



KANSAS
COMMERCE

COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

*Designed for community leaders
to help build their community*



INTRODUCTION

Kansas Commerce's community self-assessment toolkit is a resource for community leaders to leverage their existing assets and identify opportunities for projects that can help build their community. With this information, communities can outline strategies and activities that align with Commerce's available grant opportunities.

This toolbox includes the following materials:

- Community Self-Assessment Tools:
 - » [Survey Instrument](#)
 - » [Facilitation Guide](#)
 - » [Asset Inventory](#)
- Community Engagement Meeting Tips
- Ideas for Building Community
- Community Action Plan Tips
- How to Engage Youth in Community Planning



COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The items below are templates that you can use to administer a community survey, facilitate a community meeting, and complete an asset inventory. Based on your community's needs and abilities, you can use one or multiple of the following tools to conduct your community self-assessment.

Each of these tools is a way to gather information from your community that will be used to develop your community action plan.

HOW TO CONDUCT A COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT

Step 1:

Pull together a core team of community leaders to spearhead the initiative

This can include elected officials, members of local community or civic groups, business owners, or interested community members.

Step 2:

Conduct a community self-assessment, using the included tools

The following tools, included in this toolkit, can help you conduct a self-assessment of your community. You can use any or all of the following tools to conduct your community self-assessment, based on your individual community's needs.

- **Community Survey:** A method of gathering information from a sample of community members to understand needs and opinions on areas of opportunity in the community.
- **Community Meeting:** A gathering of community stakeholders to discuss and address needs and ideas that can help inform grant applications and projects.
- **Asset Inventory:** A process of identifying various resources, strengths, and capabilities within your community to go after grant opportunities.

Step 3:

Develop a community action plan that outlines goals for your community over the next year or multiple years and targeted projects you want to work on

Using the information gathered through your community self-assessment, develop a community action plan. This plan can consist of goals for your community over the next year or multiple years, targeted projects that you think should be implemented, and types of grant funding you should pursue.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

This survey template is designed to help you gather valuable feedback and insights from your community. The questions provided serve as examples, and you are encouraged to modify or add questions to better suit the specific needs and concerns of your community.

To facilitate the collection of responses, consider using free and low-cost online platforms such as Google Forms ([google.com/forms](https://www.google.com/forms)) and Survey Monkey ([surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com)). These tools make it easy to distribute your survey and analyze the results, ensuring you can effectively engage with and understand your community.

The survey should be tailored to your community and could include information on ways to get involved. The responses should help you make the case for the project you are requesting funds for.

1. What is your age?

- ☐ 18-27 ☐ 28-43 ☐ 44-59 ☐ 60-69 ☐ 70-78 ☐ 79+

2. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other: _____ ☐ I prefer not to say

3. What do you believe are the biggest strengths of our community? What are you most proud of?

4. What places in our community need the most improvement?

- ☐ Downtown area ☐ Libraries ☐ Parks ☐ Schools
☐ Shopping areas ☐ Government buildings ☐ Other: _____

5. What are some small-scale projects that could help enhance our community?

- ☐ Main street beautification ☐ Signage ☐ Improvements to building facades ☐ Community garden
☐ Cleanups or trashcans ☐ Community branding effort ☐ Pedestrian lighting ☐ Benches
☐ Other: _____

6. Who are the community members who most need our attention and resources?

- ☐ Children ☐ Teenagers ☐ Parents ☐ Seniors ☐ Veterans
☐ Single parents ☐ Teachers ☐ Health workers (i.e., nurses, doctors, etc.) ☐ Law enforcement (i.e., police, firemen, etc.) ☐ Other: _____

7. What do you believe are the most significant needs in our community? Please select up to three.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of safe, sanitary housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare access | <input type="checkbox"/> Public transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blighted property that requires rehabilitation or demolition | <input type="checkbox"/> Income/wages | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreational infrastructure (parks, swimming pools, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broadband/internet access | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure – roads | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreational programming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare services | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure – water/sewer | <input type="checkbox"/> Upkeep/maintenance of public areas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Job training | <input type="checkbox"/> Upkeep/maintenance of buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elder care services | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health services | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

8. Are you interested in joining a group working to improve our community? If so, please provide your name and contact information.

