

# **Community and Economic Development Readiness Assessment**

## **Guidebook**

### **Acknowledgments**

The Oregon Economic and Community Development Department (OECDD) has developed this guidebook and readiness assessment tool to help communities assess their business and community development capacity and to identify next steps in achieving their development goals. It attempts to condense much of the significant strategic thinking that has been conducted in the State of Oregon over the past 15 years into one simple document.

Many people and organizations contributed to the creation of this assessment tool. The project originated as a collaborative approach between the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, the Governor's Community Development Office and the Community Solutions Team. Key state agency contributors to this project include Yvonne Addington and Brian Cole.

In 2000, the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department decided to promote the use of this self-assessment tool more widely in rural Oregon. The Department engaged Rural Development Initiatives, Inc. (RDI), an Oregon based non-profit organization, to apply the tool in five rural communities and to evaluate its usefulness. As a result of this experience, the Department then engaged RDI to further refine the tool to reflect best practice in the field of assessment and to increase the practical application of this tool. A focus group of statewide stakeholders from the public and private sectors provided valuable input. Community leaders who participated in the test assessment also provided valuable input in the communities of Banks, Enterprise, Gaston, Irrigon, Jordan Valley, Nyssa, Richland, Rogue River, Roseburg, Spray, Stanfield and Waldport. We thank all who participated and provided their observations and suggestions for improvement.

The goal of this project has been to help communities assess their readiness for community and economic development. From this assessment, they can then determine areas needed to build their capacity. We are interested in hearing from communities in and outside of Oregon that use this tool. Please send comments to the department at:

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Salem, Oregon 97301-1280  
web site: <http://www.econ.state.or.us>

## **Introduction**

Perhaps you are an elected leader in your community ... or perhaps you are appointed on a board or commission ... or maybe you represent your community as a chamber executive, economic development staff person or volunteer. In any event, you are a person that cares about the future of your community.

Perhaps you would like to see the community achieve the completion of a particular project, or would like to see better economic opportunities for its citizens. The problem is, you may not know where to begin. One place to start is to take an objective assessment of your community and its current “capacity” to achieve its development goals.

On an individual basis, this guide provides an excellent method to objectively assess your community’s development capacity from your own unique, individual perspective. You may feel challenged, due to a lack of knowledge, to address all of the variables in this guide. Nonetheless, by “doing your best,” it will accomplish two objectives: 1) it will present *your* understanding of your community, and 2) it will give you a sense of some of the complexities of community development that you may wish to become more familiar with.

There are also distinct advantages to utilizing this guide in a group setting. For example, you may wish to collectively work through this guide as a member of a board or commission that serves your community. Your community may also wish to work with regional team members from the Economic and Community Development Department and other local, regional, and state experts that are trained in community and economic development techniques and programs. The advantage of working with these professional development staff is that you not only become more familiar with your community development capacity, you are instantly connected with the expertise to advance your capacity and complete community development objectives. In a group setting, it is recommended that a facilitator be used to assist you in utilizing this assessment tool. A facilitator’s guide is included as part of this guidebook.

## **Purpose**

This is a guidebook designed to enable users to understand and increase the capacity of community and economic development activities in Oregon. Hopefully, the diagnostic tools contained within this guidebook will have significant value to Oregonians that wish to create quality communities.

This document is all about asking and answering three basic questions:

- I. Where are we?
- II. Where do we want to be?
- III. How are we going to get there?

This guide can set the foundation for a community-wide effort to increase its capacity to meet future community-wide goals.

## **Components of the Guidebook**

- A. Assessment Questionnaire
- B. Facilitator’s Guide and Checklist
- C. Sample Final Report

## **Assessment Categories**

The assessment tool contains 85 statements in four categories. The categories are Baseline Capacity, Civic Capacity, Economic Development Capacity and Community Development Capacity.

**Baseline Capacity:** Services without which a community cannot function well as a community. These characteristics, such as safe water supply, modern phone service, and access to health care, are comparable across communities and over time, and are needed in all communities regardless of their economic development strategy.

**Civic Capacity:** Community vision, strategic plan, trained leadership, functional organizations, partnerships and collaboration. These items and baseline capacity need to be in place before community and economic development strategies or projects can be implemented and sustained.

**Economic Development Capacity:** Infrastructure, facilities and programs that contribute to economic development potential such as industrial sites, zoning that matches market, transportation, etc. The importance of these items depends on a community's choice of strategy, so these should not be used to compare across communities.

**Community Development Capacity:** Facilities, programs, attitudes and ordinances that contribute to community development potential such as a community center, park, public transportation, etc.

For each statement, the goal is to determine the level of progress and satisfaction with each community characteristic. The assessment statements are answered with the following scale:

- Yes, adequate
- Needs improvement, actively making progress
- Needs improvement, little progress to date
- Needs attention, no action yet
- NA, this item is not relevant for our community
- DK, Don't Know

There are also two open-ended questions at the end of the assessment.