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Transforming Communities Institute Re-envisioning Study: Logan Community Report



College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Transforming Communities Institute
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About the TCI Re-envisioning Study

Transforming Communities Initiative, now known as Transforming Communities Institute (TCI), was founded in 2014 by faculty in the Department of Social Work at Utah State University. TCI aimed to conduct research in and for the community while teaching the next generation of social work leaders to be data-driven and civically engaged.

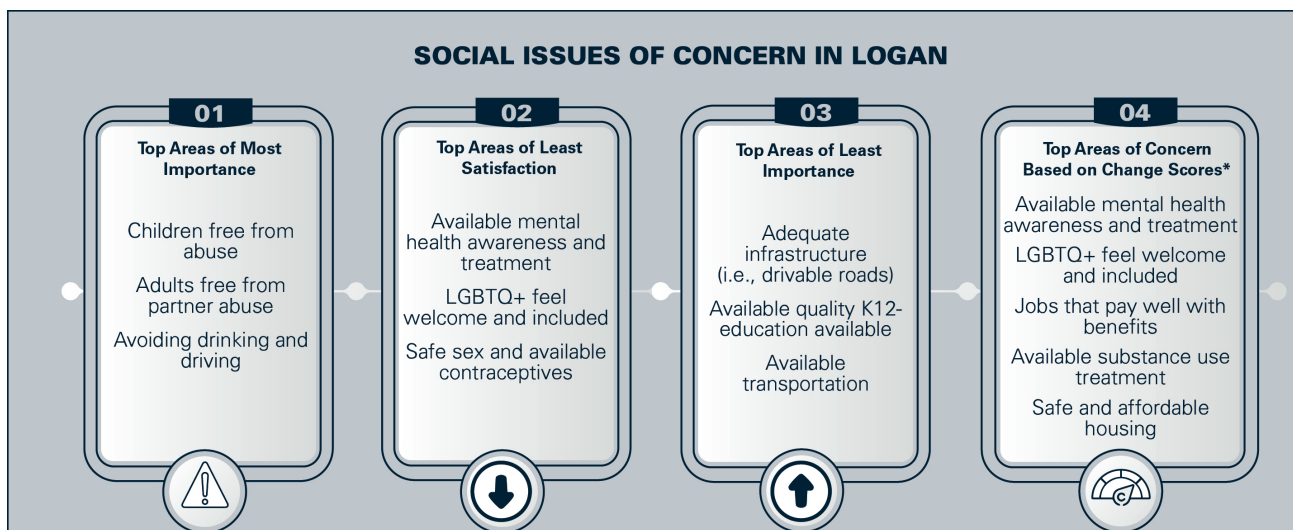
After several years of successful projects and changes in Utah communities, a need existed to re-examine the mission and strategy of TCI. Recently, TCI faculty leadership petitioned USU to advance from an initiative to an institute, with confirmation in February 2022. As part of this growth process, TCI was reimagined through a community-engaged research project to ensure relevancy and maximum impact in Utah communities.

The project was a mixed-methods study that sought to understand 1) the social challenges and resources of Utah communities and 2) ways in which TCI may integrate more fully into communities to meet their needs and expand on their strengths. Surveys and focus group data were collected from community decision makers and non-profit leaders who work in Blanding, Brigham City, Logan, Moab, Price, Tooele, and Uintah Basin. The present report shares the survey and focus group findings from the Logan area community.

Survey Findings

For the Logan area, 41 Community Decision Makers responded, and there were 20 Nonprofit respondents. The mean age of both groups was over 45, and the mean number of years spent in the community was 21.61 (SD= 18.64) for Decision Makers and 19.30 (SD=13.06) for Nonprofits. The majority (56.1%) of Decision Maker participants were male, while the majority of the Nonprofit participants were female (75.0%). The majority of the respondents were white (90.2%). Over 65% of both groups have obtained an advanced/professional degree. Over half of Decision Maker respondents reported earning \$100,000+ (65.9%) as their yearly household income, while half of Nonprofit respondents reported the same.

The majority (87.5%) of Decision Maker respondents somewhat agreed to strongly agreed (42.5%) “community members have a strong voice in their community.” However, for Nonprofit participants, that number drops to 50.1%. Most (83.8%) Decision Makers somewhat to strongly agreed that USU was an asset in their community, and 72.5% felt connected to the USU campus in the area. Both numbers increased for Nonprofit respondents, with 93.8% somewhat to strongly agreeing that USU is an asset to their community and that they feel connected with the campus.



