Collecting Citizen Input

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Process Flow Chart

Collecting citizen data to measure the "needs" and compose the "story" of the community

Data used to make periodic decisions about programs, facilities, marketing and fees

One-time "snapshot" of the community

Ongoing data collection to keep feeling the "pulse" of the community

Data used in developing a Master Plan
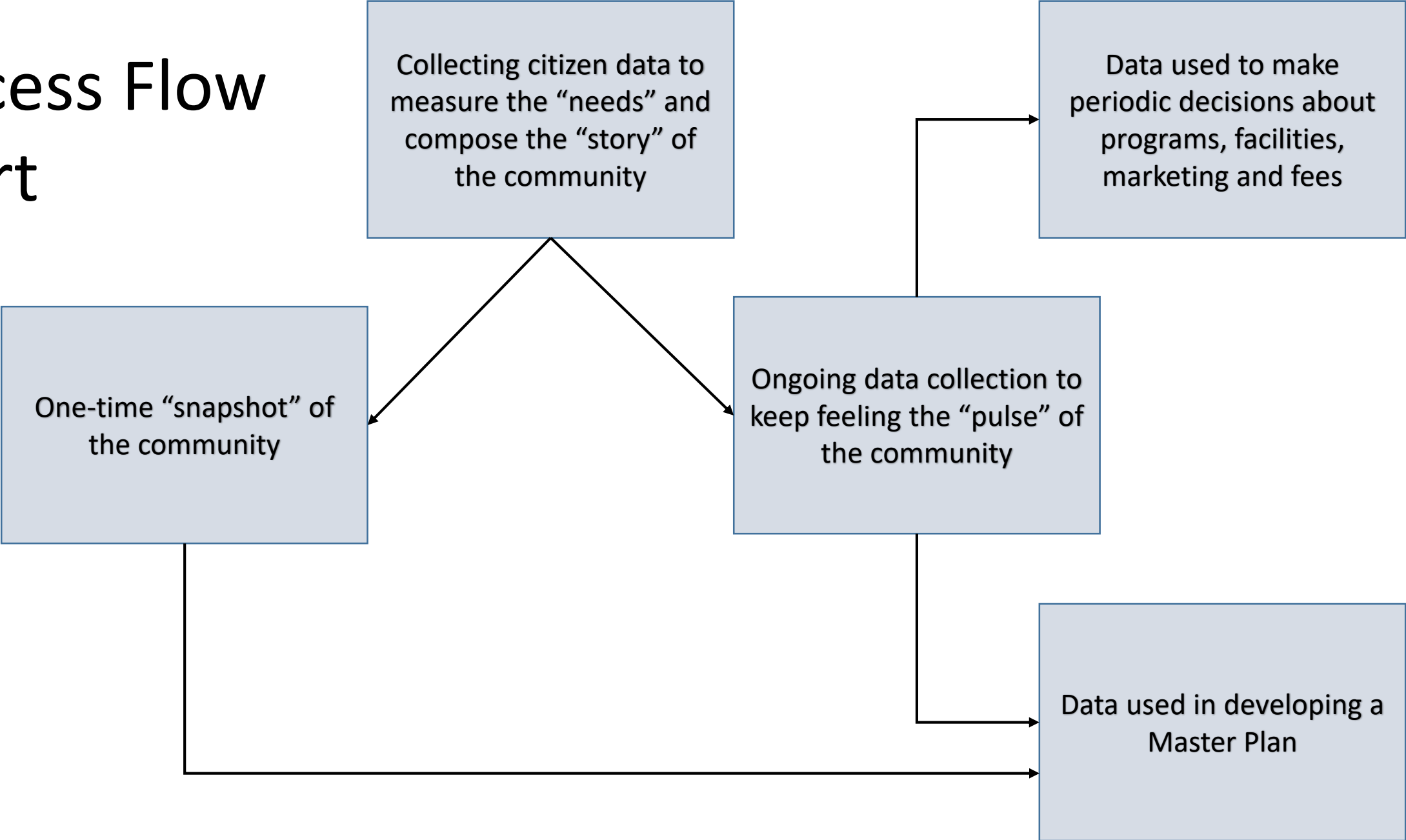
The process of collecting data from the citizens requires scientifically reliable statistical methods to gain an understanding of the community-wide recreation needs, attitudes, opinions and behaviors of the constituency served by a recreation service provider. Additionally, the data should offer a descriptive "profile" of the community

Collecting data from citizens must not be confused with creating a master plan.

