



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION**

### **Step 1: Consultations & Engagement**

The first step of the community needs assessment (CNA) is for county Extension offices to become familiar with the overall process and to engage County Commissioners and CSUE advisory board members as appropriate. It is also important that all staff have opportunities to reflect on their own understandings of needs assessments and ask questions about this particular CNA process. As matters of practicality, counties need to understand their roles in the process, the roles of other supporting entities like the state office or consultants, and our expected timeline for the rollout. County offices should also begin thinking about potential partner counties and designating both a lead county and a single point-of-contact for CNAs, especially if the single point-of-contact may be someone other than a County/Area Director. When considering county partnerships, think about how much you may have in common with one or more adjacent counties, whether or not there would be overall efficiencies gained by partnering, and availability of staff time and effort to conduct CNAs themselves.

The CNA webpage can provide quick reference points for counties to become more familiar with the CNA process and as collateral to provide to Commissioners and advisory board members. Those two key stakeholder groups will likely want to understand what the CNA process means for them, the county Extension office, and the communities they serve. Commissioners and advisory board members may provide suggestions to the county single point-of-contact about potential key informants, important survey content (to capture issues important to communities), survey distribution methods and channels, and other issues throughout various points of the CNA process. Some Commissioners may be hesitant to change what the Extension office is currently doing, so it may be important to emphasize that CNAs can leverage existing data about community needs, provide documentation for new funding opportunities, strengthen partnerships and collaborations, help ensure that duplication of efforts is avoided (as CSUE and partners learn more about each other's services), and provide value to broader county efforts outside of CSUE. While we don't expect the results to change our CSUE offices and OEE offerings overnight, we may understand new opportunities to look for "growth edges" – what we might reasonably be able to provide in the medium-term future should resources be acquired or shift.

In addition to engagement with Commissioners and advisory board members, county single points-of-contact must think about how and when to ensure that all county staff are engaged throughout the process. Check-ins should be considered before each key step in the CNA process and when results from any step of the process become available. The CSUE state office will also provide guidance on staff engagement.