Performing a Community Assessment
Robert is the director of a community-based organization in Franklin County that links and coordinates local teenage pregnancy prevention services. The organization, entitled F-CAPP (Franklin’s Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention), has over 30 member organizations representing mental health, local faith organizations, the primary school system, university professors and students, teenage pregnancy prevention programs and family members. In spite of its wide range of members and diverse representation of local groups, the county continued to experience a climbing teenage pregnancy rate and ranked the third highest statewide. Additionally, the program was located in a southern county which had a higher than average unemployment rate and the high school graduation rate was below average, with current projections showing the rates worsening in coming years. Robert raised the issue of the county’s increasing teen pregnancy rate at F-CAPP’s monthly Board of Directors meeting. After much discussion, it was decided that F-CAPP needed to redirect its efforts and develop new outreach efforts so as to better prevent unplanned pregnancies from occurring.

Robert was tasked with completing a new, up-to-date community assessment. With his task in hand, Robert began gathering the most accessible data: community demographics, socioeconomic data, employment and graduation rates and teenage pregnancy data. Using several resources, including www.city-data.com, the Census Bureau’s website, and state vital statistics, current information was gathered about the county’s population. In addition, community members were surveyed to identify leaders and determine what issues were most important to them. Finally, to get a more in-depth look at teenage pregnancy, unemployment and graduation rates, Robert contacted the local health department’s environmental health division and worked with them to conduct an analysis of the county’s zip codes to determine the neighborhoods most at risk and using the Geographic Information System (GIS) display these neighborhoods on a county map.

Based on this assessment, Robert found that a disproportionate amount of teenage pregnancies were located in the central and eastern parts of the county. Not surprisingly, many of the neighborhoods with both high rates of unemployment rates and low rates of high school graduation also had the highest teenage pregnancy rates. The community survey found that people were most concerned about the lack of employment opportunities and teenage pregnancy. It also found that they were largely unaware of the teenage pregnancy prevention resources and services that existed. Through discussions with the local business administration, Robert was informed that there were two reasons why potential new businesses settled elsewhere: the high teenage pregnancy rate and low graduation rates.

Leveraging Community Assets
Armed with this new information, Robert presented the data to F-CAPP’s Board of Directors at the next meeting. Disappointed but not surprised by the results, the Board decided that a coordinated effort to leverage and advertise current community assets was needed to address those areas of concern raised by the community.
To start their effort, the Board first began by defining what they were concerned with and what they wanted to accomplish. Using the Preliminary Community Engagement Strategy on page 38, the Board determined that their problem was that teenage pregnancy and low graduation rates were a part of a cyclical problem whereby increases in one created more negative results in the other. Therefore, an effective approach to addressing the issue needed to include programs and services targeted at each aspect in the cycle. The Board found that current programs represented by their organization were mostly targeted at youth, with very few including components to raise awareness among adults about the resources offered by the community. They used the Preliminary Community Engagement Strategy tool to identify new potential partners who would benefit from a decrease in the community teenage pregnancy rate. Once complete, the final goal was to increase awareness around the linkage between education, employment and teenage pregnancy through both broad and targeted social marketing campaigns geared at adults and teenagers. As part of this effort and recommended by the Community Assets: Potential Uses and Engagement Strategies on page 40, the Board decided to extend F-CAPP membership invitations to several potential partners whose assets could be leveraged in addressing the issue. These included members of the education, media and marketing and business communities as well as community leaders. Robert tasked the Board members with reaching out and educating these organizations about F-CAPP’s mission and the linkage between teenage pregnancy and their area of interest. Finally, the Board developed talking points and reviewed the mission and goals of F-CAPP to ensure they were current and relevant to the organization’s work.

Over the next month, four new individuals joined the Board of F-CAPP and seven more joined the organization. These individuals represented the education, marketing and business communities and assisted in bringing fresh perspective and more importantly resources to F-CAPP’s activities. The first order of business was to develop possible outreach strategies to raise awareness about the linkages between education, employment and teenage pregnancy and get key stakeholders interested in developing a communitywide effort to combat the problem. Using the Community Assets: Potential Uses and Engagement Strategies worksheet, three different strategies were chosen. First, they developed a booklet to distribute that listed the available employment, education and teenage pregnancy prevention services and programs in the community. The completed booklet, entitled ‘The Community Guide to Education and Pregnancy Prevention Services’ was provided to all member groups, all organizations identified within the booklet and to local doctor offices, community organizations and schools for use by their staffs. Further, an interactive website was established which contained the booklet’s information with a visit counter to track the number of individuals accessing and using the site’s resources.

Second, the new member of the Board that was from the social marketing firm agreed to donate their services towards a pregnancy prevention campaign. Prior to starting work, Robert and the firm sat down with the tool Priority Communities for My Outreach on page 42 to ensure the neighborhoods most at risk received targeted outreach efforts. Community leaders from these neighborhoods were invited to join the conversation to ensure efforts would be effective. They worked to develop commercials, radio ads, bus signs, and billboards with broad messages; however additional ads were run in the priority communities. Each ad included the website and a toll-free number to contact F-CAPP for more information on available resources. Finally, the local media and business were contacted and F-CAPP was able to negotiate reduced advertising and development rates for their ads.
Prior to the start of the campaign, the Board developed an evaluation plan to determine the number of people reached by the campaign and track program usage for one year prior to the campaign and one year following its launch. In order to effectively evaluate the program, Robert realized that objectives had to be developed to guide the project. Once complete, the Board used the worksheet *Develop SMART Communications Objectives* on page 43 and created five objectives for the campaign. These objectives were created to measure changes in education, employment and teenage pregnancy trends within the community before and after the new efforts. A Board member, Stephen, from the local university, volunteered to develop and run the evaluation at a substantially reduced rate.

The result of the leveraging of community assets to support the campaign’s efforts was substantial. Over the following year, local pregnancy prevention organizations saw a 40% increase in service uptake among the community, with a full 50% increase among the most at-risk populations. Further, fewer students dropped out of school due to pregnancy-related issues, leading to an increase in the graduation rate. It is projected that in the next five years, the local unemployment rate will decrease, some of which can be attributed to these efforts. Finally, business leaders are watching the results closely so that they can have a better package to present to prospective businesses when they consider Franklin County for their location.