2021

TCI Re-envisioning Study:
Uintah Basin Community Report

College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Transforming Communities Institute
UtahStateUniversity®

College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Transforming Communities Institute
UtahState**University**®

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.
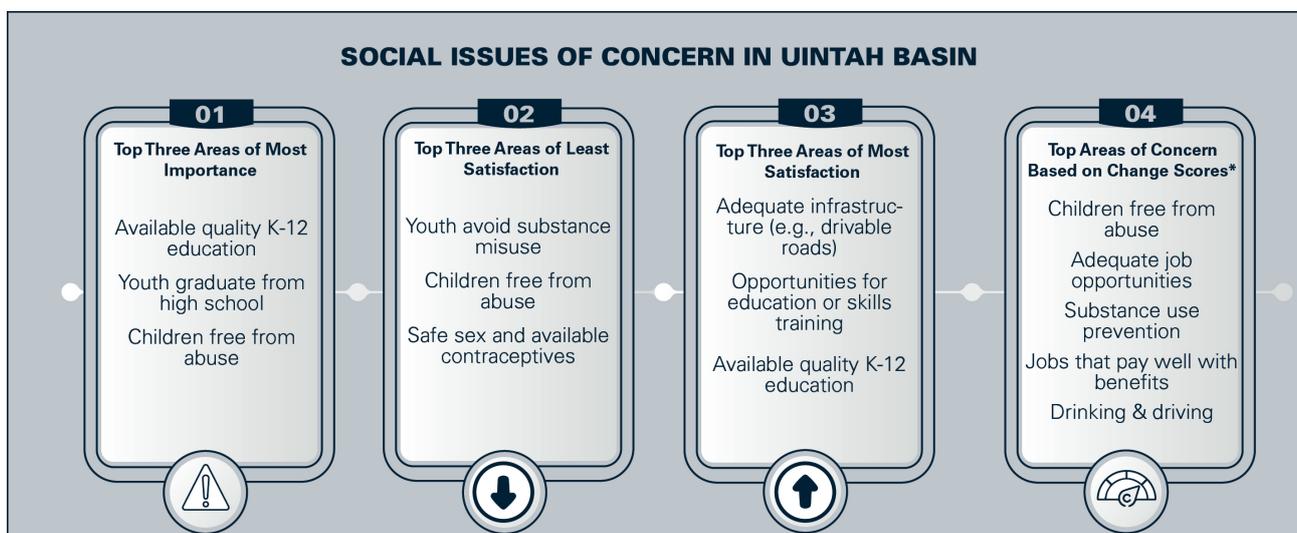
After several years of successful projects and changes in Utah communities, a need existed to re-examine the mission and strategy of TCI. Recently, TCI faculty leadership petitioned USU to advance from an initiative to an institute, with confirmation in February 2022. As part of this growth process, 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. Survey 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 Uintah Basin area.

Survey Findings

There were 12 Community Decision Maker responses and 10 Nonprofit responses from the Uintah Basin area. The mean age of Decision Makers was 46 (SD=5.83). Similarly, the mean age of Nonprofit respondents was 47.89 (SD=7.94). The mean time working in the community for Decision Makers was 23.64 (SD=13.66) and 19.80 (SD-9.43) for Nonprofit respondents. Most Decision Makers (91.1%) identified as female. However, Nonprofit respondents equally identified as male (50%) and female (50%). All Nonprofit respondents identified as white, and 91.1% of community decision makers identified as white. In both groups, over 60% of respondents had an advanced professional degree. When asked about yearly household income, 41.7% of community Decision Makers reported $100,000+, while 40% of Nonprofit respondents reported earning between $50,000-$74,999.

While 75% of Decision Maker respondents somewhat to strongly agreed that community members have a voice in their communities, only 37.5% of Nonprofit respondents agreed. Overall, 91.7% of Decision Maker and 87.5% of Nonprofit respondents somewhat to strongly agreed that USU is a community asset. Over 65% of Decision Makers and 50% of Nonprofits somewhat to strongly agree that they felt connected to the USU campus in their area.

SOCIAL ISSUES OF CONCERN IN UINTAH BASIN

01

Top Three Areas of Most Importance

Available quality K-12 education

Youth graduate from high school

Children free from abuse

02

Top Three Areas of Least Satisfaction

Youth avoid substance misuse

Children free from abuse

Safe sex and available contraceptives

03

Top Three Areas of Most Satisfaction

Adequate infrastructure (e.g., drivable roads)

Opportunities for education or skills training

Available quality K-12 education

04

Top Areas of Concern Based on Change Scores*

Children free from abuse

Adequate job opportunities

Substance use prevention

Jobs that pay well with benefits

Drinking & driving

*subtracting the overall satisfaction score from the importance scores

College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Transforming Communities Institute
Utah State University.

Focus Group Findings

In the focus group for the Uintah Basin area, there were four participants: one healthcare worker, one school district worker, and two mental health workers. The topic that the group chose to discuss was substance use disorder.

Substance Use Disorder & Treatment

Participants shared that substance misuse rates are an increased concern in the community. Participant 3, a school district worker, shared drugs in schools are particularly a problem because of the easy access and concealment of marijuana. Participants discussed the lack of substance use disorder treatment resources and support. Participant 1, a healthcare worker, shared an increase in violent substance users in the hospital.

The group noted that there are some interventions taking place. The health department is distributing NARCAN, and Uintah County has a drug court that is important for taking a treatment perspective in substance misuse. Participant 4 notes that since the Medicaid expansion, they are sending more people who now qualify for coverage to residential treatment across the Wasatch front. Two participants stated that there are several outpatient treatments centers in the community, but many struggle to recruit clinical staff. One participant suggested TCI can help with substance misuse by helping with the clinical provider shortage in the community.

treatment. Although there are several outpatient treatments centers in the community, many struggle to recruit clinical staff.

