

# IDAHO COMMUNITY REVIEW: A Community Visitation Program

Offered in Partnership by the  
Association of Idaho Cities, Idaho Department of Commerce, Idaho Housing & Finance Association,  
U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, University of Idaho,  
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development, & Idaho Rural Partnership

Community is a process, a condition, and a state of being in which people are working for their own futures and the future of their town. **The purpose of a community review is to assess and increase the vitality and wealth of a community.**

**Community vitality** means not only jobs and income, but resiliency and the capacity to respond to both negative and positive change.

**Community wealth** refers to the assets of the community, including all types of infrastructure, crime rates, climate, scenery, environmental quality, individual skills and community spirit.

The community review process is based on the notion that visitors to a community can offer a fresh perspective and make observations by listening to community members and touring the community from an outside perspective. Participating in a community review allows a community to see itself through the eyes of an objective observer. The success of a community review requires a significant degree of commitment and participation on the part of the community.

## **How does the Community Review work?**

- A visiting team of diverse community leaders tours, interviews, surveys, and observes a community based on a wide range of indicators and a few focus areas identified by the community.
- The visiting team listens to community leaders and citizens and fosters an open dialogue about the future of the community.
- The visiting team uses its experience with community development to offer suggestions and strategies to increase the community's health, wealth, and vitality through an interactive meeting and a subsequent report citing specific referrals.
- The visiting team continues to follow up with the community.

## **Who conducts the Community Review?**

A visiting team of 15-18 people are selected based on their skills and the focus areas identified by the community. Generally this may include a few mayors, city councilmembers, or city officials from other Idaho communities. Organizations likely to be on the team include: Association of Idaho Cities, Idaho Rural Partnership, Idaho Department of Commerce (Gem Community, regional specialists, or community development professionals), Local economic development district representatives (Ida-Ore, PAC, SICO, CEDA, etc.), Local Resource Conservation & Development teams, Local Job Service management, Local USDA Rural Development management, the Mountain States Group, Utility or Bank representatives, &

volunteer consultants. Other organizations might include: U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Idaho Department of Agriculture, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Commission on the Arts, Idaho Historical Society, Idaho Division of Environmental Quality, & University staff. Additionally, representatives of the Governor’s Office, Legislature, or Congressional delegation may participate in the process.

**FOCUS AREAS**

The visiting team will be divided into **three** small groups for parts of the Community Review, in order to better examine the whole community. Each group will have a particular area of focus, although observations and feedback will likely extend beyond this area of emphasis to incorporate larger themes. Focus areas might include some combination of the following: Local Economy, Infrastructure, Housing, Community Design & Identity, Land Use Planning, Education, Transportation, Communication, Health Care, Natural Resources, Arts, Historic, and Recreation Resources, Seniors & Youth, and Civic Life & Community Involvement.

After having a chance to talk internally, the visiting team meets with community leaders and citizens and gives an oral presentation of observations and options. Within approximately two to three months, a written report is sent to the community with detailed observations and expanding upon possible action items and resources. The community responds by describing how the community review was beneficial, detailing what action it plans to take, and offers improvement suggestions to the community review process. In follow-up meetings between community leaders and members of the visiting team, additional action strategies and ideas are brainstormed and developed. The following sample schedule suggests a two-day Community Review process.

**DAY 1**

- 9:00 a.m. Welcome, Introductions, & Community Overview
- 10:00 a.m. Community Tours for focus teams
- 3:30 p.m. Roundtable discussions with Community Leaders
- 5:30 p.m. Community Social Networking Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. Roundtable and community discussions with citizens
- Throughout Day Community Input Sessions & Interviews with citizens

**DAY 2**

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast with local service clubs
- 9:30 a.m. Visiting Team work session to gather final information, develop themes & preliminary resources, and prepare oral & written community reports
- 6:00-7:30 p.m. Facilitated Town Meeting with community leaders and citizens
- 8:00 p.m. Community Review Ends

2-3 months following the review **Community Review Report**

6 months – 1 year following the review **Ongoing Follow-up and Facilitation Assistance**

Please complete this application and return to:  
**Idaho Rural Partnership**  
2270 Old Penitentiary Road, Boise, Idaho 83712 -- (208) 332-8687

# Idaho Community Review Application

## A Community Visitation Program

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Please submit the answers to the following questions. Cities with populations under 10,000 are eligible to apply.

The community review program is an excellent in-kind value for its cost. Idaho Cities such as Heyburn, Jerome, Hayden, Kooskia, Priest River, Weiser, and Buhl have conducted successful community reviews for under \$2,500. Estimated costs for a community review through a private consulting firm, including salary, travel, lodging, site visit, data collection, and report fees, is approximately \$50,000 for equivalent expertise from 15-18 community development professionals.

Your community must agree to accept the following responsibilities to ensure the success of the review:

- Arrange for large and small group meeting sites throughout the review with community leaders and citizens
- Appoint a home team leader for each of the three focus areas you identify who is willing to work with the visiting team leaders to plan and coordinate the community review
- Arrange community tours and meeting agendas in the three focus areas you identify
- Pay for group transportation during the community tours and all team meals (many communities have partnered with school districts and civic groups to share transportation and meal costs)
- Suggest lodging locations for the visiting team
- Publicize the community review to maximize community participation
- Assist with survey data collection prior to the community review
- Provide one or two individuals during the review to assist with data entry
- Designate at least two community members to facilitate the follow-up process

Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address/City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone, Fax, Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Names/phone numbers/Email addresses of the three Focus Area Team Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Circle, or write in, the three focus areas that your community would like to emphasize.  
Focus areas might include some combination of the following:

Local Economic Development

Housing

Infrastructure

Community Design & Identity

Land Use Planning

Education

Health Care

Arts, Historic, and Recreation Resources

Seniors and Youth

Civic Life and Community Involvement

Other Focus Area(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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In the Focus Areas identified, what specific issues does your community want to address?

1.)

2.)

3.)

What is the best possible outcome resulting from a community review in your town?

What strategic planning, business development, enhancement, revitalization, clean-up, contracted or consulting efforts have occurred in your community in the last one to three years? (attach additional sheets, documentation, brochures, or report summaries as necessary)

Describe any economic development projects the city would like the visiting team to examine. For the purpose of this question an economic development project is any initiative to attract new business, help retain or expand existing business or improve infrastructure. In your description of the project identify any funders and partners contacted and/or involved with the project.

What other projects has your community completed in the last one to three years? (attach additional sheets or information as necessary)

Has your community completed and implemented a Gem Plan? If so, please describe to what extent and attach a copy of the Gem Plan to this application.

Starting with the 2010 community Reviews, we ask that communities participating in the review process provide brief updates on an annual basis. These updates will share progress the community has made as either a direct or indirect result of the Community Review. IRP will use the information to help future visiting team members adjust and refine their presentations and discussions to better meet the need of the communities participating in the reviews. A secondary purpose will be to measure the impact of reviews and demonstrate how resources and investments are leveraged through the process. This is critical to maintain support for our work with rural Idaho.

What possible dates do you propose for a community review?

Mayor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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