

Welcome to the Communities of Excellence Newsletter!



Message from Stephanie

*Stephanie Norling, Executive Director,
Communities of Excellence 2026*

Focusing on Data: The COE Digital Community Scorecard and Toolkit

Whether you work in government, business, education, healthcare or non-profits—data is the cornerstone of informed decision-making and strategic planning. We all rely on data to make decisions that impact the organizations and the communities we serve. In the 2023-2024 Communities of Excellence Framework, questions about data appear in all seven categories and the Community Profile, though it is featured most prominently in Category 4: Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management.

Accurate data provide a clear picture of our current reality, enabling leaders to identify trends, anticipate challenges, and seize opportunities. It can also help us build trust with our residents and other stakeholders, evaluate the success of our programs and services, and demonstrate impact.

Meaningful data facilitates collaboration among different sectors and organizations. When data is shared and accessible, it creates opportunities for partnerships and collective problem-solving.

When selecting metrics for an entire community, as the leaders in our National Learning Collaborative are doing, it is essential that they paint a picture of the interconnectedness of various factors affecting the community. By avoiding a narrow focus, leaders can develop more integrated and effective strategies that address the root causes of issues, avoid unintended consequences, and create sustainable solutions.

But how do we select metrics that represents our community, are inclusive, meaningful, accurate, and timely? This is the challenge we took on beginning in 2021 thanks to the support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Data Across Sectors for Health (DASH) Mentor Grant.

What's New with Us:

We are accepting applications for the 2024–2025 National Learning Collaborative: This three-phase experience is designed for community leaders from all sectors to align and strengthen their collaborative efforts while learning how to identify, prioritize, and take action on strategic advantages, challenges, and opportunities. Visit our website for more information and request our **Getting Started Readiness Assessment**.

Join us at the 2024 Communities of Excellence Fall Conference: Prepare to be dazzled as we bring together community leaders from across the country for two days of inspiration, innovation, and downright fun! The agenda is coming soon, but here are some highlights:

- Join our first-of-its-kind **Housing and Economic Development Workshop** including a national housing and land policy expert in a special presentation called “Who Owns America”.
- Our **Lightening Round Breakout Sessions** are sure to inspire! These interactive, rapid-fire sessions feature COE Communities presenting their promising practices on topics like community engagement, measuring impact, storytelling, and more.
- The Monday evening Awards Celebration and Reception is going to be the cat's pajamas! Help us celebrate the achievements of communities across the country and join us for the inaugural Founders Award.

Learn more at www.communitiesofexcellence2026.org.

We knew that our community teams were struggling with how to best select, track, and communicate the data that is essential for moving from reactive to systems-thinking leadership. They were asking for a standard set of metrics, reliable resources of credible data, and help with messaging. While the Communities of Excellence Framework, based on the proven Baldrige Excellence Framework is a comprehensive system, it is not prescriptive. Providing a Common Community Scorecard Template and Data Communications Tools would be helpful to COE, too, as we continuously validate the effectiveness of our model.

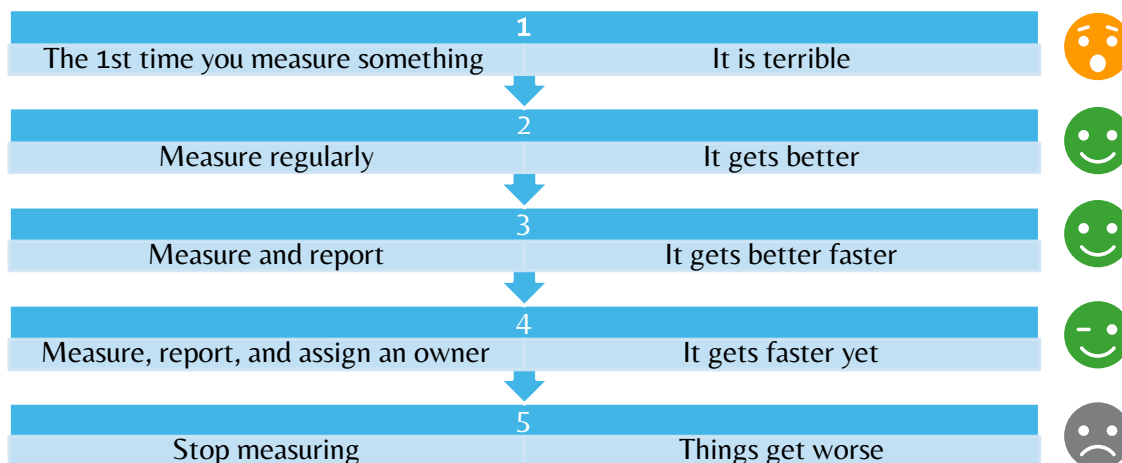
Today, our initial scorecard of five interdependent, high-level metrics has expanded to include over 30 cascading metrics, detailed instructions to access the data, data visualization guidelines, and data literacy tools. In this newsletter you'll learn how we've recently digitalized this scorecard to make it even more accessible and customizable to communities across the country and hear how one community in central Minnesota plans to use it.

Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication.

Stephanie Norling

Executive Director

Five Measurement Truths



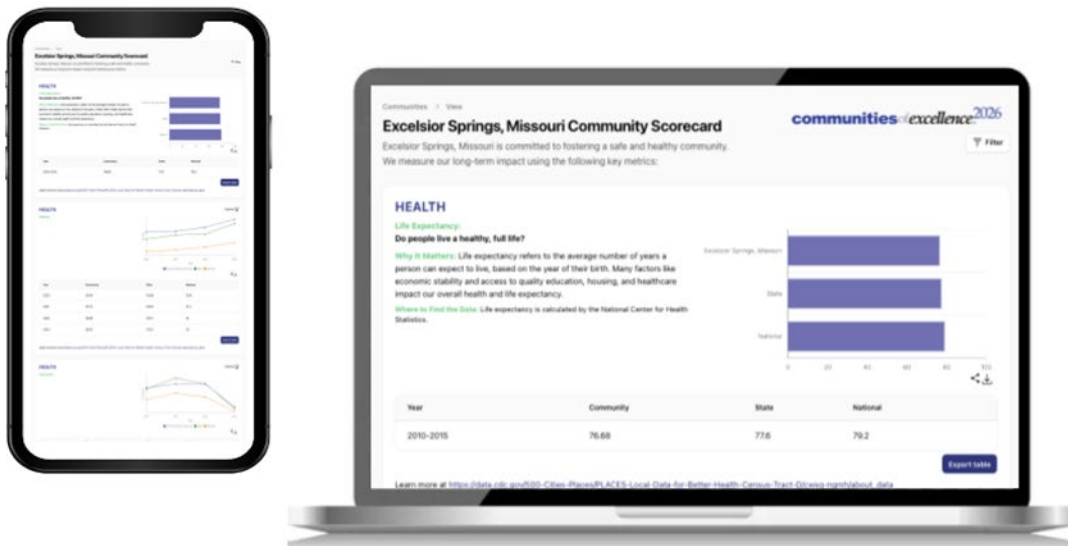
Some bonus content for you: This slide above is from our December 2023 All Cohort and Alumni Session on Community Resilience and Excellence Measures. Our thanks for Gary Floss, COE Faculty and Mentor for bringing us these insights! One way to learn more about Communities of Excellence AND our Digital Scorecard and Toolkit is by attending our Fall Conference. Learn more on our website at <https://communitiesofexcellence2026.org/get-involved/fall-conference-2024/>. We hope to see you there!

Introducing the NEW COE Digital Scorecard!

communitiesofexcellence²⁰²⁶

TAPP Network

In today's world, data isn't just numbers—it's the lifeblood of smart decision-making, compelling storytelling, securing crucial funding, and assessing impact. Communities of Excellence 2026 (COE) is excited to introduce the COE Digital Scorecard, a powerful tool crafted to deliver real-time, actionable insights.



Supporting Your Digital Transformation Journey

COE has teamed up with [Tapp Network](#), a globally recognized marketing technology firm, to support the digital transformation of COE communities. In an age of acceleration where market forces such as technological advancements, economic shifts, and evolving social dynamics converge, keeping up with technology is crucial. This collaboration follows a dynamic three-phase approach:

1. **Phase 1: Advanced Data Analytics:** Empowering communities with real-time metrics and insights for informed decision-making through the **new COE Digital Scorecard**.
2. **Phase 2: Technology Modernization:** Deploying state-of-the-art tools and digital infrastructure to streamline operations.
3. **Phase 3: AI-Enhanced Communications:** Offering predictive analytics and automation to optimize community engagement and accelerate impact.

We're thrilled about our strategic partnership with Tapp Network, which will provide COE communities with exclusive access to the advanced COE Digital Scorecard and Tapp's innovative services. This collaboration ensures our communities stay at the cutting edge of technological innovation, empowering them to navigate and thrive in this new age of technology acceleration.

Why the Scorecard Matters

The Common Community Performance Scorecard has always been crucial. It's a strategic roadmap, guiding communities toward measurable, sustainable enhancement. By focusing on key performance indicators, communities align their efforts, resources, and initiatives towards common goals, fostering collaboration and driving significant positive change.

Features and Benefits of the New COE Digital Scorecard

The COE Digital Scorecard takes the original scorecard to the next level with real-time data access, seamless comparisons, and enhanced flexibility.

1. Real-Time Metrics and Cascading Metrics

Imagine having the pulse of your community at your fingertips. With the digital scorecard, communities can access their metrics in real-time. No more waiting for reports—updates are instant. This leads to faster decision-making and more responsive strategies. Communities can track cascading metrics that go from broad goals to specific, actionable data points, ensuring alignment with overarching objectives.