A master plan can be developed after a data has been collected from citizens.

The process of collecting data from citizens must be considered to be an activity independent and completely separate from the process of creating a master plan.

Throughout this presentation it will be stressed that collecting citizen data, sometimes also called a needs assessment, must be considered to be an independent activity from creating a master plan, although the citizen data must be used as a blueprint for developing a master plan.

A Needs Assessment is

- **NOT** Public meetings
- **NOT** Mailer going out with utility bills
- **NOT** Asking people questions at the swimming pool
- **NOT** Getting input from friends and family
- **NOT** Occasionally checking Tweets and FB comments
- **NOT** Something that has not been done systematically

Having reliable Data helps

- Cost savings by prioritizing
- Address the constantly changing needs
- Balancing resources
- Keeping up with the competition
- Maximizing effect in Community
- Responding to external pressures

What to ask about?

Current activities

Future needs

Personal Opinions

Leisure behavior

Demographics

Current Activities

Interest in specific recreation programs or categories of recreation programs, e.g.

- Family events
- Activities for different ages
- Activities for different populations
- Trips
- Special Events

Future Needs

- **General Needs**
- **Specific programs and facilities**
- **Methods of Payment**
- **Extent of the Need**

Leisure Behavior

- Frequency of attendance

- Day of week & time of day

- Reasons for non-attendance

- Information distribution

- Competitive leisure behavior

Personal Opinions

These questions address the opinion of the community with respect to a variety of issues such as:

- **Level of maintenance**
- **Land acquisition**
- **Future goals of your agency**
- **Specific concerns in a community**
- **The overall "feel" of the community**

Demographics

- Age

- Gender

- Marital Status

- Income/Ethnicity

- Household Information

Open ended comments

The community is invited to share their thoughts in their own "voice" stating what their primary concerns are

This is textual data that is not open to Statistical analysis but requires to be treated as Big Data

How to Ask the Questions
Questionnaire Development

Focus Group Discussions

These meetings help to produce area specific information about the needs and concerns of the community

Focus Groups

- Stay involved in the planning
- Do not interfere with the actual group discussions
- Use this as an opportunity for community outreach
- Prepare a report of the information gathered in the focus group meetings

How to Ask the Questions

Questionnaire Development

Questionnaire Formatting

Considerable effort is spent in producing
an instrument that is not only pleasing to the
eye but easy to complete on many different digital
platforms

Invitation Postcard

The respondents are sent a postcard with the
Information on how to complete the questionnaire

Questionnaire Design

- Carefully review all drafts
- Keep the evaluation group small but involved
- Make sure all questions have justification
- Ensure there is good mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions
- Make the questionnaire accessible on all digital devices

Sampling

Population Definition

The community to be surveyed is carefully defined in terms of residency requirements location, and other specific criteria

Sample Selection

A random sample is selected from the defined population. Random means that every member in the population has a chance of being selected
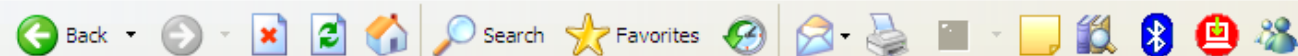
Data Collection

Mixed-Mode Data Collection – US Mail and Online

**The questionnaires are sent out by mail and
the respondents complete the questionnaire using
a digital device**

Response Rate (RR)

**A minimum response rate of 20% to 25% is expected
on the first mailing. When necessary a second
mailing can be conducted to boost the RR**

