or gather from your interviews?

#	Needs
1	
2	
3	

What's Next?

Once your teams have completed the surveys, you will want to gather to discuss what you've learned and begin developing a plan to start small groups and churches where God has revealed the need. Consider who your church can partner with, the resources available for the task, and your commitment level.

A good place to start is to contact your local Baptist association. They can provide you with information and resources that will aid in your journey. You can also discover resources for starting new churches at www.churchplantingvillage.net and clicking on the "Church Partners" tab. This is a Web site of the North American Mission Board's Church Planting Group.

A follow up resource to the *Peoples Search Survey* is *Epoch*. *Epoch* is a process, which empowers everyday Christ-followers to engage people in their communities, seeking to make disciples and establish relationship-based faith communities. Go to www.churchplantingvillage.net/epoch for contextualized versions, an Implementation Guide, and other related resources.

Timeline for Using the Community Survey

1. Complete the **Internet Survey**.
2. Use information collected from the *Internet Survey* to determine what location within the ZIP code area to send participants to use the **Community Survey**.
3. Set a date for the **Community Survey**.
4. Enlist volunteers for the **Community Survey**.
5. Determine schedule for the **Community Survey** (see sample on page 4).
6. Gather at designated meeting place on the day of the **Community Survey**.
7. Provide orientation and instructions to volunteers who will use the **Community Survey**.
8. Do the **Community Survey**.
9. Collect completed **Community Surveys** from each volunteer.
10. Pastor and other church leaders review findings from the **Internet Survey** and **Community Survey**.
11. Do more **Community Surveys** if needed.
12. Determine what unreached people to start a church or small group among.
13. Contact the local association for church planting assistance, if needed.
14. Design church planting plan for your community.
15. Implement church planting plan.