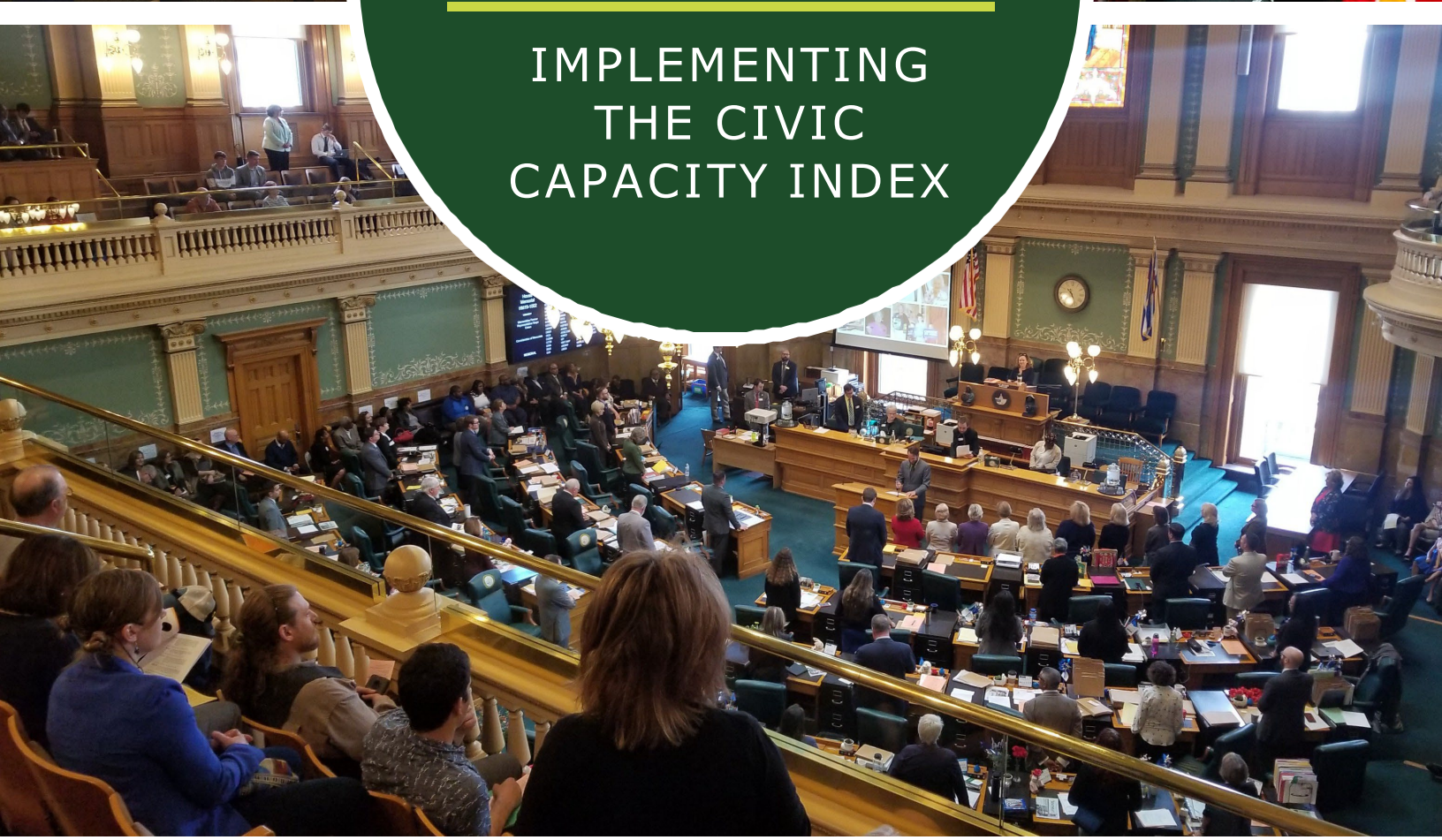


**ENGAGEMENT
AND EXTENSION**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

**IMPLEMENTING
THE CIVIC
CAPACITY INDEX**



A FIVE-STEP GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES



Five Steps To Implement the Civic Capacity Index

1

RECRUIT PARTNERS

Engage in local partnerships to support already existing community efforts



IDENTIFY AUDIENCE

Target individuals with a general sense of the civic system and community change process

