



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

### Step 3b: Identify Initial Issues & Diverse Informants

Once a county Extension office gathers secondary data (step 3a), staff can screen it for:

- a. key community issues/needs;
- b. possible contributing factors to those issues/needs;
- c. barriers to accessing CSU's Office of Engagement & Extension (OEE) resources;
- d. potential strategies/opportunities for OEE work; and
- e. potential partners

While screening secondary data, agents can also identify specific key informants or a desired type of key informant. For example, if secondary data reveals youth mental health to be a significant community issue/need, key informants could include the county public health department and the school district.

One guideline for developing a list of community issues/needs is to stretch a little beyond OEE's current capacity to meet needs. It is good to list issues which CSUE or OEE can't address with current resources because the community needs assessment (CNA) can have value to the broader community, the CNA can spark new partnerships, and "funding follows focus." On the other hand, be cautious of delving too far into issues that OEE can't reasonably address in coming years even with a modest influx of resources, as we want to make wise use of our time and effort on the CNAs.

***The "CNA Secondary and Key Informant Data" spreadsheet is a template you can use to record data insights and to list key informants.*** The information in this spreadsheet will remain accessible to counties throughout the CNA process and will be useful during future steps such as survey and County Program Plan creation. ***Examples of key informants and secondary data analysis are pre-populated for reference purposes only.*** A separate document provides a list of key informants identified in the Larimer County CNA process also for your reference.

Another separate document that may be helpful is a Community Engagement Resource chart (and instructions). Although this particular chart is labelled for the Latinx community, it can also be used to understand ways to engage with other populations that have been underrepresented in CSUE programming. The chart can also be used to help identify key informants. It is important to not feel limited in identifying key informants by who we already know, and the Community Engagement Resource Chart provides a framework for thinking about how to access new informants directly or through existing partners. Beyond that, EFNEP coordinators and FLTI program participants are potential close collaborators that can help OEE reach out to new informants if available in your county/area.

***If your county/area is host to an Agricultural Experiment Station, Colorado State Forest Service Office, or CSU Regional Engagement Center, also reach out to those collaborators to ensure that we identify their key informants for potential interviews.*** Then, coordinate as needed with other county CSUE offices that are served by these collaborators (but do not host them) when considering interviews of these informants.

Be aware that the process of gathering secondary data and identifying key informants could seem overwhelming at first. There are many issues that are important to our communities that could be addressed with additional OEE or partner resources. There are many topic-specific sources of secondary data that you may or may not choose to analyze. Needs of community members within your county may differ significantly based on the specific city, town, or geographical area they live in. The idea behind this step of the CNA process, as well as the actual key informant interviews/focus groups, is to gather information that could inform OEE and partner efforts down the road and prepare a county Extension office to build a CNA survey for the general public. Hearing and sifting through many ideas - even divergent ones - about community issues and potential solutions is a normal part of this stage of the CNA process. For now, it's important to identify high-level community issues that OEE or close partners may even potentially be able to act upon, even if you don't know what those actions may consist of in the moment. The CNA survey and the analysis by county Extension offices will help sort and prioritize this data.