

This program was first developed by Andrew Lewis and James Schneider in 1991. It was revised in 2002 by Andrew Lewis with further revisions in 2006. This guide booklet format was developed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rural Development Division, Ontario, Canada, in 2004. Questions about the program should be directed to:

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First Impressions Community Exchange Photo Log

Visiting Team Member Info Sheet

You have volunteered to be a member of our community's visiting team in a First Impressions community exchange. Thank you for your commitment to your community. 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.

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 about an hour of your time. You will need to review the questionnaire, maps and checklists and participate in an orientation meeting to arrange 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.

Typically, the visit itself is going to take 4-8 hours, plus drive time. One member of the team will have to compile a follow-up report which may take an additional two hours or so.

In addition, one or two members of the team with skills and experience in public 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.

For most volunteers your commitment will be one day. For those assisting with the final report, coordination, and presentation, the commitment might take up to three days.

Activities During The Visit

Visiting Team Members travel together to the exchange community. You will tour the community, take photos, interact with people, businesses, and public officials. You will use this booklet to record your thoughts and observations. Please try to look for assets, opportunities, and problem areas. Please try to offer constructive criticism that might assist the community in dealing with the issue.

A group "windshield survey" usually starts off the visit. 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'm on my way to a conference and have 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 am considering moving 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. The intent is to get an honest feel for how "visitors" are treated in the community. Take lots of pictures if you can do this without being noticed. Otherwise, keep notes on the images you would like to capture and then take those photos at the end of your visit. A digital camera is recommended so that these pictures can be easily integrated into a community presentation. Use the photo index on page 65 to keep track of the pictures you take.

A Learning Opportunity

The exchange element of the First Impressions program 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 exchanges in the U.S. and Canada, 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.

Tips

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 in this guide.
- Appear to be shopping, conducting business, or making a social visit.
- Strike up casual conversations with residents and be interactive
- Be observant.
- Be sure to circle a ranking score for the guestions which request this, but also take the time to include comments. The comments are more useful then the ranking.
- Have a good time!

Your Name:	
Age: Gender:	
Occupation:	
Date of visit:	
Time spent in the community: Weather conditions on date of visit:	hours
Thanks and Good Luck!	

Use this checklist as a guide. Please provide some details to your observations (avoid "good/bad, yes/no" responses).

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.

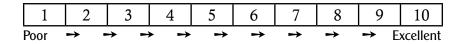
For Visiting Team Coordinators

(Please review Site Coordinator's Guide)

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 web materials and information (only answer if you were assigned the task of reviewing the community's website). Could you find information on this community on state and regional tourism web sites?

Quality of online materials:



Observations:

The Five Minute Impression

After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, what was your first impression? As you exit the community, pull over to the side of the road and write down what you felt about the community based on this quick drive through. For larger communities, this may take more time.

The Five Minute Impression

Notes:

Community Entrances

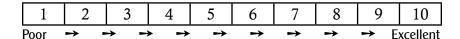
Approach the community from the major entrances. Rate and comment on each entrance. While there may be an obvious main entrance to the community there are typically multiple ways to enter the community. In some communities there are entrances for other modes of transportation. Comment on other community entry points like airports, bike trails, water access (boat landings), and train stations (page 11).

ENTRANCE #1: _____(Road name and direction)

Observations:

ENTRANCE #2:

(Road name and direction)

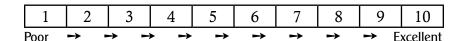


Observations:

Community Entrances (continued)

ENTRANCE #3:

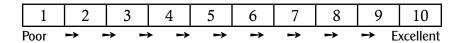
(Road name and direction)



Observations:

ENTRANCE #4: _____

(Road name and direction)



Observations:

Community Entrances (continued)

OTHER ENTRANCES (airports, bike trails, boat landings, train stations, snowmobile trails):

Observations:

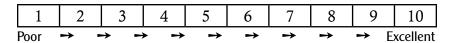
Community Entrances (continued)

Notes:

Housing and Residential Areas

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

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





Rate using a 1-10 scale (10 is best/highest)