2. Community Comparisons

In the quest for excellence, knowing how you stack up is crucial. The COE Digital Scorecard lets you compare metrics within your community and against others. This benchmarking provides a nuanced understanding of your standing relative to peers, enabling the identification of best practices and accelerating progress.

3. Sub-Community Integration and Custom Data Uploads

The digital platform supports the integration of sub-communities, allowing detailed analysis of different neighborhoods or districts within a larger community. This is key to addressing localized challenges with tailored solutions. Plus, the scorecard supports custom data uploads, providing a comprehensive and personalized performance overview.

4. Visual Graphs and Data Downloads

Data tells a story, and the COE Digital Scorecard offers the tools to tell it compellingly. Download visual graphs and data spreadsheets. Integrate them into community websites, enhancing transparency and accessibility. This feature supports storytelling, making it easier to share progress with stakeholders, secure funding, and demonstrate impact.

5. Customized Solutions

No two communities are alike, and the Tapp Network team gets that. They collaborate with each community to customize their scorecard and tailor solutions that address their unique needs and challenges. This personalized approach ensures each community maximizes the scorecard's effectiveness, aligning it perfectly with their specific goals.






A Sneak Peek at the COE Common Community Scorecard Toolkit

In addition to the scorecard itself, we are continuously adding to a toolkit of offerings to make sure leaders, residents, organizations, and other key stakeholders know how to access and make sense of their data, create powerful visualizations, and understand and teach critical aspects of data literacy. The toolkit is a work in progress and is informed through direct feedback from our communities. Our most recent addition was titled “30 Terms to Know: A Data Literacy Glossary”.



THE FIVE PRIMARY INDICATORS

These five primary indicators have been chosen based on their long-term impact and free access to data by any community in the United States, regardless of population size. They are high-level indicators that also demonstrate the interconnected and interdependent nature of the five core areas of communities: health, education, the economy, housing, and other aspects of quality of life.

 Health	Life Expectancy
 Education	HS Graduation Rate
 Economy	Median Household Income
 Housing	Homes with Suboptimal Conditions
 Quality of Life: Social and Community	Adults with 14+ “Not Good” Mental Health Days Per Month

Next Steps: Onboarding and Support

Starting this journey requires expert guidance. Tapp Network, on behalf of COE, will onboard each community, providing access and comprehensive training to ensure full leverage of the scorecard's features. Once setup is complete, Tapp Network will offer a complimentary consultation on behalf of COE, including a technology audit and a digital transformation roadmap. This support will help communities identify further opportunities for technological enhancement and strategic growth, ensuring a smooth and effective transition into the digital era.

Schedule your COE Digital Scorecard onboarding today.

Contact. Stephanie Norling (snorling@communitiesofexcellence2026.org) or Joe DiGiovanni (Joe@TappNetwork.com)

COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

Granite Table Focusing on Data to Empower the Greater St. Cloud Region

By Peggy Sammons, Granite Table, Data and Information Committee Chair

Intentions for using the COE scorecard? Yes!

Granite Table, the Central MN Communities of Excellence Alumni Cohort, has been talking more and more about data as a key priority to drive positive change in the Greater St. Cloud Region. As the local scorecard evolves, Granite Table partnered and contracted with St. Cloud State University and a community expert, to commission a mapping dashboard using an ArcGIS Hub platform. The Hub provides insights at the Census tract level across 6 cities and 27 tracts. The initial focus has been housing indicators to support prominent existing activities in the community.

A community scorecard aligns with the work of multiple Granite Table partners. One partner is the Central MN Alliance (CMA), which is a collaborative of three county public health agencies and the CentraCare Division responsible for community health improvement. CentraCare has been the Granite Table backbone and CMA has led the Health Sector work from cohort inception. The CMA prepares a community health improvement plan (CHIP) every three years and the current CHIP identifies a goal to increase data access to the three-county region. The Greater St. Cloud Region lies in the heart of the three counties. All data for the Greater St. Cloud Region also applies to all three counties.

Version one of the Granite Table mapping Hub became available in May 2024. The CMA Data Committee and the Granite Table Data & Information Committee had their first joint meeting at the end of May and are in the process of analyzing what the maps are telling us about the community. The identified insights will be

shared with the community via the Granite Table website and through partner conversations.

The highly anticipated COE tabular and graphing scorecard, supported by the Tapp Network, providing additional COE cascading indicators and allowing a space to add local measures to support the community story, will complement the Granite Table ArcGIS Hub. The combination of spatial and tabular data will give Granite Table a 360-degree view of the region, empowering us and community partners to make more strategic, data-driven decisions. We are particularly looking forward to the sub-communities function, which will allow us to create subcommunities for the three counties and any other geographies that will support partners as we engage with conversations about the data.



Above: Granite Table Steering Committee Member David Tilstra, MD shares plans for the scorecard during the 2023 COE Fall Conference.

As the local and COE supported scorecards are used, we are confident that this data-driven approach will drive sustainable, measurable progress across the region. *Learn more about Granite Table at <https://granitetable.org/>.*