

In our recent article about [how to effectively implement ideas for outreach ministry](#), we mentioned that researching existing services is arguably the most important step, particularly when capacity and resources are limited. For those who are new to this kind of research, the following sources may be helpful in guiding your search.

A general keyword Google search is a good place to start, even if it just gives you more refined terms to search for. This can cover that initial review of what is available in the local area where you are seeking to serve. But a keyword search will not necessarily uncover all activities that may overlap with your idea.

The best next step is to search by specific organizations to review their websites for service offerings. The following are some examples of whom to target in your research.

## Religious Organizations

You may already be familiar with large congregations of various faiths in your area. You can identify [your peers in the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta](#), review this [online database of mega churches](#) (includes independent and denomination-affiliated), and use the location search for nationally large denominations, for example:

- [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)
- [Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](#)
- [Roman Catholic Church](#)
- [Southern Baptist Convention](#)
- [United Church of Christ](#)
- [United Methodist Church](#)

## Nonprofit Organizations

While you will want to include in your research smaller organizations in your area, you can also start with the local affiliates of the following national nonprofits:

- [Boys and Girls Club of America](#)
- [Goodwill](#)
- [Junior League](#)
- [United Way](#)
- [Urban League](#)

## Local Government and Regional Commissions

To start with local government, you can find the websites of city and county governments in your service area with the [USA.gov search tool](#).

The State of Georgia is divided into 12 regions to facilitate the management of various state government programs. To

confirm which Regional Commission aligns with your area, scroll the home page of the [Georgia Association of Regional Commissions](#).

## State Government

Several divisions of Georgia state government align with the mission focuses of ECF or otherwise address poverty and oppression. One place to start is this overview of [Georgia Assistance and Benefits Programs](#). The following are specific State of Georgia websites to review for potentially related programs:

- [Aging Services](#) (various, including hunger/food-related)
- [Attorney General's Office](#) (human trafficking prevention and support)
- [Community Affairs](#) (housing assistance)
- [Corrections](#) (reentry programs)
- [Family and Children Services](#) (various, including for refugees and people affected by the criminal justice system)
- [Juvenile Justice](#) (reentry programs)
- [WorkSource Georgia](#) (job search assistance and training programs for persons with barriers to entering the workforce, which can include people affected by the criminal justice system and generational poverty)

## What to Look For

When reviewing offerings in your area, a program of the same purpose is not necessarily duplicative. For example, perhaps you find a program offering safe shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness, and your idea is to provide after-school care to students experiencing housing insecurity. While both ideas address the needs of unhoused persons, your concept is not duplicative because of its focus on a specific need of a subgroup of the general unhoused population. You further benefit from your research work when you discover the [Georgia DFAS Afterschool Care Program](#) as a resource to leverage.

## Equitable Impact from Target Audience

Why do we say that researching existing services is only *arguably*, not *definitively*, the most important step? Until your idea has been vetted with the intended target audience to confirm it is a genuine need, and that your proposed approach is accessible to them, you do not yet know if you have a viable idea.



Following Christ's example and the tradition of The Episcopal Church, we partner with Episcopal communities in the Diocese of Atlanta by providing funding, leadership, and resources to enable Episcopalians to lift up people facing poverty and oppression and to achieve significant, long-lasting change in our communities.

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