



FAQ: MissionInsite's Decision to Change Demographic Vendors

Recently MissionInsite changed its primary demographics vendor. We are very excited about this new source of community demographic data. But changes always raise questions, so in anticipation, we have compiled a few specific questions and answers.

How does MissionInsite decide upon a demographics vendor?

MissionInsite is committed to making good demographic data available to the church at a reasonable cost. Four principles guide us as we evaluate all data resources in fulfilling that commitment.

- Quality of the data
- Flexibility of use and access
- Available data sets
- Price for the data

Quality of the data: There are only a few credible providers of census data updates in the US. We are aware of all of them and evaluate them for quality. MissionInsite's parent company is in the business of doing student enrollment projections, so it is sensitive to methodologies. In the estimation of the principals of both companies, of the major providers, their quality is comparable.

Flexibility of use and access: MissionInsite believes that the church is best served when good planning data is easily available at all levels of the church. When evaluating a vendor, we look for maximum flexibility in use so that we can freely configure our systems to deliver the data as broadly as possible. Some vendors put prohibitive restrictions on users and access. We do not believe this serves the need of the church. When seeking a vendor, we look for one that will grant us the greatest flexibility in providing services to our clients.

Available data sets: Ultimately, it is the data that our clients want. So the this principle looks carefully at the catalogue of data available from each vendor. All vendors will provide certain variables such as updates and 5 year projections of population, households, household income, racial/ethnicity, age, etc. It is in the additional data and the updating of additional data sets that the scrutiny is applied. Each vendor will focus on some similar variables and each will focus on some different ones. Trade-offs must be made. Our objective is to choose the vendor with the best overall data set that we believe addresses the kinds of questions for which church leaders need answers to support effective and faithful mission planning.

Price of the data: Affordability is critical to effective use of demographic data for church planning at any level. If the cost associated with obtaining the data becomes prohibitive, church leaders will not use it. We believe that is a mistake missionally. We try to keep our pricing in line with church agency reality. Some data vendors set pricing at a level that makes it prohibitive for the church or for a firm like MissionInsite to provide it data. This is exacerbated by inflexibility which seeks to charge by each user. Our objective in choosing a vendor is to obtain the best

price and greatest flexibility so that we can hold down costs for our clients while providing them the broadest access opportunities at the national, regional and local level.

Why did MissionInsite change its demographics vendor?

In the estimation of the principals of both DecisionInsite and MissionInsite, the vendor we had used for years no longer squared well with the four principles. On the quality front, of course they were very good. But on the other three principles, we simply found AGS/MOSAIC to conform better to our objectives.

How will the variable sets differ with the former vendor?

There will be some differences, though minor. But the really good news is the amount of new data that is already available and more is to come. AGS includes several consumer behavior data sets that will be very helpful to church leaders. Look for some of these new variables to be integrated over the next few months.

For example, there are a couple of data sets that provide information on contribution patterns to all sorts of church and charitable causes. And the data is updated every year! This is just one of many possibilities that we will be considering in the months ahead.

How will the change impact our contract?

There will be no change to your contract. Part of the reason we changed was to keep the price of the raw data down and thus hold the line on the price of the MI System and the data within it.

Where do we get information on the meaning of the data?

We are still in the process of totally re-working our reference documents. But for the most part they have been changed. Go to our website www.missioninsite.com/resources.shtml. Under Technical Support, open the MI Demographic Reference Guide for general demographic variable descriptions. Open the MI Demographic Segments (MOSAIC) for the all information on the MOSAIC segments and groups.