

COMMUNITY AUDIT

**SELF-
ASSESSMENT
INVENTORY**

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Workforce Learning Strategies
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COMMUNITY AUDIT PROJECT

SELF-ASSESSMENT INVENTORY

Community audits bring together information on economic and labor market trends. They vary in scope and purpose, depending on their precise goals. However, all depend on a common base of information about the regional labor market—both its demand and its supply sides—and about the kinds of workforce development and other critical resources available (such as housing, child care, transportation, supportive services, and so on). As such a community audit is fundamentally a strategic planning effort that involves all the relevant stakeholders in a defined area. In fact, some practitioners refer to these kinds of information-gathering efforts as “strategic research”.

This Self-Assessment Inventory is a checklist that enables local Workforce Investment Boards and other organizations engaged in the practice of community audits to identify areas of strength and potential areas of improvement. It is based on a performance model drawn from interviews with many kinds of organizations that engage in such strategic research, including Workforce Investment Boards, One Stop Career Centers, economic development organizations, community-based organizations, community colleges, union-led initiatives, and employer organizations. This Self-Assessment Inventory could also enable the Department of Labor to identify how to best target technical assistance efforts.

Begin, by reviewing the categories and then checking the box that best describes what your organization or community has done. Compare this against the “best practice” performance model that the outline represents.

PURPOSES/GOALS: Information is gathered on our economy and community regularly and for a wide range of purposes.

1. Each project is designed with a particular strategic purpose in mind.
2. These purposes have included:
 - a. Developing long-term strategic plans for workforce development in the region.
 - b. Developing specific, tailored workforce development strategies aimed the needs of particular population groups.
 - c. Developing tailored strategies aimed at addressing the workforce development needs of particular industries or firms.
 - d. Developing pro-active layoff aversion strategies.
 - e. Providing consumers with the information they need to make informed decisions.
 - f. Ensuring that education and training providers are responsive to the needs of the labor market.
 - g. Establishing performance standards (such as wage/income goals) for public programs.

YES	Sometimes	NO

SCOPE: The scope of each audit corresponds to its purpose.

1. The “baseline” information, describing both the demand and supply sides of the labor market, that is gathered corresponds to actual labor markets—as defined by commute patterns--rather than being confined by political boundaries (e.g. WIB areas, city or country boundaries, etc.).
2. On the other hand, specialized audits are targeted to whatever geographic area is relevant (which may be a particular community or sub-region).
3. The labor market information gathered for overall planning provides a detailed overview of the economy as a whole, including information on major industries, industry clusters, firms; on labor demand; on wages and working conditions; on the size, demographics, education and skill levels of the workforce; the populations experiencing barriers to labor market success; and the geographic relationship between workers and jobs.
4. Even more in-depth labor market information is also gathered to inform particular strategies (for example, very detailed information on particular kinds of jobs or particular industries or firms).
5. Information on similar economies is analyzed so that we have benchmarks for our own economic performance.

YES	Sometimes	NO

6. In addition to labor market information, we conduct a careful analysis of factors critical to economic health such as our educational system; transportation system; available childcare; housing; crime; substance abuse.

7. Finally, we research our assets and resources such as public (federal, state, local) funds available for workforce development, infrastructure, supportive services; educational and training programs available; supportive services programs and agencies; and so on.

YES	Sometimes	NO

SOURCES AND METHODS: The sources of information and methods used to conduct community audits correspond to the purpose of each and, to the extent possible, engage stakeholders in the process of information gathering.

1. For an overview of the labor market, most of the data we utilize are secondary data from publicly available sources; but these data are customized to our needs.
2. However, since some critical questions cannot be answered through secondary research and because secondary data is often outdated, we supplement this effort with primary research of our own (which we either do ourselves or contract out).
3. We understand that the process of information gathering can be a means through which stakeholders are engaged in the effort to understand their community and through which they can begin to build consensus about problems and solutions. As such, when it is practical we involve employers and community members in conducting the audit.
4. We also recognize the importance of hearing the customer's voice. As such, as practical we use focus groups and other methods to hear from workers, employers, and other members of the community.

YES	Sometimes	NO

MAPPING COMMUNITY ASSETS: Typically our community audits not only identify labor market needs and trends but also the assets available in our community to address our workforce development challenges.

1. When conducting an audit of our local economy, we look at our resources as well as our needs.
2. As part of implementing the Workforce Investment Act, we identified the programs and services provided by each of the required WIA partners.
3. We also identified—or plan to identify—the programs and services provided by the optional WIA partners.
4. And by other state, federal, and community-based organizations.
5. We have detailed the major discretionary funding sources available at the federal and state levels.
6. We have investigated philanthropic funding sources.
7. When we form a partnership to implement a particular initiative, we ask the partners to make specific contributions.