2

3

SEND COMMUNICATIONS

Send information at multiple points to partners and respondents -- pre-survey, survey, survey reminder, results



HOST COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Feedback from diverse stakeholders and build collective understanding & action planning

4

5

EXPERIMENT & INTERVENE

Community Leadership Team identifies strategies for use over 2-3 years to grow community assets



Community Driven Change and Civic Capacity



Over the past two decades, there has been a distinct shift in thinking about where the impetus for adaptation and change should come from in neighborhoods, communities, and regions. Perhaps recognizing the limitations of top-down, externally-driven approaches, foundations, governments, and other civic actors now encourage and support community-driven responses to adaptive challenges such as health, education, housing, policing, and other public crises.

Three premises inform this thinking about community-driven change:



It is more effective in making lasting progress



It is more inclusive and egalitarian, therefore more democratic



Communities with the capacity for community-driven change are observably more resilient and responsive to disruptions and challenges

At its heart, community-driven change can be defined in terms of shared power between decision makers and community members, multiple perspectives on issues, strong participation from diverse people, a focus on equitable outcomes, and decision-making processes that are equitable, authentic, and transparent.



The Civic Capacity Index

The Civic Capacity Index is a research based measure of a community's civic capacity to respond to challenges and disruptions like the coronavirus. To create the CCI, we convened a panel of 34 experts from the U.S. and Canada with conceptual and experiential expertise related to civic capacity in terms of civic engagement, civic leadership development, and community building. We began with the question: Based on your experience and knowledge, what would you see (in communities) if community-driven change is occurring? We worked with the panel to connect and consolidate their knowledge and experience using a concept mapping process. We engaged the panel in brainstorming, sorting, clustering, analyzing, and mapping their responses to create a synthesis. In social science research terms, we were discovering the attributes of community-driven change, a critical aspect of theory-building. Ultimately, the panel identified 52 characteristics or descriptors of community-driven change and civic capacity.

The resulting items represent more than simply identifiable characteristics that can be measured in terms of presence or not; they provide benchmarks about what you would see if community-driven change is occurring. This allows the CCI to be used to assess the relative presence of these characteristics, the crucial value of the instrument. The CCI asks respondents to assess whether and to what extent these characteristics are present in their communities.

As a result of this work, we have a broadly shared conception of civic capacity, its domains, and what it entails in practice. Communities and regions with a high capacity for community-driven change are characterized by:

- a collective and pervasive capacity to exercise leadership for the common good from any part of the community or region;
- a willingness to confront overarching issues such as racism, discrimination, and social injustice that prevent real progress on other, substantive challenges;
- the commitment and support of authority figures and institutions for constructive civic engagement;
- a default civic culture that encourages civic engagement and the organic creation of coalitions that can work, learn, and act together in pursuit of the common good.

Through this study, we began to understand civic capacity as the collective capacity of a social system – neighborhoods, communities, regions – to respond to challenges and disruptions. Progress emerges from the interplay of these domains in particular situations on specific challenges. Civic capacity ebbs and flows manifesting differently in different times, situations, places, and on different issues. Each dimension represents a necessary but not sufficient aspect of civic capacity. The whole is greater than the parts. No community can deploy all of these qualities in every situation, though some can do so better than others. With knowledge of this concept and data from the CCI, civic actors can take advantage of existing civic capacity to make more progress on shared concerns, understand where it is lacking, and build resilience for the future.