Existing/Older Homes **New Homes**

Housing for Seniors Apartments/Rental Housing

Vacant lots for new homes

Observations:

Affordability

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

Observations:

Housing and Residential Areas (continued)

Availability

Rate using a 1-10 scale (10 is best/highest)

the housing in this community? Why?

	g (=	.3
	Existing/Older Homes	_ New Homes
	Housing for Seniors	_ Apartments/Rental Housing
	Vacant lots for new homes	
Observ	vations:	

What are the most appealing and least appealing features of

Housing and Residential Areas (continued)

Please comment on the quality and availability of residential infrastructure (e.g., roads, sidewalks, lighting, public transportation, bike trails/lanes, and green space, street trees, yards):

Appeal Rating Category

How would you rate the overall appeal of housing to the following populations (1=Not Appealing, 10 =Very Appealing):

Senior citizen Single young adults

Young families Upscale/professional

Middle income

Please comment on your observations:





Housing and Residential Areas (continued)

Notes:

Education, Health, Social and Emergency Services

Education

Comment on the availability and appearance of schools.

Pre-school/Kindergarten/Head Start

Primary/Elementary/Middle School

High School

College/University

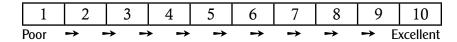




Education, Health, Social and **Emergency Services (continued)**

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

Overall, how would you rate the adequacy of schools for a community of this size?



Please comment:

Health Care Services

Comment on the availability and apparent quality of healthcare facilities.

Hospitals:

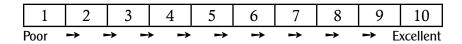
Education, Health, Social and **Emergency Services (continued)**

Physician, dentist, optometrist, and other medical offices and clinics:

Long-term care, assisted living, and nursing home facilities:

Other health services (e.g., Chiropractor, psychotherapy, naturopath, massage, etc.):

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



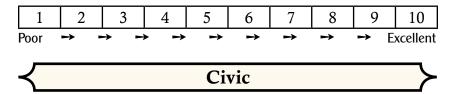
Please comment:

Education, Health, Social and **Emergency services (continued)**

Social Services

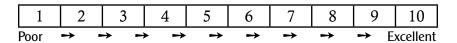
What social services (e.g., day care, senior center, counseling, etc.) are available in the community?

Overall, how would you rate the level of social services for a community of this size?



Are there a variety of not-for-profit organizations and clubs within the community?

Overall, how would you rate the level of nonprofit/civic services for a community of this size?

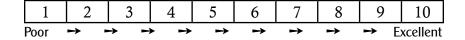


Please comment:

Education, Health, Social and **Emergency services (continued)**

Emergency Services

Overall, how would you rate the police, fire, ambulance, and emergency medical service facilities? How do local residents feel about these services?



Education, Health, Social and **Emergency services (continued)**

Notes:

Local Economy

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

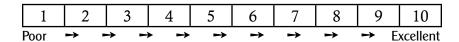
Downtown

Explore and visit as many businesses as possible.

Could you locate the downtown easily? If not, why did you have difficulty finding it?

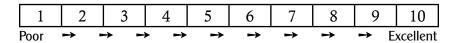
Rate and comment on the overall appearance of the downtown (buildings, displays, signage, streetscape).

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



Local Economy (continued)

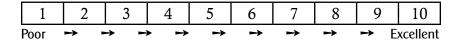
Rate and comment on the signage in the downtown.



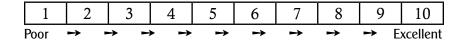
Rate and comment on the customer service you received in the downtown.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
P	oor	→ ·	→ -	→	→	→	→	→	→ [Excellent

Rate and comment on the window displays in the downtown.



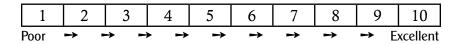
Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise in the downtown.



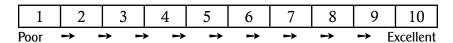
Comment on the mix of facilities and services in the downtown (housing, professional services, retail, recreation, accommodation and food, industry, parks, etc.).

Local Economy (continued)

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



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



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 (apartment, single detached).

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

Were there any government or nonprofit organization activities that are serving as traffic generators for the downtown (city hall, post office, YMCA)?

