



Talk to your Community

Your project, whatever shape or size, must respond to a real identifiable need within your community. This includes all the people who live in your parish, (including your congregation) and it is important to gather evidence, both qualitative (letters of support, individual quotes) and quantitative (data) to vocalise your case for support.

The more urgent and visible the need, the better you can demonstrate your case for support to funders. Remember, people give to people therefore even if your funding application is for building work – the funders will want to know what influence that building work will have on the people using the building.

Have a heart-to-heart

There is always room for improvement, a way to make life better for others, and sometimes people can presume they know what's best for others, without asking directly. A community audit ensures you hear your community's opinions on existing services, and the introduction of new services they'd like to see.

Some suggestions for change won't be viable or applicable, but it doesn't mean they should be ignored. Sometimes creative solutions can be found within the most difficult problems. If people have immediate needs, you can ask how the church might be able to help. If you offer prayer or aid, however, be sure you follow up and keep your promises! Enlist volunteers to pray for the needs revealed in the survey.

Who should conduct the survey?

Anyone and everyone can gather the information for the Community Audit, but it is helpful to use friendly, relaxed individuals who are well known and respected in the community.

It is also an opportunity for members of the congregation to get involved, to develop existing relationships and build new ones in the process. A survey can make a lasting impression on those who conduct the survey as well as on those they visit. If most church members are not from the neighbourhood, considering pairing a church member with a local resident who knows the people in the community. This helps to build trust and credibility.

While the purpose of conducting the survey is to gather information, not to attract people to your church, survey participants may ask about your church. To help answer these questions, be sure to have a brochure or flyer that features your church programs and worship services that you can share with them.

Collecting People's Views and Comments

There are a number of ways to collect and collate your audit responses, and the process will depend on the success of similar previous activities. It may also depend on the size of your parish, and the number of volunteers available.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are one of the most common audit techniques, as a letter drop ensures every house is consulted and meets with a representative of the church. Ensure you allow plenty of time for households to respond, and make it easy for them to respond either by future collection or a questionnaires box at the church.

Have a Quick Natter

If you have a local high street or community centre, why not ask people questions directly and fill in the form on their behalf? It's always a good gesture to say thank

you to people for their thoughts and opinions, it also makes the offer of a survey more appealing if there is a physical gesture available, for example a balloon, sweet, sticker or free coffee voucher.

Suggestion Boxes

Create colourful suggestion boxes and place them in communal spaces throughout your parish. Make sure information is available as to what you're seeking suggestions for, and set up a system for analysing and communicating the results.

More Tea Vicar

Alongside or in addition to your regular community fetes and festivals, why not organise an event for the community where they can pop along to chat with the church leadership and share their thoughts on the project. You could introduce a competition, a quiz, or slightly peculiar advertising angle (for example More Tea Vicar) to draw people to the event.