*subtracting the overall satisfaction score from the importance scores



Focus Group Findings

In the focus group for the Logan area, there were six participants: one business owner; one K-12 teacher; one university employee; one nonprofit worker; and two local government representatives. The three topics that the group chose to discuss were mental health, housing, and people from different backgrounds feeling included and welcome.

Mental Health Awareness & Treatment

Participants indicated that access to and quality of mental health services and resources in the Logan area were limited. With mental health problems continuing to rise, especially among students at Utah State University Logan campus, limited access to mental healthcare is presenting as a major barrier to maintaining or improving quality of life. Participants felt limited access to mental health care was particularly problematic for youth and people who have lower incomes.

Two participants shared that the community organizations and local government had worked together on a coalition in recent years to address growing mental health challenges. However, the results of the partnerships and efforts were unclear and potentially not effective: "...we have the same discussions, but nothing ever seems to come out of it." Nonetheless, one group member commented about the Logan City Police Department working with mental health providers to address mental health issues rather than arresting someone for a non-criminal problem.

The growing demand for mental healthcare has resulted in mental health professionals feeling unprepared to handle the increasing concerns and has resulted in a desire for additional mental health training. One participant voiced this concern by saying "...it's difficult because we don't, I don't know. We need more support. We need to know where to go and how to get kids help..."

Even with available resources, half of the group discussed stigma associated with seeking mental health services. A few participants said this was especially true for community members who were Latinx. However, some local organizations, such as CAPSA and The Family Place were identified as agencies that breakdown stigma surrounding receiving mental health services and providing specialized services to community members from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

People from Different Backgrounds Feeling Welcome & Included

Participants indicated that in the Logan area there is a fear of people who are from different backgrounds in race and religion, especially those who are deemed outsiders (i.e., people who did not grow up in the Logan area). The current divisive climate in politics contributes to ignorance and perpetuating negative beliefs about people who are not from the dominant culture of an area.

"So...is Cache Valley, a racist place? No. Is there an underlying, I don't know if ignorance is the right word, is there an underlying fear of the unknown and fear of, you know, whether we're talking religion, or race, or different people, different backgrounds different beliefs? Yes, there is..."



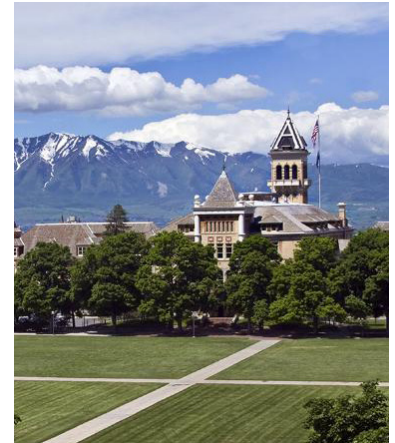


However, there have been significant improvements in the Logan area related to cultural diversity and acceptance of people from diverse backgrounds. Community efforts such as multicultural festivals and highlighting refugee contributions in the media (e.g., Utah Public Radio) are more frequent. Participants emphasized efforts of The Family Place, local government, and Utah State University. However, all participants noted that there is a need for more opportunities for connections and conversations about diversity among residents.

Housing

All participants agreed that the low stock of affordable, quality housing especially single-family homes, is very problematic for the Logan area. Because of the low housing stock, prices of single-family homes as well as rentals have increased dramatically. For some families in the current market, it will be nearly impossible for them to save enough money to buy a home. To compound the problem, families are being forced into substandard homes, with immigrants and refugees in the Valley being disproportionately impacted.

A few participants discussed the efforts of the local government and private businesses to address the housing stock issues. Solutions have included building more apartments and homes, including some with affordable units; however, they acknowledged that this is a multi-pronged problem that needs more than one solution.