YES	Sometimes	NO

RESOURCES: A variety of resources—both public and private—are used to support “community audit” projects, allowing those projects to meet the needs of many stakeholders. In addition, multiple organizations and regions frequently pool resources to make the projects affordable.

1. “Community audit” projects are supported by a variety of funding sources, both public and private.
 2. Multiple public organizations pool resources.
 3. Multiple communities and regions pool resources.
 4. Workforce development and economic development organizations both contribute resources.
 5. Employers contribute funds and make in-kind contributions.
 6. Unions contribute funds and make in-kind contributions.
 7. Philanthropic organizations funds projects.
 8. Other funding sources_____
- _____
- _____

YES	Sometimes	NO

COLLABORATION AND REPRESENTATION: Community audits reflect the perspectives of all key stakeholders in the community and often are initiated by collaborations of these stakeholders.

1. "Audits" of the labor market and community are often initiated by collaborations of key stakeholders.

2. These partnerships include a wide range of stakeholders including:
 - a. Employers and/or employer organizations
 - b. Unions
 - c. Economic development agencies
 - d. Social service agencies
 - e. Community-based organizations
 - f. Educational institutions
 - g. Others

3. In cases where an audit is not initiated by a partnership, the project is careful to receive input from all relevant stakeholders. (For example, information may be checked for accuracy and usefulness.)

4. To the extent possible, projects are never simply staff-driven. There is some advisory or "governance" body of key stakeholders.

YES	Sometimes	NO
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		
e.		
f.		
g.		
g.		
g.		

UTILIZING THE RESULTS: Community audits are used to design strategic interventions and inform decision-making; they are not academic exercises.

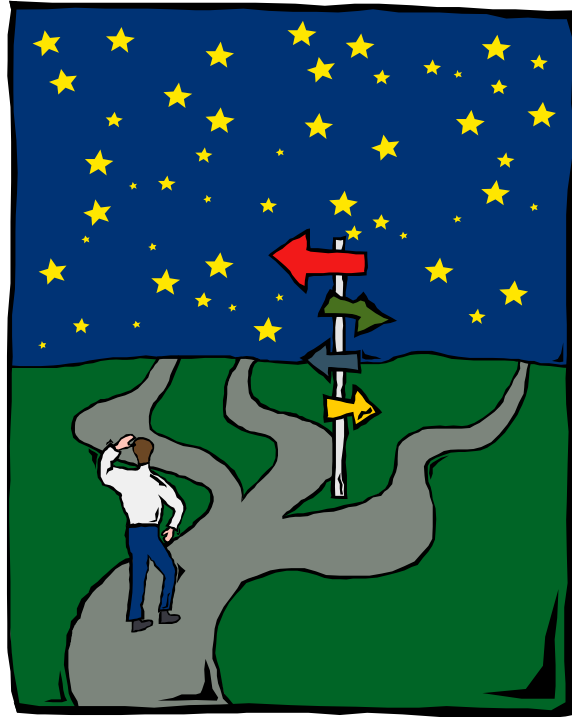
1. Most community audits are used to inform a strategic planning effort.
2. The decision-makers for each effort are broadly representative of the key relevant stakeholders in the community or region.
3. In each case, the decision-making body has the authority it needs to make the necessary decisions.
4. Employer members of the decision-making body are able to represent their industry (rather than just their firm) and have a serious and sustained commitment to the effort.
5. Staff facilitating the strategic planning effort has received formal training in strategic planning.
6. Many of these projects are not one-shot efforts but are long-term in nature.
7. Strategic plans that are developed are real guides for action.

YES	Sometimes	NO

PRODUCTS: The products that result from a community audit are appropriate to its purpose and goals and are easily used by their intended audience.

1. The information produced by each community audit project is never simply a collection of data but is designed to tell a story about our economy and community.
2. The “product” of each community audit corresponds to its purpose and goals.
3. Although the products of community audits vary widely, they are always “user-friendly” for their intended audience.
4. Formal strategic plans—including WIA plans—are one product of our community audit efforts. The information in these reports is organized to be useful to decision-makers. As such, any member of the community could read and understand them.
5. We also develop products for direct use by customers—both workers and employers. These products are simple to use; and they are designed to help these customers make informed choices.
6. Increasingly these products are interactive.
7. All products are timely and are updated frequently.

YES	Sometimes	NO



WHAT NOW?

Now you review what you've checked and compare it to where you would like your organization or community to be in conducting community audits. U.S. DOL has information available on types of community audits, methods of conducting, data sources, and effective practices. Check out our web site, determine your goals, organize your partners, and get started.