Local Economy (continued)

General Information About Overall Retail

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

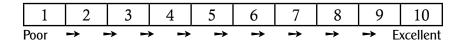
What retail goods do local residents appear to need to travel to surrounding communities for?

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?

What store(s) in this community would you travel a distance of more than 30 miles to patronize?

Rate and comment on the overall condition of the retail sector



Local Economy (continued)

Other Retail Shopping Areas (e.g. Malls, Big Box stores, etc.):

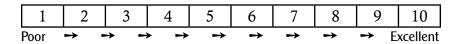
If applicable, explore other retail shopping areas outside of the downtown business district and visit as many businesses as possible.

Retail Area #1

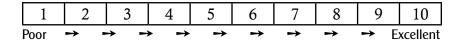
Type (Shopping mall etc.):

Location:

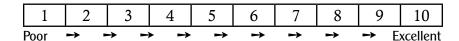
Rate and comment on the overall appearance.



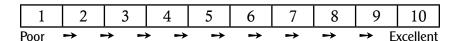
Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.



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



Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise.



Local Economy (continued)

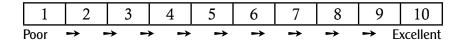
Retail Area #2

Leave this section blank if there is not a second retail shopping area.

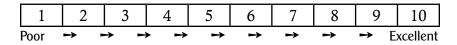
Type (Shopping mall etc.):

Location:

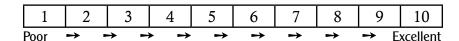
Rate and comment on the overall appearance.



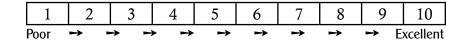
Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.



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



Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise.



Local Economy (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)?

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

Is there a well defined industrial park or improved land where industries could locate or expand?

Are the industrial facilities well maintained?

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

Local Economy (continued)

Commercial Services

What types of commercial businesses serve the local community (high-speed internet provider, print shops, etc.)?

What commercial services appear to be missing in the community?





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
Poor	→	→ -	→	→	→	→	→	→	Excellent

Please Comment:

What other professional services are available (accounting, insurance, legal, etc.)? Are there any apparent gaps?

Local Economy (continued)

Tourism

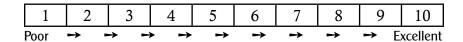
Does the community have a strong tourism sector? Please comment:

Does the community have a slogan/brand?

Is the community well known for an attraction or event?

What have you seen that could be developed into a tourist attraction (natural or man-made)?

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



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

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

Comment on the availability and selection of overnight accommodations in the community (hotels, motels, campgrounds, B&Bs).

Local Economy (continued)

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

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

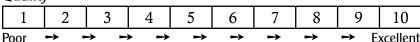
Rate and comment on the customer service of Chamber/Visitor Center staff:

1	2		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	→	→	-	· →	→	→	→	→	→	Excellent

Restaurants

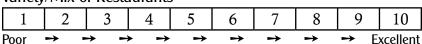
Comment and rate the quality of restaurants:

Quality



Comments:

Variety/Mix of Restaurants



Comments:

What do local residents recommend on where to stay, eat, and visit? One way to do this is to ask questions: "I have only one hour (half a day, etc.) in this community, what would you recommend?" or "where would you recommend we stay/eat?"

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

Government/Public Services

Local Government Information

Are municipal offices conveniently located?

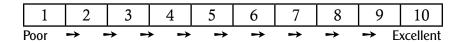
Please comment:

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

Community brochure/quide:

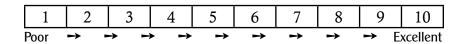
1	2	3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	\rightarrow	\rightarrow	-	→	→	→	→	→	→	Excellent

Business Directory:



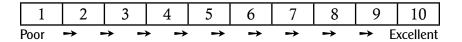
Government/Public Services (continued)

Community Profile (including business and industrial sites):



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).

How would you rate the helpfulness of government employees?



Government/Public Services (continued)

Public Infrastructure

Comment on and rate each of the following for quality accessibility, or availability where relevant.

