

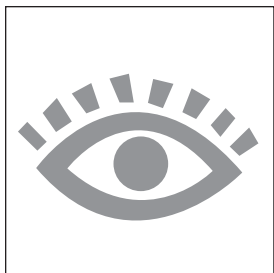


FIRST IMPRESSIONS COMMUNITY EXCHANGE TEAM MEMBER'S GUIDE BOOKLET



"Seeing things in a whole new light"

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Rural Development Division



**FIRST
IMPRESSIONS**
COMMUNITY
EXCHANGE
TEAM MEMBER'S
GUIDE BOOKLET

"Seeing things in a whole new light"



Table of Contents

Visiting Team Member Information	1
Prior to Your Visit	5
The Five Minute Impression	6
Community Entrances	9
Housing and Residential Areas	13
Education, Health, Social and Emergency Services	17
Local Economy: Downtown, Retail, Industry	23
Professional, Commercial and Government Services	37
Public Infrastructure and Planning	40
Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Faith, Entertainment and Recreation	45
Information from Community Residents	53
Wrap-up	59
First Impressions Community Exchange Photo Log	64



Visiting Team Member Information

You have volunteered to be a member of our community's Visiting Team in a First Impressions Community Exchange. Thank you for your commitment.

Along with other Visiting Team Members, you will make a short *incognito* visit to an exchange community you are not familiar with and record your first impressions. You are not expected to offer expert advice – you are simply expected to give an outsider's honest viewpoint on various aspects of the exchange community.



Activities During The Visit

Visiting Team Members travel together to the exchange community. You will tour the community, take photos, interact with people and businesses, complete a questionnaire and return it to the Coordinator.

A group drive through the community usually starts off the tour. Then, different members of the team split up in pairs or individually to role-play during the visit. For example, you could be asked to play someone who is a new resident, a person considering moving to the area, a tourist, or someone looking to open a business. The role you have will determine some of the places you visit and questions you ask.

Your questions might include:

- I've never been here before. What is there to do for recreation?
- Are there any good restaurants in this town? Where would be a good place for lunch?
- I might bring my family here on our way to a wedding next month. Are there any good places to stay?
- I may move to this area. Are the schools good here? Where is the best place to look for housing?
- Where can I get information on commercial space to buy or lease in this community?

You need to be **discreet** as you record observations and seek out information about the community you visit. Before you complete your visit, your Team should reconvene to see if any photos are needed of key sites and locations.



Time Commitment

There are preparations you will need to make before the visit as well as follow-up reporting tasks.

The pre-visit preparations may take 2 hours of your time. You will need to review the questionnaire, maps and checklists and participate in arranging trip logistics. The Coordinator will give you detailed information on meeting spots, things you need to bring along, and discuss any arrangements for covering costs such as fuel and meals. You will be provided with any necessary equipment, such as pens, a clipboard, a note pad and a camera.

Depending on the distance to your exchange community, travel time by car may take up to 2 1/2 hours each way. Typically, the visit itself is going to take 6-10 hours and the follow-up report writing may take an additional 2 hours or so.

In addition, one or two members of the team with skills and experience in making presentations will be selected to present the results of the team's work to the exchange community within 4-6 weeks of the visit. Providing constructive criticism and praise always requires some diplomacy. Careful attention to the words and phrases contained in the report is necessary. Preparing for this presentation and going back to the exchange community to present it could add another day to the time commitment.

Depending on your role on the team your volunteer commitment may range from 1 to 3 working days.



A Learning Opportunity

The exchange element of the First Impressions Community Exchange is based on the notion that all communities can learn from their peers. A First Impressions visit can give you new insights about your own community. Based on hundreds of U.S. exchanges in Illinois and Wisconsin, and over 2 dozen visits in Ontario, visiting teams often return with good ideas for a new project to implement in their hometown, after seeing something in place in the exchange community.



Remember:

- We'll get better information if residents do not know we are there to assess the community.
- Try to discover not only their warts, but also the ways in which they shine!
- Feel free to record additional community strengths and weaknesses not included on the assessment guide.
- Appear to be shopping, conducting business, or making a social visit.
- Strike up casual conversations with residents.
- Be observant.
- Have a good time!



About the Questionnaire

Remember to use this questionnaire as a guide. There may be variations to the questions that are more fitting to the community you are visiting.

