



Kent County  
**Essential Needs  
Task Force**

Economic & Workforce Development

**Organizational Self-Assessment  
2024 System Report**

# Introduction

This report contains results from the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF) Economic and Workforce Development (WFD) Committee Organizational Self-Assessment (OSA). Sixty-four respondents from 17 organizations completed the survey in May 2024. This project was adapted from the ENTF Food and Nutrition Committee OSA developed in 2021 and revised in 2022 and 2023.

The OSA survey asks about 12 organizational practices, listed below. Respondents were asked to rate their organization's commitment to and implementation of each practice. The practices were divided into four categories, each containing three practices, labelled A1-A3 for advocacy, C1-C3 for community engagement, D1-D3 for data, and E1-E3 for equity. These labels are only intended to aid in navigating between charts, not to convey value. The practices are abbreviated in the graphs throughout this report. Reference the list below for the full wording.

For each category, respondents were asked: "Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?" They were also asked if they would like to receive support with any of the practices. Finally, participants were asked if any changes had been made to advocacy, community engagement, data, or equity practices in the past 12 months.

Organizations were provided three options for participating: 1) have one person take the survey, 2) offer it a select group, or 3) offer it everyone in the organization. Ten organizations had only one or two respondents. Seven organizations had five or more respondents, and each received a confidential report of their organizational results. This report aggregates results from all the organizations that participated.

## Practices

- A1 We actively look for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities
- A2 We engage in governmental planning and budgeting processes
- A3 We promote policies and practices that address the root causes of financial insecurity
- C1 We involve participants in our organizational and program planning
- C2 We empower participants to become leaders in our organization and community
- C3 We adjust our programs based on participants' feedback
- D1 We have a clear understanding of how our programs contribute to our mission
- D2 We identify and track outcomes, not just outputs, for our programs
- D3 We adjust our programs based on data
- E1 Our board and staff are representative of the community we serve
- E2 Diversity, equity, and inclusion training is mandatory for our board and staff
- E3 Our communications explain the root causes of financial insecurity

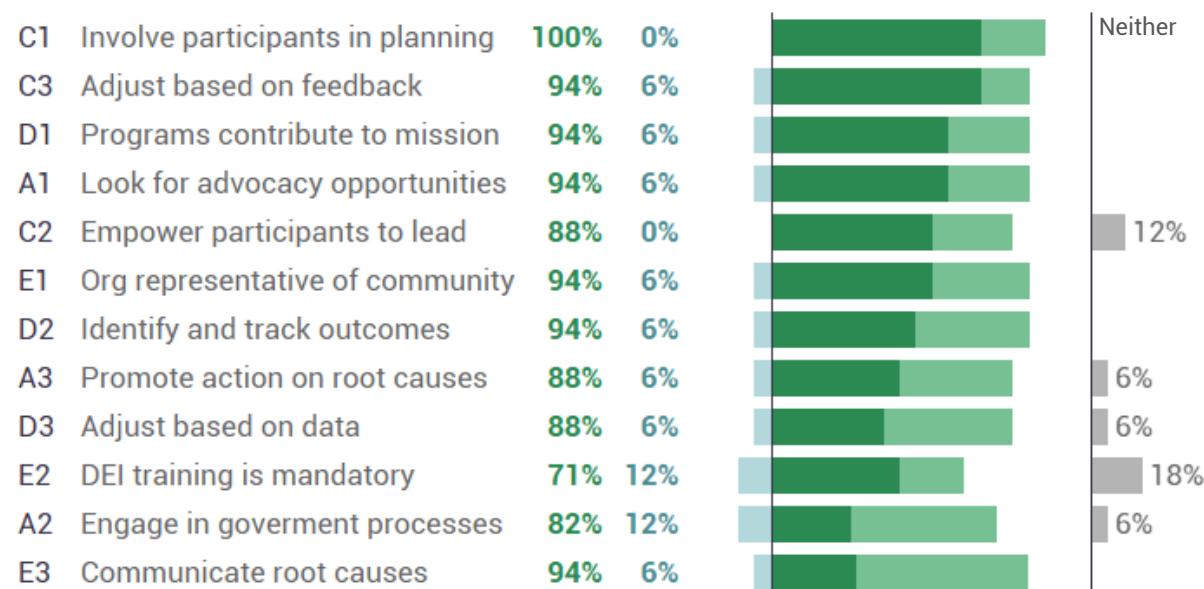
# Commitment

Participants were asked to rate their organization on the statement "we are committed to this in theory" for each of the practices. An average over three indicates agreement and under three indicates disagreement.

