



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

Step 3a: Information Gathering

This step of the community needs assessment (CNA) process includes gathering demographic and secondary data. The purpose is to develop a fuller understanding of the makeup of our communities and to strengthen our understanding of key issues. In addition, demographic data combined with identification of key issues from secondary data can help us identify the key informants to involve in later steps of the CNA process.

CSU's Office of Engagement & Extension (OEE) will pull together a wide range of demographic and economic/workforce data in a standard "County Profile" format for use by county Extension offices. Because of our intention to be inclusive with the CNAs, we will provide counties with demographic data that highlights the presence of traditionally underrepresented audiences in addition to more typical demographic data. These demographic data will be compared to state level data as a reference and will include (purple = select underrepresented/ "Champion" groups identified by National 4-H):

- Race/ethnicity
- Age
- Gender
- Income
- % in poverty
- Home ownership vs. renters
- Educational attainment
- High school graduation rates
- Immigrant and refugee
- English language learners
- With disabilities
- Economic/workforce profile
 - Unemployment rate
 - Employment and income by sector/industry
 - Top 10 employers
 - Commuting patterns
 - Location quotients

County Profiles will also include county Census of Agriculture profiles and Tapestry Maps from ESRI that break down areas within a given county according to dominant "lifestyle modes". These lifestyle modes can provide insight into the values and interests of a community, such as valuing outdoor recreation or maintaining homes and gardens.

Aside from these County Profiles, the strategic collection and analysis of secondary data is key to understanding community issues at a deeper level and identifying potential partnerships with organizations working on the issues. For the purpose of the CNAs, secondary data can be broken down into general and topic-specific sources.

General sources include reports from local governments such as:

- strategic plans
- needs assessments
- budget documents
- community/economic/workforce development-related documents (i.e., a Community Development Action Plan from the local Community & Economic Development District)
- health district surveys such as a County Public Health Assessment or a Community Health Improvement Plan

These documents either implicitly or explicitly describe local priorities. They should be considered standard secondary data for county Extension offices to collect and analyze.

Topical secondary data would include reports focused on natural resources, tourism, agriculture, or other specific issues facing particular communities and/or populations. (See separate document for a list of common general and topic-specific secondary data sources.)

Collection and analysis of this secondary data would be county-specific based on the county's demographics, conversations with staff, and suggestions from advisory boards and/or County Commissioners. For example, a county's demographic data may reveal that there is a high population of Latinx and a high percentage of mental health issues in a given community relative to the rest of the state. This county may decide to seek topical secondary data on **issues** facing those two populations in addition to collecting the more standard set of secondary data. In another example, if a county is host to a CSU Regional Engagement Center, that county will likely want to work with the Center to collect more detailed workforce data in addition to the standard set of secondary data.

It should be noted that topic-specific secondary data will become relevant again once basic priorities are identified through key informant interviews and CNA surveys. Once those basic priority issues are revealed, topic-specific secondary data focused on the priority issues can provide more detail on specific problems that could be addressed through an OEE/partner intervention. Also note that general and topical state- and national-level reports and data may contain information helpful to counties, especially in the absence of local data. Staff will need to use their resourcefulness and discretion to identify potential secondary data and decide whether or not to analyze that data. ***It is critical that any secondary data come from a reputable, unbiased, research-based source and is not outdated (consider sources from 2015 to the present).***