Waukesha Customer Survey - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File   Edit   View   Favorites   Tools   Help

Back   Search   Favorites

Address   http://www.freesurveysonline.com/fso/NextPage.fso   Go   Links

nero   Yahoo!   Search Web   Mail   My Yahoo!   Answers   Games   Shopping   Music

MLL

2. **For each activity listed below please indicate whether you and/or anyone in your family would have interest in the activity.**

	Not Interested	Interested
a. Activities specifically for people with disabilities	○	○
b. Adventure activities	○	○
c. Aquatics	○	○
d. Arts & Crafts	○	○
e. Environmental	○	○
f. Extreme Sports	○	○
g. Family Programs	○	○
h. Gardening	○	○
i. Hobbies	○	○
j. Indoor Fitness	○	○
k. Outdoor Fitness	○	○
l. Outdoor sports	○	○
m. Passive recreation	○	○
n. Performing Arts	○	○
o. Special Events	○	○
p. Sports and Athletics	○	○

Data Collection

- Use a mixed method that is comprehensive and cost effective

- Do not interfere with the data collection effort to keep the study unbiased

- Ensure that all groups have access to the questionnaire and can complete the questionnaire
  - Digital completion
  - Paper and pencil completion

Data Analysis Structured Data

- The numeric structured data is analyzed using statistical tools to obtain numeric analysis of the data and get a number-based description of the community

- Statistics include
  - Descriptives
  - Central Tendencies (Mean, etc.)
  - Difference between groups
  - Relationships

Data Analysis
Unstructured Data

- Data from the questionnaire
- Data scraped from "public domain" digital sources
- Data obtained from digital social networks

Scraping: Continuous Collection

- The data is continuously collected from public domain data sources

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Share

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1	Twitter Query: #flsenate -filter:retweets -filter:replies									
2	Date	Screen Name	Full Name	Tweet Text	Tweet ID	Link(s)	Media	Location	Retweets	Favori
3	2/20/2019	@LindaStewartFL	Linda Stewart	Moffitt Cancer Center in state capital for #MoffittDay. #flsenate #SD13	1098321527618052096		https://pbs.twimg.com/		0	0
4	2/20/2019	@LindaStewartFL	Linda Stewart	Future Farmers of America (FFA) students from Orange County #FFA #flsenate #SD13	1098319803897597952		https://pbs.twimg.com/		0	0
5	2/19/2019	@LindaStewartFL	Linda Stewart	This afternoon in the Infrastructure and Security Committee Meeting my bill, SB 116: Motor Vehicle Racing was heard and passed unanimously. Here is a link to SB116: #flsenate #MotorVehicleRacing...	1097989439605882880	https://www.flsenate.go			0	0
6	2/19/2019	@LindaStewartFL	Linda Stewart	The Commerce and Tourism Committee meeting starts at 10:00 am. There are several bills on the agenda for consideration and a couple of presentations. If you would like to watch, please go to: . #flsenate	1097873232940724224	http://flsenate.gov/	https://pbs.twimg.com/		0	0
7	2/16/2019	@capotealejandro	Alejandro "Alex" Capote	Love your neighbor. #sharejourney with your brothers and sisters. ♥🌱🌍🌿 ... #FlaPol #Florida #FLSenate #FLHouse #Tallahassee	1096976721700667392	https://www.youtube.c			0	0
8	2/16/2019	@capotealejandro	Alejandro "Alex" Capote	Love your neighbor. #sharejourney with your brothers and sisters. #solidarity ♥🌱🌍🌿 #FlaPol #Florida #FLSenate #FLHouse	1096973953308995585	https://youtu.be/A2Djh			0	0
9	2/16/2019	@capotealejandro	Alejandro "Alex" Capote	Love your neighbor. #sharejourney with your brothers and sisters. ♥🌱🌍🌿 #FlaPol #Florida #FLSenate #FLHouse	1096972143353651200	https://www.youtube.c			0	0
10	2/16/2019	@FTenther	FloridaTenther	DeSantis announces new 'equal opportunity' voucher program, aims to end scholarship waiting list, expand... A tacit admission that government schools are failure factories #Florida #DeptofEducation #FlSenate #Tallahassee	1096937861398577153	https://www.orlandose			0	0
11	2/15/2019	@TheJonBellamy	Jon Bellamy	Hyperlapse I made of the #FLSenate Chamber. @ Florida State Capitol Building	1096488681236357120	https://www.instagram.			0	0