Public Transportation:

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	→	Excellent								

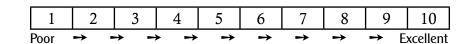
Comment:

Sidewalks:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	→ ·	→ →	→	→	→	→	→	→ E	xcellent

Comment:

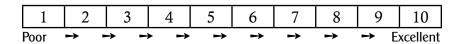
Streets:



Comment:

Government/Public Services (continued)

Landscaping, Street Trees:



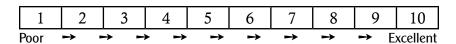
Comment:

Public Restrooms:

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	\rightarrow	\rightarrow	\rightarrow	→	→	→	→	→	→	Excellent

Comment:

Street Signage:



Comment:

Government/Public Services (continued)

Pay phones, drinking fountains, benches, public Internet access points, other misc:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	\rightarrow	→	→ →	→	→	→	→	→ [Excellent

Comment:

Planning

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

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

Government/Public Services (continued)

Did you experience traffic congestion anywhere?

If yes, location:

Comment:

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

Does the community appear to be pedestrian/bike friendly?

Recreation, Faith, Culture and Heritage

Recreation

Facilities

Comment on the availability & appearance of each of the following types of recreational facilities. Rate each type of facility.

Parks:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	\rightarrow	→ -	→	→	→	\rightarrow	→	→	Excellent

Comment:

Public recreation facilities:

1	2	3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	\rightarrow	\rightarrow	\rightarrow	→	→	→	→	→	\rightarrow	Excellent

Comment:

Private recreation facilities:

1	2	3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	\rightarrow	\rightarrow	→	Excellent						

Comment:

Recreation, Faith, Culture and Heritage (continued)

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

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 populations using a 1-10 scale (10 is best):

Rating Category

Senior citizens

Families

Singles, young adults

Teens

Children (12 and under)

Recreation, Faith, Culture and Heritage (continued)

Entertainment

What does the community do for entertainment?

What entertainment opportunities do residents feel they lack?

Does the community have a vibrant nightlife? Please comment:

Faith/Religion

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

Recreation, Faith, Culture and Heritage (continued)

Are there any outstanding architectural or design features found on the religious buildings you visited?

Please rate the religious buildings and denominations represented in this community.

1	2		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	\rightarrow	→	-	→	→	→	→	→	→	Excellent

Comments:

Culture and Heritage

Does the community hold any events (festivals)? Which events are held annually?

What events are popular with residents?

Recreation, Faith, Culture and Heritage (continued)

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

Does the community have historical buildings or places? Are they well maintained?

Recreation, Faith, Culture and Heritage (continued)

Notes:

General Observations

Role Playing

The following questions may be assigned to individuals. (Record comments and responses from residents.)

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

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

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





General Observations (continued)

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 adult? Why or why not?

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

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?

Did they refer you to someone else who would help?

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 a particular issue (e.g. safety) to be of major concern?

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

1	2	3	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor	→	→	-	· →	→	→	→	→	→	Excellent

Please comment:

Using Your Senses

What did the community taste like? Was there any speciality food item, bakery, restaurant, or candy store that you will remember?

Information from Community Residents (continued)

What did the community smell like? Was there any offensive industrial, agricultural, or sewage smells? What about pleasant odors (flowers, food, etc.)?

What sounds did you hear? Please comment on the level of noise in the community (traffic, industrial, birds singing, water falls, music on the streets, trains, noon whistle, etc.).

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

Did you experience anything that had a strongly negative or positive impact on the way the community felt to you (hateful or angry responses, crowded or deserted streets, safety issues, smiling faces, etc.)?

Do you think your impression would be different if your visit occurred during evening hours?

Information from Community Residents (continued)

Notes:

Wrap-Up

The following questions are to be answered by all team members:

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?

What is the most outstanding feature of this community?





Wrap-Up (continued)

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

Wrap-Up (continued)

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

1

2

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?

3

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:

Location First Impressions Community Exchange Photo Log Description Photo

∞:

9.

6.

4

2

EXTENSION

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5.

12.

10.

First Impressions Community Exchange Photo Log

Photo #	Description	Location
13.		
14.		
15.		
16.		
17.		
18.		
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22.		
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<u>Extension</u>