

Preparing for an Inclusive Community Assessment

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You can use a community assessment to gather, analyze, and report information about the needs of your community, as well as your community's capacity to address those needs. The assessment process begins with convening an inclusive group of local citizens, establishing a vision, and prioritizing the issues that require change. Being intentional about inclusion helps ensure that your community assessment includes professionals with expertise on local issues as well as stakeholders who will likely be affected by the changes you are planning. Visioning provides a focus for the assessment—a clear picture of what you want for the future of your community. You can then establish goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-framed (SMART) to organize strategies and actions that will lead to positive change. For more on goal setting, see the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's publications: "EAG-044 Implementing Community Goals Successfully" and "EAG-047 Translating Data or Survey Results into SMART Goals."

- ◆ **Why should you conduct a community assessment?**
 - To provide data for decision-making
 - To promote awareness
 - To take positive and informed action
 - To satisfy a mandate
- ◆ **What are characteristics of a successful community assessment?**
 - Facilitates understanding of the current situation

- Allows questions to drive the assessment process
- Addresses issues that stakeholders believe are important
- Defines a community vision statement for the future
- Communicates information back to stakeholders
- ◆ **What are questions to consider in a community assessment?**
 - Do we need to hire a technical consultant?
 - What do we know?
 - What do we still need to know?
 - How will we collect the additional information?
 - Who will we ask?
 - What will we ask?
 - Who will collect the data?
 - How will we compile, present, and analyze the data?
 - How will we report our findings?
- ◆ **What do we do after we finish the assessment?**
 - Process to support implementation efforts
 - Review of vision
 - Formulate statements of problems
 - Prioritize problems
 - Propose strategies and goals to address high-priority problems
 - Formulate a plan to implement actions for meeting goals

This brief draws on the 2007 East Texas Economic Development Summit Toolkit.

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