Community-building Growth Matrix (CGM): *An overview*

This Community-building Growth Matrix has been developed with, by, and for rural community builders and community building practitioners. It is intended to help see where a community has been, is and might go as it grows and develops its community building efforts.

Community building stages

To better engage with this tool, it will be helpful to understand that it looks at six different stages of community building that evolve from less to more developed. Community building work is messy and not entirely predictable, it is possible that work moves forward two stages and then back one. We don't anticipate a perfect straight line of growth, but do we hope for a general trend of growth. Please note, we are using the word *community* loosely here. No community backbones represent the entire community. Numerous community groups come together and over time represent more of the community.

Stage	Characteristics of this stage
0. Not yet	No work has happened in this area
1. Getting started	A community need or opportunity exists, and your community wants to do something about it. Individuals, groups and/or organizations are interested in working together to make things better. Individuals or groups are talking about the need to organize and mobilize around an issue, and are starting to find their way through these early efforts.
2. Focusing	Members of your community are beginning to channel their interest and passion into focused action and are gaining confidence with a can-do attitude. Organization and planning are inconsistent but developing enough to progress. The community is inspired by the dedication of residents and stakeholders involved in the work and the action taking place. Steps are starting to be taken to involve a diversity of voices and embrace inclusion.
3. Intentional	A core of individuals, groups and organizations have recognized the value of comprehensive community visioning and planning and actively engage resources and promising practices. Actions are more formalized. Measurable benchmarks connected to long-term goals are being accomplished, and there is regular learning from evaluation of progress and impact. While most steps are highly strategic, there is still a sense of flexibility and innovation. There is an explicit commitment to inclusion and equity. Groups are staring to leverage resources well.
4. Strategic	Your community's work and accomplishments are visible and recognized. The actions in your community cause a ripple effect of involvement by others. The values of collaboration and inclusivity are increasingly accepted so that diverse voices are part of leadership and feel authentic to your community. Your community owns and leads the work, and there is little concern over who claims credit. Organizational infrastructure for community building is nearing sustainability and resources are being powerfully leveraged. The work is starting to focus on policies and systems that affect the community.
5. Catalytic	The community work and progress is visible and others that have not been engaged are attracted to the groups' energy and ability to get things done. The community has agreed upon principles and practices that include inclusivity, strong leadership that represent diverse voices, the work is owned and lead by the community. The community is willing to take risks for the greater good and focus on accomplishments and not the credit. In addition, the work is focused on policies that affect the community and the group advocates for them.
6. Transform-ational *(Most developed)*	Your community has in place the infrastructure and leadership to address most needs and opportunities. There is a strong identification with being able to resolve issues, impact systems and remove barriers, particularly for underserved community members. Your community secures and leverages resources necessary to move community building work forward. Your community manages change and has the flexibility to redirect the work when necessary. Your community is transformational and is recognized as such in and outside of the community. Some community and regional systems that support the community have been transformed, leading to more durable change.

Community-building dimensions: The other aspect of this tool is around different dimensions of community building. Below you'll find the 4Cs and their 12 dimensions.

Connections *Our community builds caring, lasting and inclusive relationships.*	**Engaged Neighbors** Residents know and care for each other. People here nurture existing relationships and actively seek new ones. There are trusted and timely ways for residents to learn about community happenings, resources, and issues.	**Purposeful Gatherings** The community comes together in productive, fun and respectful ways. Residents gather to celebrate, for important discussions, and to work together. This happens in big and small groups, in-person and online.	**Intentional Inclusion** Our community is safe for diverse perspectives, including opposing views. Any person can express their needs, share their voice, and live into their potential. Everyone has a place in our community. Power dynamics are named and understood.
Capacity *Our community has the people, groups, skills, and resources needed to shape the future.*	**Committed Base** Our community has a base of committed community builders, with a range of backgrounds and skills, and unified by shared agendas. Core groups and individuals provide leadership who energize, attract support and bring the community together.	**Responsive Organizations** A variety of trusted, high-functioning and adequately resourced local organizations help address our community's priority needs. They listen to and engage the wider community, and use data to drive their work.	**Effective Networks** People and groups leverage knowledge, experience, passion and resources through formal and informal networks. Communication and sharing are open, trusted and respectful. Collaboration gives the work staying power.
Community-Led Action *Our community knows where it wants to go and takes action toward positive change.*	**Focused Direction** Our community has a clear focus for community building work. Diverse voices and interests help shape goals that respond to community needs. Residents are aware of our plans and support the vision.	**Strategic Action** Individuals and groups take action on our community's plans and ideas. Participants in the work feel a sense of accomplishment and collective progress.	**Visible Impact** Ongoing efforts result in community improvements that residents can see and name. Successes reinforce and leverage each other. People are energized by the community's direction.
Culture *Our community has a sense of unity, pride and resiliency.*	**Shared Ownership** Individuals and groups recognize they can and must shape our community's future. They regularly use their power to better our community.	**Community Pride** People are proud to live in our community. Our community honors its past and residents are excited about the future.	**Collective Resilience** Our community fosters a culture of moving forward to overcome hard issues. Individuals and groups persevere with grit and persistence. Residents believe they are all in this together.