WHERE YOU ARE ASKED TO RATE SOMETHING, USE THE FOLLOWING AS A GUIDE:

- 1 – Needs urgent attention/action
- 2-4 – Needs improvement
- 5 – Satisfactory
- 6-9 – Good/Very Good
- 10 – Excellent! You should be telling others about this!

In the spaces provided, give specific (rather than general) comments on both the positive aspects of the community, and areas where you feel changes/improvements could be made.

Thanks and Good Luck!



Prior to Your Visit

What is your impression of the community before your upcoming visit?
What are you expecting to see? Please comment on what you know about
this community.

FOR VISITING TEAM COORDINATORS:

How easy was it to get information by mail and telephone about the community
you are visiting? Are you satisfied with the quality of information received? Did
the information arrive in a timely fashion?

Please rate and comment on the community's online materials and information (only answer if you were assigned the task of reviewing the community's website).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent

Observations:



The Five Minute Impression

After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, what was your first impression?

COMMUNITY ENTRANCES/HOUSING



Community Entrances – Road/Highway

Approach the community from the major entrances. Rate and comment on each entrance.

ENTRANCE #1 _____
(Road name and direction)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

ENTRANCE #2 _____
(Road name and direction)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	



Community Entrances – Road/Highway (continued)

ENTRANCE #3 _____

(Road name and direction)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent

ENTRANCE #4 _____

(Road name and direction)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent



Community Entrances – Air, Rail and Bus Terminal (if applicable)

ENTRANCE #5 _____

(Air/Rail/Harbour/Bus terminal)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

(Air/Rail/Harbour/Bus terminal)

ENTRANCE #6 _____

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	



Community Entrances – Air, Rail and Bus Terminal (if applicable) (continued)

ENTRANCE #7 _____

(Air/Rail/Harbour/Bus terminal)

How favourable an impression of the community does this entrance provide?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent



Housing and Residential Areas

Drive through as many neighbourhoods as possible, including the Downtown.

How would you rate the overall quality, affordability, and availability of housing in the community?

QUALITY	TYPE OF HOUSING
----------------	------------------------

(rating 1-10)

Existing/Older Homes

Senior Citizen Housing

New Construction

Apartments/Rental Housing

Is there an adequate mix of housing to suit a variety of income levels?

What are the most appealing features of the housing in this community? Why?

What are the least appealing features of housing in the community? Why?



Housing and Residential Areas (continued)

Please comment on the quality and availability of residential infrastructure (e.g., roads, sidewalks, lighting, public transportation and green space).

How would you rate the **overall appeal** of housing to the following groups?

APPEAL
(rating 1-10)

GROUP

- _____ Single young adults
- _____ Young families
- _____ Middle income
- _____ Senior citizen
- _____ Upscale/professional

EDUCATION/HEALTH/SOCIAL/ EMERGENCY SERVICES



EDUCATION

Comment on the availability and appearance of schools.

Pre-school/Daycare

Primary/Elementary

High School

College/University



Education, Health, Social and Emergency Services (continued)

What do residents (young and old) think about the quality and availability of their local schools?

Overall, how would you rate the quality and availability of schools for a community of this size?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Comment on the availability and apparent quality of healthcare facilities.

Hospitals:



Education, Health, Social and Emergency Services (continued)

Physician and dentist offices and clinics:

Long-term care and nursing home facilities:

Other health services (e.g., Chiropractor, physiotherapy, naturopath, massage)

Overall, how would you rate the adequacy of health care services for a community of this size?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention			Satisfactory				Excellent		



Education, Health, Social and Emergency Services (continued)

SOCIAL SERVICES

What social services (e.g., day care, senior's centre, counselling) are available in the community?

What types of not-for-profit organizations and clubs are within the community?

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Do residents feel fire, ambulance and policing services are adequate?

LOCAL ECONOMY



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry

What is your impression of the overall health of the local economy?

DOWNTOWN

Explore the downtown and visit as many businesses as possible.

Could you locate the downtown easily? Why or why not?

Rate and comment on the overall appearance of the downtown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention			Satisfactory				Excellent		

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping in the downtown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention			Satisfactory				Excellent		



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

Rate and comment on the customer service you received in the downtown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent Attention Satisfactory Excellent

Rate and comment on the signage in the downtown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent Attention Satisfactory Excellent

Rate and comment on the window displays in the downtown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent Attention Satisfactory Excellent



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise in the downtown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Comment on the mix of facilities and services in the downtown (housing, professional services, retail, recreation, accommodation & food, industry, parks, etc.).