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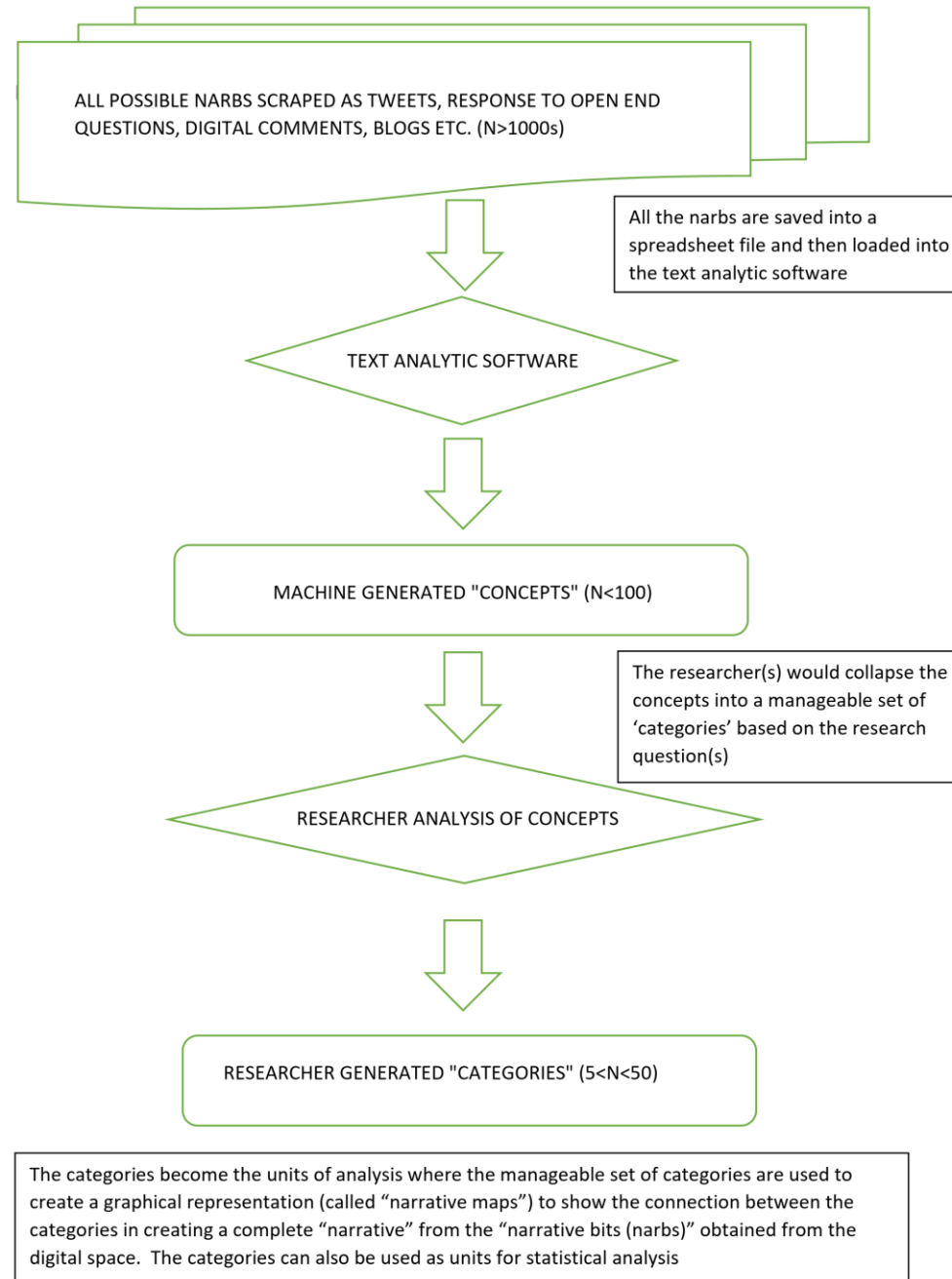
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