All four participants discussed the need for substance misuse prevention. Participant 1 said that prevention is happening in the hospitals with providers limiting opioid prescribing. Participant 2 discussed the need to focus on risk factors such as trauma, childhood ACEs, and parental substance use. Two participants noted that most youth prevention falls to schools with many curricula demands and insufficient resources. Participant 3 identified that the schools conduct parent prevention meetings, but they struggle to reach those who would benefit the most. All participants discussed that increasing protective factors for children is important.
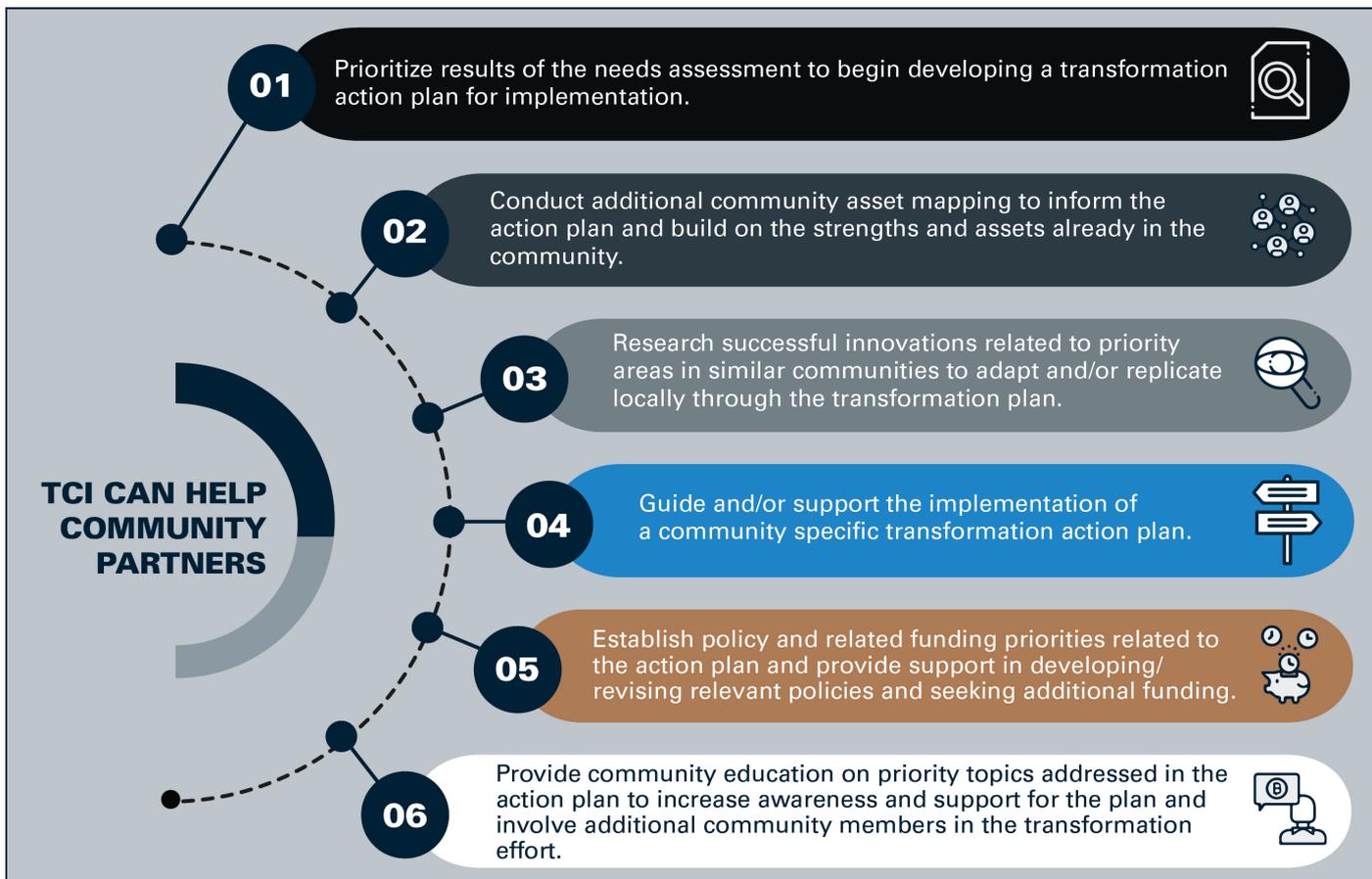
One participant emphasized this need by saying:

> *"I would bet that every one of us on this call had a very similar situation... my parents have really helped me be successful but wasn't just those two. It was this huge community... I actually created a list of all the individuals that had a positive impact in my life. I count 56 56 -- individuals that have had a positive impact on my life... Then you think about how we create that type of an environment, that type of social network for other kids?...It is not just those two fundamental ones [parents], but it's all the other people around them... a social worker...teacher, or coach...How do we as a society create [this environment]? ...How can I be one of the 56 for others, not just my own children?"*

College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Transforming Communities Institute
UtahStateUniversity®

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:

TCI CAN HELP COMMUNITY PARTNERS

01 Prioritize results of the needs assessment to begin developing a transformation action plan for implementation.

02 Conduct additional community asset mapping to inform the action plan and build on the strengths and assets already in the community.

03 Research successful innovations related to priority areas in similar communities to adapt and/or replicate locally through the transformation plan.

04 Guide and/or support the implementation of a community specific transformation action plan.

05 Establish policy and related funding priorities related to the action plan and provide support in developing/ revising relevant policies and seeking additional funding.

06 Provide community education on priority topics addressed in the action plan to increase awareness and support for the plan and involve additional community members in the transformation effort.

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/

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