Rate and comment on the quality and availability of parking in the downtown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

Rate and comment on the quality (appearance, adequacy, etc.) of lighting in the downtown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Does the downtown play a role in tourism? Is there potential for the downtown to play a greater role?

Describe the residential housing mix in the downtown (e.g., apartment, single detached, main street).

Would you find the downtown to be a desirable place to live?



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT OVERALL RETAIL

Describe the mix of retail shopping available (malls, specialty shops, strip malls, big box stores) throughout the community.

What retail goods do local residents appear to need to travel to surrounding communities to buy?

What stores or services were missing that you would expect to find?

What retail stores or services did you find that were unusual or unexpected for a town of this size?



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

What store(s) in this community would you travel a distance of more than 40 kilometres to patronize?

Rate the overall condition of the retail sector.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

SPECIFIC RETAIL SHOPPING AREAS

If applicable, explore other retail shopping areas and visit as many businesses as possible.

RETAIL AREA #1

Type (Shopping mall etc.): _____

Location: _____

Rate and comment on the overall appearance.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

Rate and comment on the customer service at the businesses you visited.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent

Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

RETAIL AREA #2

If there is not a second retail shopping area, leave this section blank.

Type: _____

Location: _____

Rate and comment on the overall appearance.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

Rate and comment on the customer service at the businesses you visited.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

LOCAL INDUSTRIES

Consider industries only within or adjacent to the community

What are the major industrial sectors in the community (e.g., manufacturing, construction, transportation)?

Who do you think are the major employers in the community?

What are the major types of manufacturing in the community?

What are the major types of primary industry in the community (e.g. agriculture, mining, forestry or fishing)?



Local Economy Downtown, Retail and Industry (continued)

Is the community noticeably dependent on any one type of industry?
If so, please comment.

Is there an industrial park or serviced land where industries could locate or expand? Explain.

Are the industrial facilities well maintained? Explain.

Would this community be an attractive location for industrial development?
Why or why not?

**PROFESSIONAL, COMMERCIAL
AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES
PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE
AND PLANNING**

**Professional,
Commercial and
Government
Services etc.**



Professional, Commercial and Government Services

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Are banks and ATMs conveniently located? Do the banks have convenient hours of service?

How would you rate the adequacy of financial services for a community of this size?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

What other professional services are available (accounting, legal, etc.)? Are there any professional services missing? Be specific.

COMMERCIAL SERVICES

What types of commercial businesses serve the local community (e.g., high-speed internet provider)?



Professional, Commercial and Government Services (continued)

What commercial services appear to be missing in the community (e.g., print shop, industrial cleaning service)?

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

Are municipal offices conveniently located? Please comment.

How would you rate the availability and quality of the following information provided by the municipal government?

Community brochure/guide:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Business Directory:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	



Professional, Commercial, and Government Services (continued)

Community Profile (including business and industrial opportunities):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

If applicable, were you able to find adequate information to make informed retail, commercial and/or industrial business investment decisions?
(Answer only if you played the role of a potential business investor.)



PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Rate each of the following for quality, accessibility, or availability where relevant.

Public Transportation:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent

Sidewalks:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent

Streets:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent



Public Infrastructure and Planning (continued)

Landscaping, Trees:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Public Restrooms:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Street Signage:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Pay phones, drinking fountains, benches, etc.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	



PLANNING

Do you see any conflicting land uses in the community (e.g., a residential subdivision next to a pulp mill)?

Are all land uses appropriate (commercial, residential, green space, etc.)? Specify where land uses are not appropriate.

Did you experience traffic or pedestrian congestion anywhere? If yes, please specify location.

Are community facilities and infrastructure generally accessible for people with disabilities? Please comment.

**TOURISM, CULTURE AND HERITAGE,
FAITH, ENTERTAINMENT
AND RECREATION**



Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Faith, Entertainment, and Recreation

Does the community have a strong tourism sector? Please comment.

Does the community have a slogan/brand? If yes, what is it?

Is the community well known for an attraction, event or festival? Are there any events/festivals held annually?

Are there any community events that could be expanded/developed to become a tourist attraction?

Have you seen any attractions (natural or man-made) that could be developed to draw tourists?



Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Faith, Entertainment, and Recreation (continued)

Rate and comment on the quality and appearance of existing tourist attractions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Do you consider any of the existing attractions to be underdeveloped? Please comment.

SERVICES FOR TOURISTS

Is there a Visitor's Center, Chamber of Commerce office, or other facility serving the needs of tourists? Please comment on the staff, facilities, location, signage, marketing material, maps, etc.

