

YOUTH COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

LEADER'S GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

Youth are leaving rural communities and given little encouragement to return. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, 72 percent of the land area of the United States is considered rural; however, only 15 percent of the population lives in that area. Kansas rural county populations have been declining since 2012. Remote rural counties have experienced this trend much longer. While the program was developed based upon rural issues, urban communities are also seeing a need to focus on youth civic engagement. What skills can youth and community members learn to address these issues?

K-State Research and Extension Community Vitality and Kansas 4-H have developed a program to focus on youth civic engagement at the local level. Youth Community Perceptions is a community evaluation and assessment program that allows youth to discover the unique assets and strengths, as well as the needs, of their community, providing young people an opportunity to engage in community conversations.

INTENDED AUDIENCES

Anyone who works with youth.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Access the Youth Community Perceptions website to access instructions, forms, and templates. (<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/program-areas/supporting-communities/community-assessment/youth-community-perceptions.html>)
- Share program information with local government.
- Review the Community Capitals Framework (<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/program-areas/supporting-communities/community-assessment/youth-community-perception-files/Community-Capitals-Framework-Writeup-Oct-2014.pdf>)

LESSON OBJECTIVES

As a result of participating in this lesson, learners will:

- Understand the Community Capitals Framework and how it applies to their community.
- Participate in civic engagement.
- Gain knowledge of local government and community processes.
- Discover unique assets and strengths in their community.
- Assess the needs of their community.
- Communicate what community capitals are present in their community and opportunities for building in other capital areas.
- Develop and conduct a service-learning project within their community.



PRESENTING THE LESSON

Share “ground rules” of the session with learners

1. Follow the Photo Guide located on the Youth Community Perceptions webpage.
2. Be sure to craft what could be seen as negative responses in a respectful manner.
3. Have fun!

Summarize objectives

- What are the current interests, hopes and expectations of the youth evaluators? What do they feel their community needs to retain or attract individuals and families to the community?

Present findings

- Use activities listed on the Youth Community Perceptions website, or come up with their own.

Share additional resources with the class.

- Community Capitals Framework.
- Grant writing resources.

Have learners complete and return evaluations to you

- Assist youth in structuring a presentation and review evaluation answers to make sure responses are tactful, and coach in communication efforts if edits must be made.
- Work with youth to schedule a presentation to city council.
- Share templates and other materials to help them build their presentation.

Lesson activities

1. Review materials on Youth Community Perceptions website.

2. Arrange, explain the program, and request approval from city council to participate in the program.
3. Discuss results and reactions to the presentation requesting application approval from the city council.
4. Discuss views on civic engagement and community processes.
5. Make a plan on how to implement the evaluation.
6. Conduct the evaluation.
7. Discuss the results.
8. Organize results using the Community Capitals Framework.
9. Use a template for the presentation or develop a way to communicate results.
10. Set a date with city your council and present the findings, including opportunities.
11. Partner with the city or a community organization to develop and conduct a service-learning project.

Optional Activities: Conduct a grant-writing training with the youth and assist them in writing a grant for their service-learning project.



WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY CAPITALS?

Natural Capital:

Air quality, land, water and water quality, natural resources, biodiversity, scenery.

Cultural Capital:

Values, heritage recognition and celebration.

Human Capital:

Population, education, skills, health, creativity, youth, diverse groups.

Social Capital:

Trust, norms of reciprocity, network structure, group membership, cooperation, common vision and goals, leadership, depersonalization of politics, acceptance of alternative views, diverse representation.

Political Capital:

Level of community organization through the use of government; ability of government to garner resources for the community.

Financial Capital:

Tax burden/savings, state and federal tax monies, philanthropic donations, grants, contracts, regulatory exemption, investments, reallocation, loans, poverty rates.

Built Capital:

Housing, transportation infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure and hardware, utilities, buildings.



YOUTH COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS EVALUATION

As a result of participating in this lesson:

1. I understand community processes.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. I understand the Community Capitals Framework.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I know the assets in my community.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. Noted opportunities for new ideas/projects or I know how to share my ideas with local government.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

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