

PROJECT PARTNERS

University of Idaho
Idaho Rural Partnership
Montana State University
Montana Economic Developers Association
University of Wyoming
Wyoming Business Council

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PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Community Reviews bring community members and leaders together with experts in rural community and economic development to identify local priorities and resources to achieve them. A phased approach provides a step-by-step process and tailored support that can help move communities from assessment to action to results.

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IMPROVING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS
in Idaho, Montana, & Wyoming

INSIDE: How community partners can participate, contribute, and benefit

About the project

Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming Community Reviews are comprehensive assessment programs that provide information and tools to help communities address priority issues and enhance quality of life for their residents.

We are looking for community partners in a three-year USDA-funded collaboration to understand, evaluate, and improve how these assessments work. Led by University of Idaho, research and extension faculty at three universities and delivery organizations in each state are learning and working together with the aim of helping participating communities see greater success in achieving their goals.

This collaborative project focuses equally on research and on program development and support. The assessment delivery organizations and their partner universities are marrying the best of on-the-ground knowledge and experience with research-based understanding of community and economic development.

From July 2017 through June 2020, the project team will complete more than a dozen reviews. They will incorporate new components and strategies aimed at boosting community engagement, deliberation, and program follow-up. Thorough evaluation will help identify the most critical and efficient means to engage communities in assessments and support them in taking action.

Expected project outcomes

- ◆ Increase assessments' potential to produce positive, lasting community outcomes
- ◆ Create a resource database and multi-functional website for delivery organizations and communities
- ◆ Develop evaluation strategies that communities can use over time

Review process

A **phased assessment approach** allows each community to receive an assessment program and related services that are tailored to its needs. From the outset, a broad-based team from the community works with the assessment delivery organization to determine how an assessment can best help the community make progress and to plan and implement the assessment and follow up.

Each review is different, but common elements include:

- ◆ Focused data gathering about the community including surveys to identify priority issues
- ◆ Focus group interviews and open houses to gain community input
- ◆ Community readiness assessments
- ◆ Tailored teams of experts who understand and can support the community's priorities
- ◆ Strategies to engage residents and leaders in assessment, learning, and action
- ◆ Written reports and in-person feedback, including specific recommendations and resources
- ◆ Post-review coaching and technical assistance
- ◆ Support for leadership development, visioning, and planning processes
- ◆ Small grants for follow-up action



What's in it for your community?

This process is designed to support communities in identifying priority issues, marshalling resources, and taking action that makes a difference. Benefits include:

- ◆ Assessing needs, assets, and resources
- ◆ Engaging and mobilizing community members
- ◆ Developing stronger relationships and lines of communication
- ◆ Augmenting planning processes and securing grants and other resources
- ◆ Aligning action with community priorities in a road map for improvement
- ◆ Continuity between leadership changes
- ◆ Improving intergovernmental coordination and private/public cooperation
- ◆ Engaging ongoing technical support
- ◆ Leadership development and increased capacity for deliberation, decision-making, and action

Community selection

At least three new communities in each state will be selected to participate in all phases of the assessment program, mini-grants, and other follow-up activities.

Ten communities in each state that have already done a community assessment will be selected to participate in a follow-up survey and/or participatory evaluation processes. These communities are eligible for a project mini-grant.

Interested? Questions?

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