

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT ASSESSMENT

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As I was reading through the transcripts from the community interviews, it struck me how caring and supportive these small, rural communities seemed. Interviewees discussed how the community came together to help someone out in times of tragedy, how the offering of food or car rides to appointments in times of need was often a lifeline, how everyone looks out for one another. Sometimes the library was involved in offering support, sometimes the support was offered to the library, but what interviewees discussed most was the community coming together to support one another.

I found the symbiotic relationship between the community members and the library to be quite interesting. Do communities where members naturally support one another also have a large amount of support for the library? Does the library offer the community as much support as the community gives them? What can libraries do to encourage that support and make connections between community members? These were all questions I pondered as I created this tool.

What is in this tool?

- Spend time considering the ways in which community residents, the library, and you support one another
- Brainstorm ways to improve those networks of mutual aid

## IN THEIR WORDS

“But I like the rural community so I’ll stay put. I think it’s just a caring community. I’ll just give you an example: My husband was involved in a serious accident last August, almost a year ago. He rolled a tractor on himself and we spent 19 days in Rochester, Minnesota. And the community support that we had was—now I’m gonna cry, no but... You can’t imagine the people that helped us. Hundreds of people helped us. [Wow] Yes. Yes. Because everybody knows you. And if they don’t know you, they know somebody who does know you.”

(Jenee, interview #2-2-02)

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER:

| <i>Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 5</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| The people who live in this community go out of their way to help others or check up on them.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| When there is a community event, party, funeral, etc., it is well-attended OR there are many volunteers.   |   |   |   |   |   |
| People don't have to ask for help from the community; they just show up for one another.   |   |   |   |   |   |
| There are many organizations/groups/clubs in the community that help those in need, such as a community improvement club, food bank, mental health support group, etc. |   |   |   |   |   |
| In this community, it feels as though community members are in each other's business not because they are nosy, but because they care.                                 |   |   |   |   |   |
| This is a safe community where people watch out for one another.   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Are there ways your community supports each other that were not mentioned above?   |   |   |   |   |   |

Are there ways members of the community support one another that were not mentioned above?

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LIBRARY SUPPORTING COMMUNITY:

| <i>Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 5</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| The library staff go above and beyond to look out for the well-being of their patrons.                                   |   |   |   |   |   |
| The library offers a warm, inviting space where patrons can sit and visit to catch up on the goings-on in the community. |   |   |   |   |   |
| The library serves to make connections in the community.   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Library staff regularly attend and/or volunteer at community events not related to the library.                          |   |   |   |   |   |
| The library Facebook page/social media regularly shares other community events and happenings unrelated to the library.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| Partnerships with other community organizations/businesses/groups are a large part of the library's programming.         |   |   |   |   |   |

Are there ways the library supports the community that were not mentioned above?

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COMMUNITY SUPPORTING LIBRARY:

| <i>Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 5</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| The library always has a sufficient number of volunteers.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| The library receives donations from the community frequently (materials or funding).                                       |   |   |   |   |   |
| If the library needed something, I would just have to reach out and ask the community, and I know they would come through. |   |   |   |   |   |
| When the library holds a fundraiser, the community is always generous with its donations, volunteer time, OR support.      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Library programs typically have great attendance.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| I feel that the library is supported and beloved by my community.  |   |   |   |   |   |

Are there ways the community supports the library that were not mentioned above?

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Which section scored the highest? The lowest?

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*The following questions are meant to inspire brainstorming.* The examples given are ideas that have worked for others but may not apply to every library.

What could the library do to try and increase their support from the community?  
(Examples: Look for volunteers, hold a fundraising campaign, etc.)

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What could the library do to increase their support of the community?  
(Examples: Personalize your customer service by learning names and book preferences, promote and attend events unrelated to the community, etc.)

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Why do you think it is so important for the library to receive and offer community support in a small, rural town?

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