9. Who else should be involved in projects to improve our community?

COMMUNITY MEETING FACILITATION GUIDE

Community meetings are one of the most effective ways to hear firsthand the needs of residents, build credibility, and establish meaningful connections.

The following facilitation guide can help you conduct an effective community meeting by outlining potential questions to ask to assess where your community is at, and where you should focus your efforts moving forward. We encourage you to modify and add questions to better suit the specific needs and concerns of your community.

For more details and tips on how to conduct an effective community meeting, view Commerce's [How to Conduct an Effective Community Meeting](#) resource, included in the community self-assessment toolkit.

WELCOME AND MEETING OBJECTIVE

It's important to open your meeting with the facilitator introducing themselves, welcoming participants, and thanking everyone for attending. You should outline the objectives and the purpose of the meeting, provide context where needed, communicate expectations, and outline next steps/outcomes from the meeting.

Ground Rules and Expectations

Setting the ground rules for your meeting at the beginning can be a helpful way of ensuring you receive the outcome you desire out of your meeting and ensure the meeting stays on track.

Introductions

Depending on the attendance size, you can go around and ask for your attendees to introduce themselves and the organization that they represent (if any). This can help break the ice and produce a more productive conversation.

FACILITATION QUESTIONS

The following questions can help guide a productive discussion. We encourage you to modify or expand on these questions to tailor to your community.

Community Strengths

- What, in your opinion, is the most important part of our community?
- What existing community assets, resources, or programs do you think are working well?
- What are the unique cultural or historical features that make our community special?

Community Needs

- What are the biggest challenges or unmet needs in our community?
- What issues or problems do you think need the most attention or improvement?
- What barriers are currently holding our community back?

Opportunities

- If our community received a grant to fund a new small-scale project, what type of project would you most want to see implemented?
- What are some small-scale projects that could help enhance our community?

CLOSING

To close the session, thank everyone again for their time, and make sure to reiterate the next steps from the meeting. It's helpful to communicate actions that will take place following the meetings, as well as offer a point of contact for follow-up questions.

ASSET INVENTORY

The following asset inventory can be completed by your core team of community leaders to understand and map out the assets in your community that can be leveraged for grant applications and potential projects. This inventory can be conducted by circulating a shared document, through a meeting, or by survey.

PLACES

Small-scale projects that enhance the quality of life for residents can result in meaningful impact in rural communities. Using the following questions, think through the places that are not only unique, but significant to your community's identity.

- Where is the place that is most representative of our community's identity?
- What spaces in our community best reflect our collective identity?
- Where are the places in our community that we bring our visitors to experience the best that we offer?

PARTNERSHIPS

Successful and sustainable community building efforts are driven by the collaboration of community leaders, elected officials, nonprofits, small businesses, and other stakeholders in the community – but most importantly those efforts are typically driven by people who love their community. Using the following questions, identify the stakeholders and partners in your community that can help you achieve your goals.

- Who are the partners involved in our small-scale and large-scale community projects?
- Who are our community champions or changemakers?
- Who are the individuals that are effective spokespersons for our community, find funding opportunities, and push for new projects?
- What organizations are the glue of our community?
- Who can be involved in this initiative as a partner, sponsor, or volunteer?

STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

You don't have to start from scratch when it comes to community placemaking. Leveraging the strengths and assets already in place can be a great place to start for small-scale community building projects.

- What are the best things about our community?
- What are elements of our community that we want to preserve and maintain?
- What are some small-scale projects that could help enhance our community?

TIMELINE

When developing your goals, consider the following questions to assess a realistic timeline:

- What are specific activities that can be completed within one year?
- When do we want to have our goals accomplished?

OPPORTUNITIES

Based on your answers to the questions above, identify your opportunities:

- What are the gaps that we need to fill?
- What impact could we have, even with a small-scale effort?



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



SURVEY FLYER TEMPLATE

You can maximize survey participation by displaying flyers in community locations such as coffee shops, grocery stores, or community centers. This template provides essential elements for an effective survey flyer, including:

- How to access the survey, whether digitally, physically, or both
- A clear, reasonable deadline to complete the survey that works for your community
- An explanation for what the responses to the survey are being used for

HOW TO CREATE A QR CODE FOR YOUR SURVEY

QR codes are an easy, convenient way to share your survey online. Follow the below steps to create your own:

1. Create your survey using Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, or similar platform
2. Copy the survey's public URL
3. Visit a free QR code generator such as bitly.com or qr-code-generator.com
4. Paste your survey URL into the generator
5. Download QR code in high resolution to include on your flyer design

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU, [COMMUNITY NAME]!

