



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Step 4b: Civic Capacity Index

What it measures. The Civic Capacity Index (CCI) measures a community's ability to collectively respond to shared, complex social challenges in cooperative, equitable, and democratic ways. The CCI helps shape and evaluate local community development and intervention strategies such as civic leadership training programs, needs assessment, capacity building initiatives, problem solving, and technical assistance. This is often referred to as a community's ability for community-driven change. The CCI is looking out how community members and decision makers learn, plan, and act together when responding to complex challenges. In short, the Civic Capacity Index is designed to assess and help transform civic culture.

The CCI is especially useful to help communities assess their collective capacity to respond to current and future challenges and to create a deeper understanding of why some communities respond more effectively to challenges than others. Simply put, it taps into key features of community resilience. For a needs assessment, it will generate a profile for a group or the community based on seven features of community-driven change. These include collaborative leadership, organic coalitions, confronting racism and injustice, purposeful collaboration, social capital, and trust/cohesion. (See sample items at the end of this document.)

How to use it. The CCI should be distributed to your key informants after the interview. If FLTI is offered in your community, consider distributing the CCI to graduates of the program. It will be available through Qualtrics.

A brief measure of community resilience will be incorporated into the CCI so that you can diagnose why community resilience might be low and what to do about it. For instance, if there is little cohesion and social capital—neighbors or youth banding together for a common purpose—then involving families in 4-H or similar programs might be an effective response. If respondents indicate that they have limited access to the decision-making process because they are from a minority or low-income group, then launching an FLTI program would be a potential solution. When programs are implemented to develop social capital, civic leadership, equity and inclusion, or other aspects of civic capacity, the CCI can be used as a pretest and posttest to assess progress in meeting objectives. Community-specific profiles from the CCI and resilience measure will be generated along with interpretation of the findings and suggestions for actions going forward. These reports may provide some guidance as to which issues to include on the CNA survey to probe needs more broadly.

Sample CCI Items

Collective Leadership

There are many people exercising leadership, some with positions of authority, many without.

Confronting Racism and Injustice

The community works openly to address past racial issues and injustice.

Institutional Synergy

Government agencies engage with the public on an ongoing basis to inform, consult, involve, and collaborate.

Engaging Civic Culture

There is a widespread attitude of resilience, prosperity, and hopefulness based on common values, vision, or civic culture.

Organic Coalitions

Coalitions learn from each other and from past efforts about what works and doesn't work.

Purposeful Collaboration

Authentic processes are in place that create commitment and confidence, with people feeling that they are respected and valued.

Learning Together

Stakeholders have the knowledge and skills to constructively engage with each other and collectively move to action.