

Louisiana Community Economic Readiness Index

The purpose of the community economic readiness index is to help citizens analyze and plan actions to improve their community's opportunity to increase employment and income. This index is a list of activities and conditions that can be controlled by the community.

To complete the form, fill in the *yes* or *no* blanks for each item, then rank the category as a whole. If you do not know the answer, check the question mark (?) blank. Items marked *no* and categories rated *fair* or *minimal* probably indicate areas in need of improvement. The index was designed for rural communities of between 1,000 and 25,000 people.

1. The community has an economic development plan:
 - a. Prepared & reviewed by a citizens' committee. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - b. Formally adopted within the last three years. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - c. Including a complete analysis of sources of employment ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - d. That encourages economic development. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

2. The community has a land use plan and zoning ordinance that delineate industrial and commercial areas.
 - a. It has been written or formally reviewed with the last three years. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - b. Provision is made for expansion of commercial and industrial sites. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

3. The community has an industrial development committee/board/corporation, etc.
 - a. There is an organized industrial development sales team. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - b. Industrial development information is updated annually. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - c. An industrial prospect search outside the community has been financed within the past two years. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - d. Annual budget (amount) \$ _____
 - e. Membership (number) # _____

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

4. The community has a system for inventorying vacant & available commercial buildings.

- a. A list of current vacancies can be provided within two days. Yes No ?
- b. The list includes square footage, photographs, property description and ownership. Yes No ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

- 5. The community has an industrial site (with vacancies).
 - a. It owns or has an option on a site of at least 15 acres. Yes No ?
 - b. There is an adequate water line (10" or more) to the property line. Yes No ?
 - c. There are heavy duty streets not through a residential area to the boundary. Yes No ?
 - d. There is an adequate sewer line (12" or more) to the property line. Yes No ?
 - e. A firm site price has been set. Yes No ?
 - f. A soil test boring has been made. Yes No ?
 - g. A copy of site covenants and restrictions is available. Yes No ?
 - h. A topographical map is available, including site layout. Yes No ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

- 6. The community has a vacant building on an industrial site.
 - a. Minimum of 10,000 square feet Yes No ?
 - b. Floor to ceiling clearance = 16 feet Yes No ?
 - c. It is expandable. Yes No ?
 - d. Layout and photo are available. Yes No ?
 - e. An annual update is filed with the Louisiana Department of Economic Development. Yes No ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

- 7. The community has done a labor survey within the past three years.
 - a. It includes the number of workers by employers. Yes No ?
 - b. It includes a wage rate & fringe benefit analysis Yes No ?
 - c. It identifies which labor unions, if any, are present in the community. Yes No ?
 - d. It describes absenteeism rates. Yes No ?
 - e. It identifies workforce participation rates. Yes No ?
 - f. It indicates the distance people will travel to work. Yes No ?
 - g. The community is organized to do a special labor survey on request. Yes No ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

8. The community has a promotional brochure and/or web site.
- a. It describes the recreational opportunities. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - b. It provides a description of available goods and services. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - c. It describes the quality of public services such as schools, hospitals, etc. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - d. It describes private housing quality. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - e. It describes major employers (industry, commerce, government). ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - f. It has been revised within the last two years. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

9. The community has completed and distributed a "Community Economic Profile" within the past year such as those done by utility companies, etc.

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

10. The local government helps business acquire financing.
- a. Has passed an industrial revenue bond interest resolution. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - b. Has created an enterprise zone, if eligible. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - c. Has encouraged the formation of a small business development organization ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

11. Local banks support community economic development.
- a. Local banks have actively solicited commercial and industrial loans within the past two years. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - b. Local banks have made Small business Administration guaranteed loans within the last two years. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - c. Bank officials are active in community economic development organizations. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

12. The community has a program to encourage existing businesses (commercial and industrial).
- a. At least three adult courses in business management were taught last year. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?
 - b. The community has a n active retention and expansion program and regularly visits business managers. ___ Yes ___ No ___ ?

c. An annual industrial or commercial recognition event is held. Yes No ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

13. The community has a chamber or commerce or business organization working on retail sales programs and commercial development.

a. It has a paid executive at least on a part-time basis. Yes No ?

b. It has a tourism promotion committee Yes No ?

1. Number of members _____

2. Annual budget \$ _____

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

14. The community completed a trade area survey or analysis within the last three years.

a. The findings have been reported to local businesses. Yes No ?

b. The findings have been communicated to business prospects outside of the community. Yes No ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

15. The community has an active downtown development program.

a. It has a regular calendar of main street promotional activities such as monthly trade or market days. Yes No ?

b. It has completed planned downtown physical renovation within the past 10 years. Yes No ?

c. Merchants follow the plan when renovating. Yes No ?

d. It has a uniform billboard and street sign ordinance.

e. It has improved main street lighting, seating and traffic flow within the past 10 years.

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

16. The community has a published directory of:

a. Restaurants Yes No ?

b. Motels, hotels, bed & breakfasts or other lodging accommodations Yes No ?

c. Recreational facilities Yes No ?

d. Tourist attractions Yes No ?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

17. The community has at least one major community event each year that has an impact broader than the community such as festivals, fairs, etc.

List the events _____

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

18. The public services of the community are adequate.

- a. The municipal fire service is Grade 6 or better as rated in the past five years. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- b. It has capacity for environmentally sound solid waste disposal for at least five years. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- c. Meets all sewerage discharge requirements or has initiated the facilities planning process. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- d. It has excess water capacity equivalent to 5% of its current population. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- e. It has an approved plan for capital improvements on streets for the next five years. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- f. It has an airport with a 3,900 foot or longer paved runway. ___ Yes ___ No ___?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

19. The community has submitted proposals for state and federal funding for development programs.

- a. For housing. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- b. For at least two of the following: sewer, water, streets, fire protection, waste management. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- c. For at least one of the following: airport, health protection, public parks, community buildings. ___ Yes ___ No ___?

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

20. The community presents a positive living environment.

- a. There are at least 10 acres of public parks per 1,000 people. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- b. There are fewer than 1,000 people per physician. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- c. There is an organized senior citizen transportation system. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- d. All educational systems are adequate. ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- e. The percentage of low and moderate income households with housing assistance needs is below 13% ___ Yes ___ No ___?
- f. How many youth organizations are functioning in the community? # _____

Circle one : Excellent Good Fair Minimal

Cautions

1. A high overall rating on the index does not assure higher employment or higher income. Individual businesses as well as state and federal governments will continue to make decisions critical to local economic conditions.
2. The community may also be simply short of resources or otherwise geographically disadvantaged.
3. Local residents may not consider economic growth their primary need or interest. Investments aimed at better community economic readiness might be undesirable from the citizens' standpoint.
4. Leaders contemplating action as a consequence of this analysis should also consider environmental factors such as air and water quality, noise levels, population density, solid waste management and visual aesthetics.

Sources

Material adapted from utility company community assessment and business development services.

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