We want to hear your thoughts and ideas for improving our community. We're asking [community] residents to complete this **brief, 10-minute, anonymous survey** about what they'd like to see in our community in the future. Responses will be used to help inform grant applications and future community projects.

WHY PARTICIPATE?



Help shape the future of our community



Share your ideas for specific projects that can improve our community



Make your voice heard

HOW DO I COMPLETE THE SURVEY?



Digital:

Scan the QR code below or visit [survey URL]



Paper:

Pick up/return a hard copy survey at [location]

SURVEY CLOSES: [DATE]

*Thank you for your participation
in this important effort!*



YOUR LOGO

For questions, please contact [email/phone].

More information about this survey and effort can be found [insert URL].



IDEAS FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

NEED SOME INSPIRATION?

Here are a few creative, small ways that can enhance your community that align with Commerce's Towns Grant:



Façade improvements on valuable buildings

- Planters and plants
- Signage
- Paint improvements



Banners, murals, or signs that feature history or foster community pride



Create a **"little free library"** and double it as signage, letting people know where they're at in your community



Commission local artists to decorate trash receptacles or paint a mural



Creatively light up your community with **string lights** or **lanterns**



Conduct a cleanup of a problem area



Beautify an area with plantings of **trees, flowers, or vegetable gardens**



Transform an underutilized space by activating it with creative displays



Place **spotlights on community buildings** such as libraries, city halls, and theaters



Create a community sign initiative speaking to the community's history and creating your community's own personalized branding



Create an **opportunity prompt** in a public space

- "Before I die, I want to..."

HOW TO CONDUCT A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING

To host an effective meeting, it's important to think about the objectives, the flow, and the anticipated outcomes for the meeting:

Determine the purpose of the meeting

- What are the main objectives of the meeting?
- What is the agenda for the meeting?
- What do you want to take away from the meeting?
- What are the next steps following the meeting?

The answers to these questions will be important to communicate to the attendees both prior to the meeting, during the meeting, and following the meeting.

Ensure that you have the right people in the room to contribute to a productive conversation

If your goal is to understand more about what the needs of your community are and what types of projects your community should pursue, make sure you have a diverse group of stakeholders in the room ranging from small business owners, young professionals, and non-profit leaders to local government leaders, education leaders, healthcare providers, and more.

Let everyone introduce themselves when the meeting starts to build the collaborative spirit.

Make sure to spread the word about the event through communication channels such as email, social media, local media, flyers, or signage in public places.

Select the appropriate time for the meeting to maximize participation

For most working professionals, a meeting during the workday might be difficult to attend. Be strategic when you are holding your meeting to ensure you are maximizing your target participants.

Identify the meeting facilitator

It's important to identify beforehand who can lead and facilitate the discussion, and ensure the facilitator listens with a neutral stance to invite ideas from all attendees without offering their own opinions, as well as having someone available who can answer questions on upcoming projects or plans, if applicable.

Give attendees the opportunity to provide feedback following the meeting

Recognizing that some participants may not want to speak during the meeting, it's always good to provide an opportunity for attendees to give feedback following the meeting, whether that's through comment cards, an online form, or a contact email.

OTHER FAQs:

Q: Where should I host?

A: Public venue that allows for a good number of people. Not too large, not too small.

Some ideas for meeting spaces could include:

- Public libraries
- Local cafés or community centers
- Local municipality buildings

Q: Should I provide refreshments?

A: It's always a nice gesture to provide refreshments, especially if your event is during a mealtime. Consider providing pastries or snacks from a local coffee shop, bakery, or restaurant to support your community. Sometimes local businesses offer to donate refreshments if they know the purpose of the meeting.

Q: Do I need a presentation?

A: If there are existing plans and ideas that would be helpful to discuss, a presentation could invite productive discussion. If you are starting from scratch, prompt questions from the Community Self-Assessment Facilitation Guide can help generate ideas and discussion.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

The following worksheet is intended to help your community develop a realistic community action plan that drives meaningful change and ultimately helps you craft a successful grant application.

A well-crafted action plan can serve as a roadmap for leveraging your community's unique assets and mobilizing key stakeholders to secure grant funding and execute projects.



