

Using community context without profiling

A community brief can help you prepare for Minnesota work, but it cannot describe any one person. Use it to ask better questions, check access, and involve the right partners. People within every community have different experiences. Each person is the authority on their own life.

Why it matters

Applying information about a group to an individual is profiling and can lead to worse service. A respectful approach is direct: ask the person, confirm what they need, and address the access barriers within your control.

Content

Use the brief to prepare: consider naming, language and dialect, decision-making, access needs, potential partners, and what not to assume.

Ask the person: how they want to be addressed; which language and dialect; who should be in the room; what would make this work for them.

Check access first: consider language, disability and communication access, timing, transportation, trust, and the time and effort a process requires. Ask what a person needs instead of inferring it from their community.

Involve partners through established channels, with a clear purpose, role, compensation, and plan to report back. Staff who share a background are colleagues; do not expect them to interpret or represent an entire community.

If the brief does not cover something, be clear about what you do not know. Ask the person or seek appropriate guidance rather than relying on assumptions.

Next steps

- **Open Minnesota Communities** — program page [/minnesota-communities](#)
- **Community engagement path** — program page [/practice/gp-3](#)

Practice paths this supports

- Community engagement or co-design effort