



# K-STATE

Research and Extension  
Community Vitality

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[ksre-learn.com/supporting-communities](https://ksre-learn.com/supporting-communities)



# ENGAGING COMMUNITY MEMBERS THROUGH NEWCOMERS EVENTS

## ■ WHAT IS A NEWCOMERS EVENT?

Newcomers' events are focused on welcoming new residents to a community. They can take on a variety of forms and are often held annually. A welcome from community leaders, a meal, and activities to help participants get to know one another are recommended.

Some communities choose to host regular events over the course of the year, such as quarterly new-to-town meetups. These events create an opportunity for more frequent and formal connections with resources in the community. For example, a meeting with the mayor or hearing from the planning committee of the annual celebration with a specific ask to get involved could be considered.

Newcomers' events also benefit community leaders. Meeting with newcomers can help community stakeholders and officials learn more about community needs.

## ■ SUCCESSFUL NEWCOMERS' EVENTS ACCOMPLISH THE FOLLOWING:

**Connect newcomers.** It can be hard to get connected in a new community, especially when existing residents have known each other for decades. These events can help newcomers build a support network with others new to the community.

**Provide an official welcome to the community.** It's important to have community leaders get involved. An official welcome helps newcomers feel that the community is "excited you're here!" and that leadership is invested in making connections.

**Show off the highlights of a community.** A newcomer's event is a great opportunity to show off your community's assets. Connecting newcomers to local businesses, residents, and programs that are invested in creating community will help newcomers feel like they belong.

## ■ IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- Make plans to eat a meal together.
- Start with a warm, "Welcome! We are so glad you are here!" message.
- Have an option for newcomers to sign in. Get permission to send emails after the event with follow-up information. A thank you for attending email is also a good idea.
- Go around the room and ask every newcomer to introduce themselves. You might have them answer "What do you like about our community" or "What attracted you here?" People will likely find it easier forming connections with other newcomers than existing residents. These icebreakers will help them get to know each other a little better.
- Create gift bags with community resources for attendees. Have a community leader explain what's included in the bags and why you've included it. Make sure to offer resources that help newcomers answer questions.
- Focus on thoughtful discussion as the main activity of the program.
- Limit presentations by local officials – including gift-bag presentation – to less than 10 minutes of the total agenda (*10 minutes total, not 10 minutes per person*).
- If you want businesses to attend, have them set up tables around the perimeter of the room.

## ■ THINGS TO AVOID:

- Try to avoid letting existing residents and officials sit together at their own tables or talk amongst themselves. The temptation to talk shop or catch up about long-time connections could defeat the purpose of the event.
- Again, it's important to reiterate, avoid letting existing residents and officials sit together. Instead, coach community leaders to mingle with newcomers. Don't be afraid to enforce this rule!

Our team is committed to building a stronger Kansas economy by improving the lives, livelihoods, and communities across the state through community assessment, leadership development, and business and organizational support.



Materials were adapted with permission from the University of Minnesota Extension. To learn more about research related to rural brain gain and newcomer trends, visit:

[extension.umn.edu/economic-development/rural-brain-gain-migration](https://extension.umn.edu/economic-development/rural-brain-gain-migration).

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