STEP 1



RECRUIT LOCAL PARTNERS PRIOR TO LAUNCHING THE CIVIC CAPACITY INDEX

The Civic Capacity Index (CCI) will provide communities with important data on topics such as how effectively stakeholders collaborate and to what extent local civic culture is viewed as inclusive. CCI data supports communities' ability to have deeper conversations about how to build on their strengths to build their collective civic capacity.



Ideally, the use of this tool will be coordinated in partnership with local partners and in support of broader community efforts.

The tool should not drive the effort, the tool supports the effort.

Who do I partner with?

A cross-section of community sectors: neighborhood representatives, advocacy organizations, nonprofit staff, etc.

What do we focus on?

Dialogues about trust, connectedness among residents, community needs and goals, cultural contexts.

STEP 2



IDENTIFY YOUR CCI AUDIENCE

After you have identified some key stakeholders to co-lead your effort, the next important step is to identify potential respondents to take the CCI survey. It is important to note that the CCI survey is not meant to be taken by the whole community.

You should target identifying and collecting contact information for individuals who have a general sense of the civic or political systems and how community change happens. This awareness is important because individuals completing the CCI survey will be asked to provide an assessment of the current system. However, CCI respondents do not have to have a formal leadership role. Some potential groups and individuals to think about when recruiting are:

- Graduates of leadership programs
- Interfaith networks
- Civic leagues and clubs
 - League of Women Voters
 - Rotary Club
- Chambers of Commerce
- Elected officials
 - Municipal, County, State
 - Special districts, e.g. school board, utilities commissions
- Nonprofit leadership collaborations

STEP 3



DESIGN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Talking about this effort and communicating with your partners and community members is important. Planning for when you will send out information and reminders will keep everyone informed about where you are in the process and the overall goal of the effort. Here are some potential communication guidelines to follow:



Pre-CCI Communications

Send an email to the list of contacts identified letting them know about the effort and that they will be getting an invitation to fill out the survey soon.

CCI Survey Communication

Send emails with the survey link, once again explaining the purpose and planned use of the survey. Be sure to include the following:

- A deadline for completing the survey
- Contact information for the person to reach out to if respondents have questions, problems filling out the survey, and/or to indicate they would like to have a digital report sent to them when the report is completed.

Allow 2-4 weeks for individuals on your list to fill out the survey. Invite individuals to share the survey link with any other individuals that could provide information.

CCI Reminder Communication

One week before you plan to close the survey, send a reminder asking people to fill out the survey and reminding them about how the collected survey information will be used.

Initial Results Report Communication

This step occurs after you have closed the survey and received your CCI report. Follow-up with your partners (and interested survey respondents) with the initial report and an invitation to plan or participate in a community-wide conversation about the report results.

STEP 4



HOST A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

The CCI Report provides a limited, big picture overview that is a starting place for understanding your civic capacity. However, by utilizing the CCI report to start a community conversation, it allows various groups and members to build a collective understanding of why scores might be lower in one or more of the six domains. The details provided in community conversations can help identify areas to focus resources on in order to grow models of effective collaboration and shared leadership.

The CCI Report is limited in the detail it can provide you about your civic capacity. It is a way to start a community conversation that allows various groups and members to build a collective understanding of why scores might be lower in one or more of the six domains. It is from the community conversation that communities can then identify areas to focus resources on to grow how effective collaboration and shared leadership models.

Aspects of the Community Conversation to Consider

- Make sure to include facilitators that represent various stakeholders involved, especially those that represent historically under-resourced groups
- Make sure that next steps are clear to those involved in the conversation
- Consider hosting more than one conversation to include individuals that may not feel “safe” or welcomed to a larger community dialogue

STEP 5



INTERVENTION

After diagnosing some of the challenges to a strong civic capacity in the community, identify partners and resources to support growing the community’s assets in those domains.