Potential Solutions Proposed by Communities

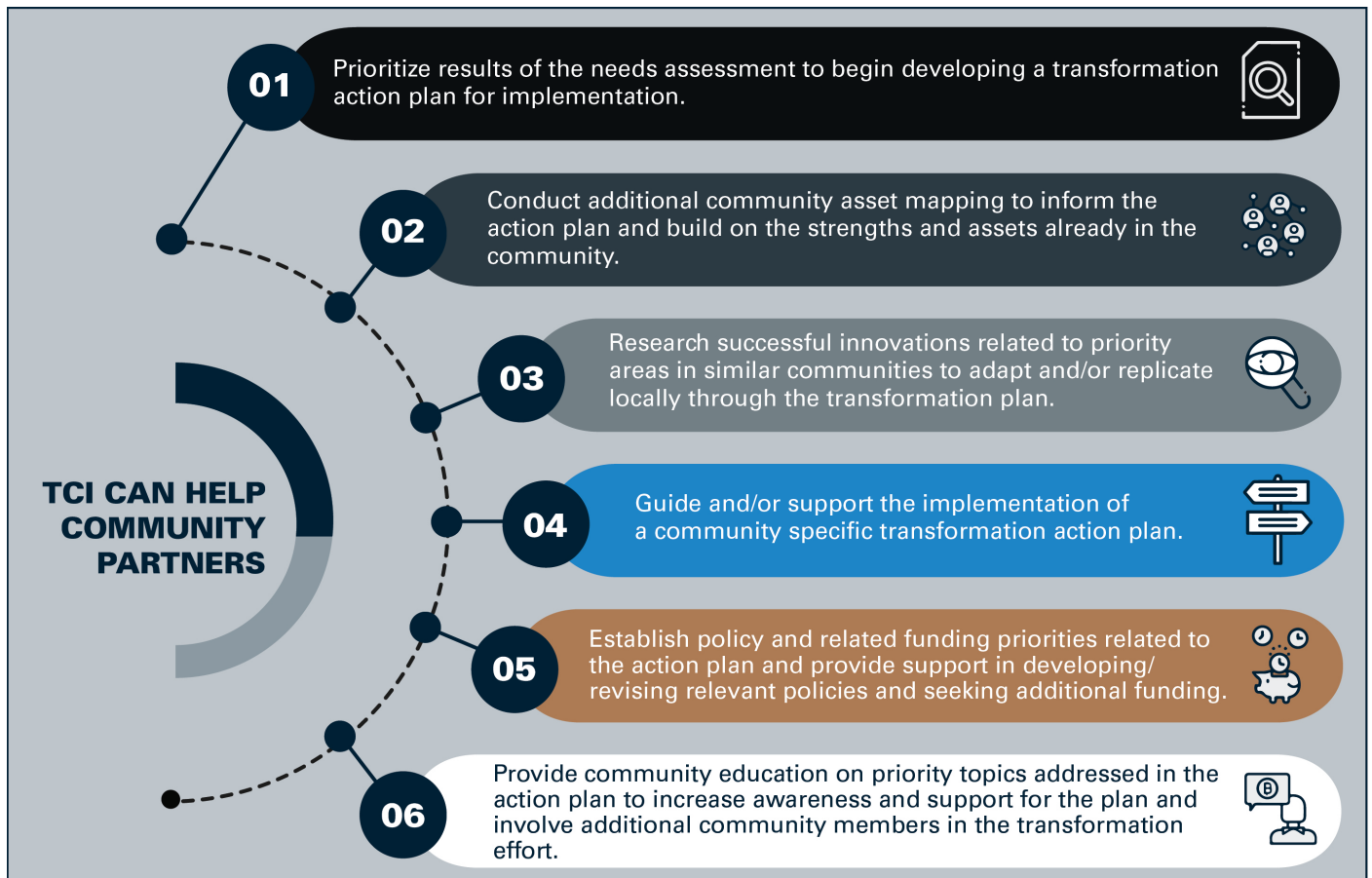
Participants discussed potential solutions and ways that USU, TCI, and other entities could help address challenges in the Logan area.





How TCI Can Help

At TCI, we are committed to working with and supporting our community partners through all stages of transformation. This includes working with key stakeholders from initial assessment to implementation of innovative ideas, all the way through to evaluating transformation outcomes. We are interested in providing our community partners with actionable suggestions on how they might apply the results of the most current round of community assessments to advance transformation activities at the local level. Below are several ways that TCI can support key stakeholders to build on the results of this report to cultivate change in their communities:



As community partners consider the next steps for their communities to take in creating meaningful change, TCI is ready to collaborate intentionally and effectively to improve community-identified key outcomes. Together, we can build vibrant, strong, resilient, and inclusive communities where all Utahns can thrive.

To read the full report of the TCI Re-envisioning study, please visit:

<https://chass.usu.edu/social-work/transforming-communities-institute/index>

To connect with TCI, reach out to our director, Dr. Jayme Walters, at jayme.walters@usu.edu or 435-797-7693.