Comment on the availability and selection of accommodation in the community.



Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Faith, Entertainment, and Recreation (continued)

Are there facilities to accommodate a conference and/or a large number of visitors?

Rate and comment on the quality and availability of public restrooms.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Rate and comment on the quality of restaurants.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	



Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Faith, Entertainment, and Recreation (continued)

Rate and comment on the variety/mix of restaurants.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

Where do local residents recommend as places to stay, eat, and visit?

What local restaurant, specialty shop or attraction would bring you back to this community in the near future?

CULTURE AND HERITAGE

What community events are popular with residents?



Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Faith, Entertainment, and Recreation (continued)

Do the residents feel there is a lack of community events?

Does the community have any heritage buildings? Are they well maintained?

FAITH/RELIGION

Comment on the number, appearance, and selection of religious buildings in the community.

Are there any outstanding architectural or design features of religious buildings you visited?



Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Faith, Entertainment, and Recreation (continued)

What is your overall impression of religious buildings you visited?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Needs Urgent
Attention

Satisfactory

Excellent

ENTERTAINMENT

What does the community do for entertainment?

What entertainment opportunities do residents feel they lack?

Does the community have a vibrant night life? Please comment.



RECREATION

Facilities

Rate and comment on the availability of and appearance of each of the following types of recreational facilities.

Parks:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention			Satisfactory				Excellent		

Public recreation facilities:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention			Satisfactory				Excellent		

Private recreation facilities:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention			Satisfactory				Excellent		



Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Faith, Entertainment, and Recreation (continued)

Based on your impression, what do people in this community appear to do for recreation?

What recreational facility (private or public) in this community surprised you?

What recreational activities or facilities seemed to be missing?

Rate the overall suitability of the recreational facilities for each of the following groups.

SUITABILITY GROUP

(rating 1-10)

- _____ Senior citizens
- _____ Families
- _____ Singles, young adults
- _____ Teens
- _____ Children (13 and under)



Information from Community Residents

Comment on the quality of information and assistance provided by residents and employees of local businesses.

Were community residents knowledgeable about their community? Explain.

Did they refer you to someone else who would help? If yes, who?

In general, did residents you spoke with have a positive or negative attitude toward their community? Why? Did you sense community pride?



Information from Community Residents (continued)

Did residents identify any particular issues to be of major concern (e.g., safety)?

Overall, how would you rate the quality of information from community residents and business employees?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Needs Urgent Attention		Satisfactory						Excellent	

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Describe the community using your senses.

Taste – Was there any specialty food item, bakery, restaurant or candy store that you will remember?



Information from Community Residents (continued)

Smell – Is there a scent that characterizes the community?

Sight – Was there any colourful or striking feature that made an impression on you?

Sound – What sounds did you hear? Please comment on the level of noise in the community.

How would describe the overall environmental health of the community (air quality, litter, noise pollution, etc.)?

What, if anything, did you experience that had a strongly negative or positive impact on the way the community felt to you? Be specific.

WRAP-UP



The following questions should be discussed and answered as a group.

Was your perception prior to the visit accurate? In what ways was the community different from what you expected?

Did the information you collected prior to the visit accurately reflect what you observed/experienced? Why or why not?

What is the most outstanding feature of this community?



Wrap-up (continued)

Would you consider this a suitable location for a young family? Why or why not?

Would you consider this a suitable location for a retired person? Why or why not?

Would you consider this a suitable location for a young single adult? Why or why not?

Would you consider visiting this community as a tourist? Why or why not?

Would you consider locating your retail or service business here? Why or why not?



Wrap-up (continued)

Would you consider locating a manufacturing business here? Why or why not?

List five positive things you observed about this community.

1

2

3

4

5

What are three potential opportunities available to the community?

1

2

3



Wrap-up (continued)

What are the five biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

1

2

3

4

5

What will you remember most about this community six months from now (positive or negative)?

What have you learned here that has changed your impression of your own community?

Has this experience given you any new ideas about what is needed in your own community?



Wrap-up (continued)

Describe ONE idea that you will borrow for use in your own business/community and describe how you will start to implement it within the next 72 hours!

Other comments:



First Impressions Community Exchange Photo Log

PHOTOGRAPHER NAME:

Photo #	Description	Location
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		



First Impressions Community Exchange Photo Log (continued)

PHOTOGRAPHER NAME:

Photo #	Description	Location
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		



















