

Four Cs of Rural Community Building

The 4Cs represent four key community building elements that rural residents can strengthen to make things better in communities. The 4Cs can help us learn about ourselves, find inspiration, set goals, and track progress. Each community is unique and activities will differ from place to place, but this framework can be applied across communities. And while much can happen in the short term, meaningful improvement takes long-term, stay-the-course work.



Where did the 4C Framework come from? Rural communities, regional and national experts, and the Ford Institute for Community Building (part of The Ford Family Foundation) set out to articulate a framework to support rural community builders and advocates. They wanted to uncover key elements of rural community building and what it looks like at its best. Energized by this goal, they worked together for over five years to develop these 4Cs. The Ford Institute for Community Building has adopted the 4Cs in its work with rural communities in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California; many other communities and groups have also adopted the 4Cs.

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The 4Cs: A Closer Look



Community Building
Working together to make things better.

Community: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____



Connections: Building caring, lasting and inclusive relationships.

Engaged Neighbors:

Our residents know and care for each other. People nurture existing relationships and seek new ones. Residents have ways to learn about community events, resources, and issues.

Purposeful Gatherings:

Our community comes together in productive, fun and respectful ways. Gatherings happen in big and small groups, in-person and online.

Intentional Inclusion:

Everyone has a place in our community. It's a safe place for diverse perspectives and opposing views. Any person can express their needs, achieve their potential.

Capacity: Having 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 that energizes and brings the community together.

Responsive Organizations:

A variety of trusted, high-functioning and adequately resourced local organizations help address our community's needs. They listen to and engage the wider community and use data to drive their work.

Effective Networks:

People and groups leverage experience, passion and resources through formal and informal networks. Communication is open, trusted and respectful. Collaboration gives the work staying power.



Community-Led Action:

Knowing where the community wants to go and taking action to get there.

Focused Direction:

Our community has a clear focus for community building work. Diverse voices 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 feel a sense of accomplishment and collective progress.

Visible Impact:

Ongoing efforts result in community improvements that residents can see and name. Successes reinforce each other. People are energized by the community's direction.

Community Building Culture:

Possessing 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. Residents believe they are all in it together.