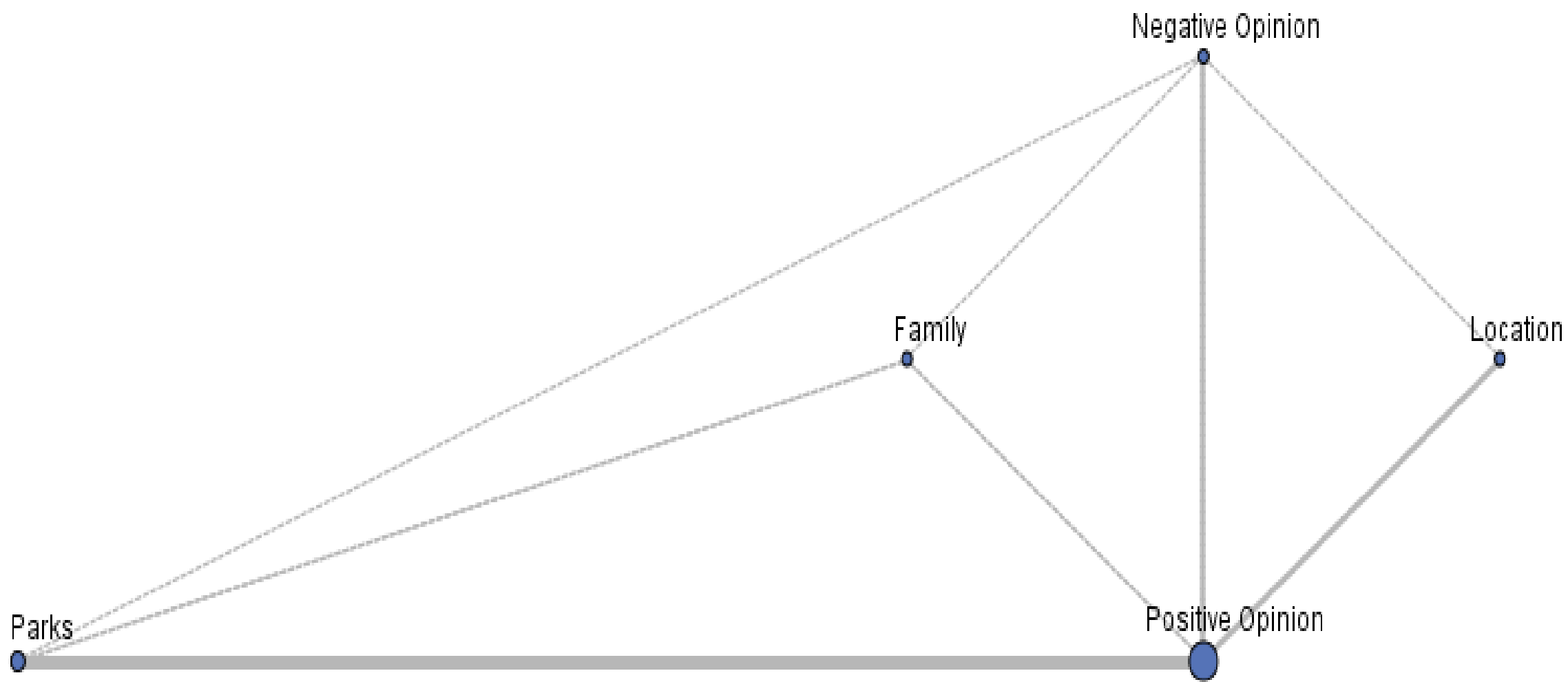2/21/2019
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What are elements of Big Data