Utilizing your community leadership team, identify strategies that will be employed over the next 2-3 years to grow community-led efforts, then consider utilizing the civic capacity index again at the end of that 2-3 year effort to measure your growth.



Why is Civic Capacity Important?

CIVIC CAPACITY AND COVID-19 RESILIENCE



Colorado communities that scored higher on domains of community-driven leadership, as measured by the CCI, had better COVID-19 outcomes.

- Communities with higher levels of leadership, inclusion, social cohesion, and community resilience had lower death rates.
- Communities with higher levels of social control, social cohesion, and community resilience had lower COVID-19 case rates.

»» *"Civic Capacity describes a community's capacity for collective action to solve local problems...it goes beyond coping with a crisis like the coronavirus and returning to the status quo. It is a dynamic process of reinvention and transformation from within the community."*

The Civic Capacity Index: A Tool for Community Transformation



Assess collective capacity to respond to change & challenge



Diagnose and design authentic, inclusive collaborative processes



Frame leadership development to build social cohesion, community well-being, and collective efficacy



Evaluate impact of current civic initiatives



Framework for community-driven change & resilience

Sample Community Conversation Agenda

Process	Time and Speaker	Time of Day
Welcome	5 Minutes	10:15 AM
Connections Before Content	10 Minutes	10:15 – 10:25 AM
Framing	15 Minutes	10:25 – 10:40 AM
Assets	15 Minutes	10:40 – 10:55 AM
Potential Opportunities	15 Minutes	10:55 – 11:10 AM
Small Group Breakouts	30 minutes Identify what opportunities the group would like to consider for taking action on. Group should identify at least 3 opportunities to consider. (No more than 4 are recommended.)	11:10 – 11:40 PM
Large Group Report Outs	10 Minutes	11:40 – 11:50 PM
Action Plan & Next Steps	10 Minutes	11:50 – 12:00 PM

Sample Dialogue

Reflecting on Results

Following a review of community CCI results, have community members consider the following:

- What do you find noteworthy or surprising about these results?
- What are your community's strengths in each of the domains? Weaknesses?
- What are specific areas that you believe will need attention in order to enhance your community's civic capacity to make progress on shared concerns?

Enhancing Civic Capacity

Following a conversation on results, shift conversation on how to mobilize existing civic capacity for community change. Consider the following:

- What is the work that needs to be done to build civic capacity in your community? What does your community need to do to take advantage of existing civic capacity and build it where it is lacking?
- Based on this assessment so far, what are the central priorities for enhancing your community's civic capacity?
- Extending this assessment process, when you think about the future of your community, what concerns you the most?
- What makes progress difficult on these concerns?
- In what ways does the civic culture of your community help or hinder making progress on these concerns?
- In what ways does your existing civic capacity help address these concerns?
- What aspects of civic capacity will you need to develop to make more progress on these concerns?

REIMAGINING COMMUNITY CHANGE



	Top-Down/Externally Driven (Doing For)	Community Driven (Doing From Within)
Who Does the Work	Organizations & Agencies	Neighborhoods, Communities, & Regions
Nature of the Process	Decide & Announce	Agenda Setting, Problem-Solving & Consensus Building
Who Organizes & Energizes Process	People with Authority & Influence (Content Experts)	Many People Exercising Leadership (Content & Context Experts)
Key Leadership Tasks	Marshal Expertise & Influence	Convene, Catalyze, & Facilitate

GIVING VOICE TEETH



"There is a difference between having a voice and having a voice with teeth, which means that you are the voice-active. So in voice with teeth, an authority is going to respect your preference, and act upon that instead of saying: 'Nice, but we cannot do it.'" - Walter Flores, Executive Director Center for the Study of Equity and Governance in Health Systems, Guatemala

How do you **INVITE** diverse community voices?

How do you **LISTEN** to the voices?

To what extent do community voices **INFLUENCE** policy, programs, and procedures?

How does community voice get to **EXERCISE** leadership?





**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**