



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

## What to Expect from Community Needs Assessment Results

Between the perceptions survey, secondary data, key informant data, and the community needs assessment (CNA) survey, the Office of Engagement & Extension (OEE) will have a lot of useful information about important issues, barriers to programming, and opportunities for impact. These data sources will collectively contribute to a detailed understanding of needs in our communities. Through a guided process, CSUE staff will use this enhanced understanding of needs to work with CSU and external partners to co-create County Program Plans that will become the basis for CSUE activities in future years. County Program Plans and CNA results will be rolled up to inform regional and statewide program priorities.

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Expect that CNAs will help you identify big buckets of priority issues in your community such as “health and well-being” as well as smaller buckets of priority issues such as “nutrition”, “mental health”, and “substance abuse”. In some cases, qualitative data can provide insights into the specific problems within those smaller buckets that OEE may choose to address, such as “lack of mental health services available to youth”.

Although the CSUE state office will provide a set of tools to help make sense of the data and identify priority issues for impact, there is no set formula for determining how to use CNA results. It will be up to individuals, counties, program teams, and OEE to make sense of the totality of data collected, and this will require follow-up with new and existing partners and community representatives. CNAs may show us that we are already uniquely positioned to have significant impact on certain community issues. If CNAs show us opportunities for impact in new areas, we can use those results in internal discussions for more resources as well as in grant applications. (This is the concept of “funding follows focus”.) In some cases, staff may be able to shift a portion of their time to meeting new needs. In other cases, new partnerships might be developed to meet needs, with OEE playing a supporting role. Counties with few staff may be more limited in their abilities to pivot to new opportunities.

County Commissioners and Extension advisory board members will need to be engaged in the process from the start. We will need to be clear that CNA results may have broader value to the community and that we can share these results with potential partners. At the same time, county Extension offices and OEE will filter results through the lens of our mission to empower Coloradans with educational resources. The structured CNA process will provide a snapshot into current opportunities for impact, but this snapshot will have to be supplemented by ongoing, less formal ways of capturing needs moving forward.