- Volume – lots of information about lots of people
- Velocity – information generated constantly
- Variety – great depth of information
- Structured – lots of numbers
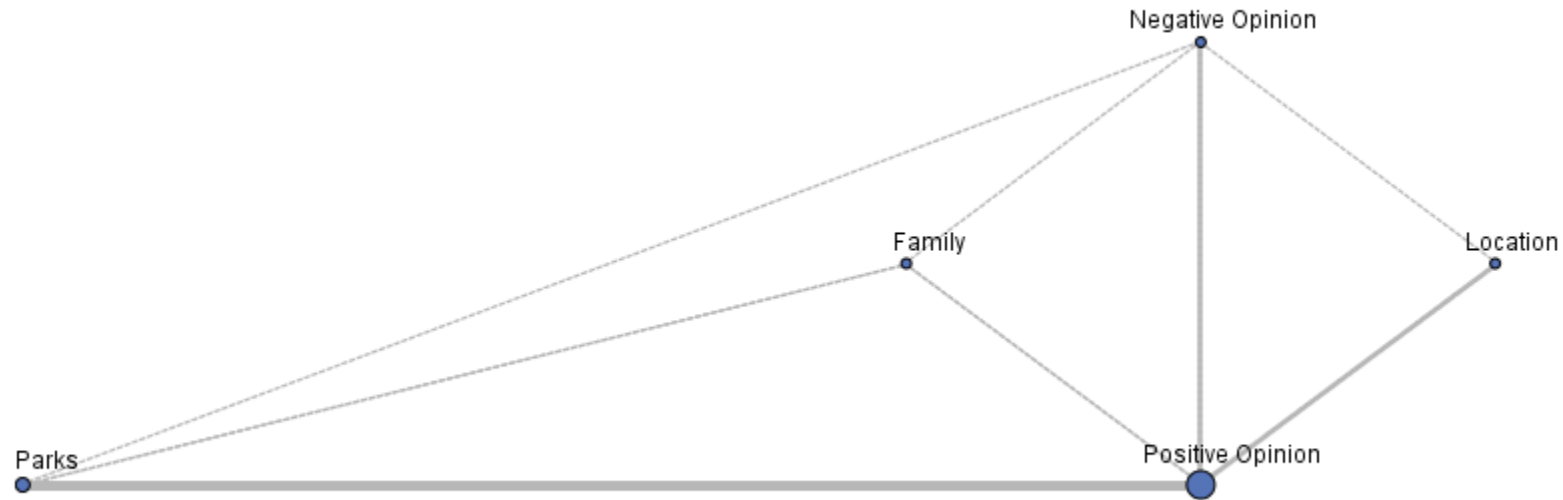- Unstructured – lots of stories

