

HIGHLIGHT 8.12**A Failed Windshield Survey**

A windshield survey was assigned to a new team member with little to no experience in the community being assessed. The task was to complete a windshield survey identifying community businesses serving a specific target area. The team leader did not adequately prepare the new member about exactly what to look for. Absent guidelines or instructions, the member noted the signage on each business such as Jones Pharmacy, Smith Family Grocery, and Giuseppe Pizza Parlor. When the member turned in the report, I was puzzled about the pizza parlor.

(Ok, it's my favorite food and I'm always looking for a good pizza.) I drove past the location only to find that it had been abandoned long ago though the restaurant sign was still there. A spot check of other businesses on the list revealed a similar pattern. The community with high unemployment, hundreds of abandoned homes, and great poverty has dozens of buildings still bearing the signs of its past glories. Without identifying the functioning businesses from those that were closed, the data gathered from the windshield survey was of no value.

- **Suggestion boxes.** Posting suggestion boxes in businesses or other organizations serving older adults will allow people to provide their ideas in a safe manner with complete anonymity. This might include libraries, senior centers, and medical facilities. Each box should have an explanation of your purpose and how the suggestions will be used.

Establish a clear plan for who will collect what information by what time. Remember, if no one is responsible for completing a task, it will not get done. Time lines and clarity about what data is needed holds people accountable. You will still need to monitor progress. Just as there are students who complete their assignments on the very last day, there are also colleagues who have the same working strategy.

Identifying Major Findings

Your major findings serve to highlight the current state of affairs for your target population, older adults. They provide support for conditions that may have not been on anyone's radar prior to now. They can also point to trends or other indicators about this population. For example, a particular community may have a larger than average population of older adults

than most communities, which suggests that whatever challenges exist now will likely get worse over time. Finally, your major findings align with the questions you posed on the front end of the assessment process. You now know the income level of most older adults, and the organizations, institutions, and agencies that are providing services and financial assistance to this group. Equally important, you now know where the gaps are.

Organize your data into groupings that allow you to address each major finding and indicate what the assessment revealed. For example, for each major finding, you could indicate the following:

- Identified gaps in service
- Community strengths relating to the needs of older adults
- Challenges or unmet needs that are faced by this group
- Opportunities that can be followed up to address the gaps or challenges.

The following chart is a sample of possible findings. Shaded areas indicate whether the findings point to a strength, gap, opportunity, or challenge.

Key Findings	Strengths	Gaps	Opportunities	Challenges
1. Older adults are unaware of available community resources to help them remain in their own home.				
2. Meals on Wheels cannot find enough clients to serve and may close.				
3. There are not any services available to help older adults maintain or repair their homes.				