

Using community material as questions, not descriptions

A community brief or cultural guide is a starting point for respectful inquiry. It can help you ask better questions and plan access. It cannot tell you what any one person wants, believes, or needs.

Why it matters

Generalizations about literacy, oral traditions, health beliefs, or family roles become stereotypes the moment they are applied to a person. The safeguard is a habit: ask, then plan.

Content

Read a brief for what to ask, not what to conclude. Turn every statement into a question you could ask the person or the community partner.

Notice the diversity inside every community. Immigration history, faith, language, disability, age, and class differ within a community as much as between communities.

Plan access from what people tell you. Language, interpreter, format, timing, setting, technology, and trusted messenger are decisions to make with people, not for them.

Say what you do not know. A brief that leaves a self-description pending is telling you to go ask.

Check the source. Community material needs authoritative sources and community review before it becomes a program fact. Material still in review is marked, and it is not a description of anyone.

Next steps

- **Prepare for intercultural work without making assumptions** — program page /library/pn-intercultural-method
- **Explore Minnesota Communities** — program page /minnesota-communities

Practice paths this supports

- Community engagement or co-design effort