Define a clear scope and prioritize your focus areas

- Based on the feedback from the community assessment tools, identify the area of your community you aim to impact
- What is the opportunity, challenge, issue, need, or problem that you want to address?
- Prioritize 2-3 key focus areas or challenges you want to address



Set measurable goals

- Establish SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) goals
- Determine both short-term and long-term goals
- Determine success metrics that indicate your project has accomplished your goals



Identify your assets and partners

- Using your community self-assessment, outline and inventory your existing community assets and stakeholders
- Determine what partners can contribute their time and funding to move your goals forward
- Who in the community will you work with?



Create an implementation timeline

- Assign a target timeline for completion of your project(s)
- Think through different milestones that need to be indicated in your timeline
- Denote a champion or entity responsible for carrying out each activity and establish clear deadlines



Secure necessary funding and resources

- Depending on the needs of your project or the requirements of the grant opportunity you're pursuing, identify the resources and funding you may need, and establish a plan for securing those resources

PROJECT PLAN FORM

For each project, action, or activity identified in your community action plan, outline the following:

[illegible]

HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR YOUTH IN COMMUNITY PLANNING

Engaging young voices in your community offers valuable insights into its strengths and potential for growth. Their perspective can highlight positive aspects that can be built upon, while their involvement fosters a sense of belonging and ownership. By including youth in community discussions and initiatives, you not only gain a fresh outlook but also empower the next generation of local leaders.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING YOUTH



Offer creative volunteer work

- Organize community art projects to beautify public spaces
- Create social media campaigns to increase community pride
- Develop youth-led community gardens



Implement a mentorship program

- Pair youth with local professionals or community leaders
- Offer both one-on-one and group mentoring opportunities



Minimize barriers by keeping language simple

- Use clear, jargon-free communication on community outreach materials
- Use visuals and infographics to make outreach materials engaging for younger audiences



Create a youth council

- Establish a diverse youth council that has a voice in local government decisions
- Host consistent planning meetings where members can brainstorm



Host interactive community action planning events, such as using the below spaces to places workshop template

- Use the provided spaces to places workshop to conduct an interactive workshop with students
- Host collaborative, interactive events that young people can attend to offer insight



Collaborate with the school system to offer school credit for community engagement

- Develop service-learning projects tied to curriculum
- Create internship programs with local organizations
- Invite community leaders to speak at schools



Leverage technology and social media

- Use popular social media platforms to share opportunities and gather input
- Host virtual town halls or Q&A sessions with local leaders



Provide leadership development opportunities

- Offer workshops on public speaking and community engagement
- Support youth-led initiatives with resources and guidance

YOUTH WORKSHOP TEMPLATE

A creative way to engage your youth in community planning is to conduct a placemaking workshop with high school students. This workshop can help gauge the things in your community that help create a sense of place, as well as ideas for things to implement that would appeal to your younger population. You can tailor the following questions and exercises to your specific community.

Exercise 1:

QUESTIONNAIRE

- What do you like about [community name]?
- What do you dislike about [community name]?
- Where do you hang out with your friends?
- What places make [community name] home?

Exercise 2:

DREAM COMMUNITY

In small groups, ask the students to draw or write out the main features of your community, then create a new map or list of a DREAM community, using the following prompts:

- What places would you keep in your dream [community name]?
- What places are in your dream [community name]?
- What do you want to see downtown?
- What events do you go to in [community name]?
- What events do you want to go to in [community name]?
- What volunteering do you participate in?
- What other volunteering would you do?
- How should we reach out to students to get their input on community needs?

Exercise 3:

PROJECT IDEAS

Ask students to come up with project ideas for budgets of \$5,000, \$500,000, and infinite funding, and write on individual post-it notes.

Note: Make sure to provide realistic examples for the students for each budget level.



GRANTS AT A GLANCE

Kansas Commerce's Grants at a Glance resource provides an overview of annual funding opportunities offered by Commerce. This frequently updated guide includes key information for each grant, such as:

- Maximum award amount
- Match requirement
- Funding timeline
- Commerce contact

Find the Grants at a Glance resource on the Commerce website at kansascommerce.gov/grantscalendar/

A photograph of a woman with short, curly grey hair and glasses, wearing a white blazer over a patterned top. She is gesturing with her right hand while speaking. In the background, another woman with dark hair is visible, looking towards the speaker. The image has a dark blue overlay.

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