Stories and Narrative Theory

- The theoretical basis rests on the fact that the goal is to understand the community needs and interests and opinions in as great detail as possible and the best way to do that is to construct the story of the community using all the different data sources available

- Big Data is allowing for the construction of that narrative

- Narrative Theory suggested by Walter Fisher allows for the understanding of the community through the stories of the community

NARB ANALYSIS FLOWCHART

ALL POSSIBLE NARBS SCRAPED AS TWEETS, RESPONSE TO OPEN END QUESTIONS, DIGITAL COMMENTS, BLOGS ETC. (N>1000s)

All the narbs are saved into a spreadsheet file and then loaded into the text analytic software

TEXT ANALYTIC SOFTWARE

MACHINE GENERATED "CONCEPTS" (N<100)

The researcher(s) would collapse the concepts into a manageable set of 'categories' based on the research question(s)

RESEARCHER ANALYSIS OF CONCEPTS

RESEARCHER GENERATED "CATEGORIES" (5<N<50)

The categories become the units of analysis where the manageable set of categories are used to create a graphical representation (called "narrative maps") to show the connection between the categories in creating a complete "narrative" from the "narrative bits (narbs)" obtained from the digital space. The categories can also be used as units for statistical analysis

As the map shows, people are often conflicted about their opinions, and it is unrealistic to consider that people have either clear cut positive opinion or a clear cut negative opinion. The line between the 'Negative Opinion' and 'Positive Opinion' suggests this duality of opinion. However, the thick connection between 'Parks' and 'Positive Opinion' also suggest that people are relatively happy with the parks just as people are happy with the 'location' of the parks. These maps are read by looking at the size of each node, e.g., the larger blue circle for 'Positive Opinion' suggests that a large number of respondents used positive supportive language in their comments, and the thickness of the lines shows the strength of the relationship between nodes. For instance, for these respondents few felt negatively about the parks, location of family.bb

Data and Report

- Use the correct statistics for the analysis
- Ensure all the research objectives are satisfied
- Use appropriate tools for the analysis of unstructured data
- Combine the analysis of the structured and unstructured data into one specific final evaluation of the needs of the community

Challenges

- Developing valid questions in readily understandable wording

- Understanding by staff and community leaders the statistical process and results (i.e. sample size, random sampling etc.)

- Timing of the instrument distribution - time of year, holidays

Challenges

- Selling the costs : benefits to decision makers

- Selecting a consultant that knows parks and recreation verse a general statistical/marketing research firm

- Developing an instrument unique to your community - staff commitment in time and careful review

Challenges

- Staff accessing the data - time, ease of access and ability to interpret

- Unwanted results

- Requests to tag on questions from other agencies that aren't related to the assessment verses the opportunity to partner and share costs

Skill Sets

- Communication – focus group facilitation
- Questionnaire design – understanding of the issues related to questionnaire design
- Management and Organization – coordination of the data management process
- Data Analysis – Statistical skill
- Data Presentation

Costs

- Time – between 6 to 8 weeks

- Resources – staff and facilities

- Dollar – cost of printing mailing etc.

- Political – Legitimacy, credibility

Outsourcing

- Timing – when to do the study
- One-stop shopping – pros and cons
- Regionality – local and national
- Process – from RFP to recommendations and data

RFP Preparation

- Prepare the RFP carefully, look at old RFPs
- Get input from colleagues
- Send it to a variety of firms
- Focus on firms that do needs assessments and not master plans
- Separate the needs assessment RFP from the Master Plan process

RFP Evaluation

- Use criteria settled on ahead of time
- Look at national reputation, local firms are not necessarily the best
- Do not confuse master planning with needs assessment
- Consider multiple awards in stead of "one stop shopping"

Process

- Don't reinvent the wheel; ask other professionals for sample RFP/RFQ's and lists of consultants

- Evaluate and selection - involve your board members and other stakeholders

- Get stakeholders and community leaders buy into the process

Process

- Stick to the time line, hold your staff and consultants feet to the fire
- Find the time to do the support work the consultants need
- Keep an open line of communication with the consultants
- Share the results; staff, leaders, and policy makers

Things to DO!

- Collect information from a large cross-section of the community.
- Collect information about all the different aspects of leisure - attitudes, use, behavior
- Always ask the demographic questions
- Remember "user" data is different from "community" data

Things NOT to DO!

- Depend only on public hearings and focus group data
- Collect information at community centers and other public places
- Confuse "user" data with "community" data
- Use a standardized "off the shelf" questionnaire

What are the steps in the new needs assessment?

- Conduct a **random sample mixed mode study** with the correctly calculated sample size, typically around 4,500 to obtain a 3% sampling error. The questionnaire should contain ample opportunities for open-ended responses
- Conduct a **longitudinal study of self-selected members** of the community over a period of 12 months using the questionnaire
- Conduct a **youth study** to collect information from the youngsters in the community, who are often missed in the traditional random sample study
- Continuously collect data from **digital social networks** and utilize the data as a part of the RecStor narrative analysis
- Conduct a **RecStor** (or similar) analysis for the unstructured response

Needs Assessment

A Systematic Approach to Data Collection

Second Edition

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