

ONE COMMUNITY— MANY GENERATIONS

CREATING MORE LIVABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES
BY ENGAGING RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS



PennState Extension

Support provided by AARP.



The Penn State Extension and AARP Grant Guidebook Outline

Welcome/Introduction

Welcome!

Many communities would like to engage citizens in the planning process but do not have the knowledge, staffing, or expertise to develop assessments and capture information for use in the decision-making process. Through a grant partnership with AARP, Penn State Extension developed an intergenerational community engagement guide and online community assessment tool. The assessment tool aims to improve livability in a community through intergenerational exchange and feedback capture. Communities can utilize this guide and assessment tool to gather feedback from residents about walking routes, transportation, economic issues, placemaking, infrastructure, community livability, and more. The feedback can then be used to develop action plans that address issues that residents identify as important.

Through this process communities will:

- Engage a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Conduct community outreach and participant recruitment by targeting community leaders and age-diverse volunteers.
- Gather feedback from residents on 11 indicators of community livability and inclusion:
 - Quality of Place
 - Diversity and Inclusion
 - Business and Economy
 - Housing
 - Community Services
 - Transportation
- Facilitate intergenerational conversations and community study activities aimed at developing action plans for potential development.
- Prepare community leaders for decision-making and action planning.
- Better understand the value of inclusive planning and ways to create intergenerational interaction.

Steps to Get Started

1. Create a Coordinated Community Committee (Suggested 18 stakeholders)

This committee will act as the project driver and assist with recruiting survey participants, marketing the community assessment event, and utilizing the information collected in the survey to develop action plans for the community. The committee will also define the area of the community to be assessed and develop a map that participants can refer to when completing the Community Assessment Survey.

- Forming the committee: The more diverse the members of the committee (in terms of individual characteristics and the organizations they represent), the more likely this community participation process will tap into diverse voices and ideas for community improvement.
- Checklist for forming the committee:
 - ☐ Mixed ages from youth to older adulthood
 - ☐ From various geographical areas
 - ☐ Community volunteers
 - ☐ Tourism/visitors bureaus
 - ☐ Local government officials
 - ☐ Entrepreneurs
 - ☐ Community nonprofits
 - ☐ Planning/zoning representatives
 - ☐ Religious organization representatives
 - ☐ Arts council representatives
 - ☐ Ethnic groups/LGBTQ
 - ☐ Community groups such as multicultural groups, 4-H, Boys and Girls Club, Area Agencies on Aging, senior centers, YMCA, and Block Associations

2. Kick-Off Stakeholder Event (Suggested 18 stakeholders)

Invite a variety of Coordinated Community Committee stakeholders identified in the list above to the kick-off event. At the event, review the process, explain the rationale about intergenerational community engagement, and answer questions (slide deck available). This event can be online or face to face and should take about 1.5 hours.

- Provide an overview of the program objectives.
- Discuss the benefits of intergenerational approaches to local planning.
- Discuss who should be involved in using the assessment tool.
- Describe the topics covered by the assessment tool.
- Share the area of the community that will be toured and explain the remaining events.

3. Community Assessment Event

(Suggested 30 participants)

Organize a community assessment event where the community is invited to walk or drive around the designated area and use the assessment survey to provide input.

- Invite participants from the kick-off event and ask them to bring one or two guests to the engagement event.
- Community members are given a map of the area they will be touring by walking, driving, or both. The map should include and label four entrances to the community.
- While following the map, participants will complete an extensive survey about their views on many facets of community life (this survey is labeled the “assessment survey”).
- The survey can be filled out online using a smart device (preferred) or on paper with data entered later. We highly recommend the online version.
- The information obtained from these surveys represents how individuals see their community. This refers to the “My Community” circle noted in the graphic below.
- Consider participant incentives to encourage participation.
- To receive the greatest amount of feedback, promote the tool and the event using social media pages or newspapers for greater participation throughout the community.
- If feasible, set up a small exhibit space for participants to view and provide feedback (written or verbal) on existing plans for the community.
- Materials needed for the event:
 - ☐ Link to online assessment and paper copies of the survey
 - ☐ Maps and instruction sheet
 - ☐ Information about municipal plans for some community sites, such as architectural renderings of future projects

4. Community Action Forum

(Suggested same 30 participants from the engagement event)

Survey results are shared at a convening of the Coordinated Community Committee stakeholders, community members who filled out the survey during the community assessment event, and other community members. The community action forum should last about three hours. At the event, the facilitator(s) will review the results of the survey data collected and lead participants through a conversation to identify top priorities and outline a plan of action to address the top concern(s).

- Pose intergenerational framing questions for conversations related to results (record discussion results for greater feedback).
 - What are the three most prevalent community perceptions and concerns noted by survey respondents for each age group (under 18 years old, 18–32, 33–48, 49–65, 66 years and older)?
 - What are some of the major differences in the community perceptions and concerns noted by residents in each of these age groups?
 - What are some of the similarities in the community perceptions and concerns noted by residents in each of these age groups?

- What might an “intergenerational garden” look like? [Hint: An intergenerational space is designed to (1) provide access for a generationally diverse population, and (2) enable and encourage intergenerational interaction and joint activity.]
- What might an intergenerational park look like?
- What are some of the advantages of intergenerational spaces?
- What are some ideas you have for creating intergenerational spaces?
- Facilitate discussion of survey results to see how different generations perceive their community.
- Prioritize projects with exercises utilizing a whiteboard, flipcharts, or online software.
- Introduce ways to develop a priority action plan. Stakeholders will collaborate to develop action plans for community enhancement.
 - Link and leverage assets to create new opportunities.
 - Convert high-priority opportunities into measurable outcomes.
 - Define pathfinder projects that move toward desired outcomes.

The graphic below should help participants see how all of the steps of “One Community—Many Generations” fit together



This process progresses from “here are my perceptions” of the community, to “here are many residents’ perceptions,” to “what are the similarities and differences between our perceptions,” to “what could we work on together” to improve our community, to “let’s get started.”

Results may be viewed in three different ways:

1. How each generation views the community (“My Community”).
2. As a side-by-side illustration of how residents of different generations view their community. This will help participants see some of the main similarities and differences in how various generations view the community. In other words, this is a way for participants to compare the views of “My [Generations] Community” and “Your [Generations] Community.”
3. The meeting facilitator(s) should guide participants through a process of identifying prevalent similarities in the views of different generations. These items are listed as views about “Our Community” and represents the intersection between how people view “My Community” and “Your Community.”

From this “Our Community” list, the facilitator(s) guide participants through a process of brainstorming possible community improvement projects.

For more information, contact Penn State Extension
One Community—Many Generations educators
at CommVitality@psu.edu.

RESOURCES

AARP materials: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/>

Choosing Our Direction: A Primer on Strategic Planning and Visioning:
<https://extension.psu.edu/choosing-our-direction-a-primer-on-strategic-planning-and-visioning>

Community Planning/Visioning Activities: <https://aese.psu.edu/outreach/intergenerational/program-areas/community-planning-visioning>

Hi Tech and Low Tech Ways to Engage Socially Isolated Older Adults:
<https://aese.psu.edu/outreach/intergenerational/program-areas/technology/hi-tech-and-low-tech-ways-to-engage-isolated-older-adults>

Intergenerational Activities Sourcebook: <https://aese.psu.edu/outreach/intergenerational/curricula-and-activities/intergenerational-activities-sourcebook>

Pennsylvania County Profiles (2019): <https://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/publications/2019-county-profile-reports>



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