**On average, participating organizations agree they are committed to each of these practices with **strong agreement** on nine.**



**When looking at the spread of responses, agreement (green text) is almost 90% or higher on 10 of the practices, and disagreement (blue text) only exceeds 10% on two.**



The practices towards the bottom of the charts above (E2 and A2) have lower percentages of agreement and higher percentages of disagreement. This presents an opportunity for the Committee to explore why these practices matter. What benefits could implementing these have for our member organizations and our community?

In both this section and the following, the graphs are sorted by the system average. Organizational averages were calculated by adding the recode values of all the responses from an organization and dividing by the number of responses from that organization. There was also a "don't know" option, which was excluded from this calculation. System averages were calculated by adding all the organizational averages and dividing by the number of participating organizations.

**Agreement (green text)** is calculated by adding the percent of organizational averages in the agree and strongly agree ranges. **Disagreement (blue text)** is calculated by adding the percent of organizational averages in the disagree and strongly disagree ranges. In the graphs showing the spread of responses, the second axis with gray bars and plain text indicates the percentage of organizational averages that were neutral.

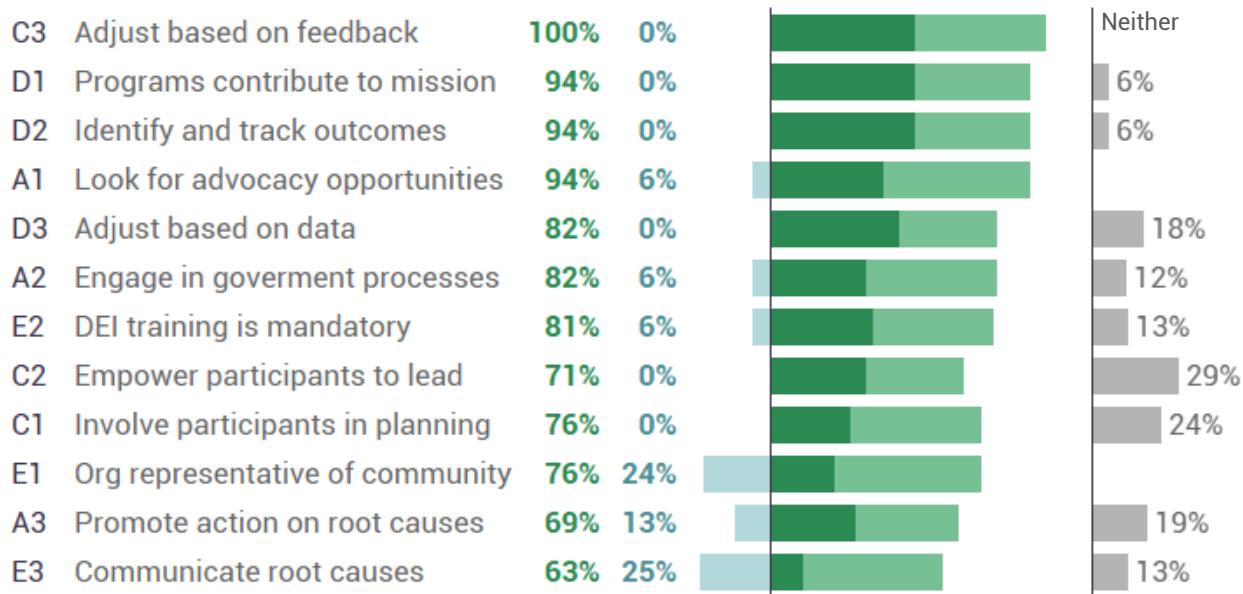
## Implementation

Participants were asked to rate their organization on the statement "we have implemented this as practice" for each of the practices.

**On average, participating organizations agree they are implementing each of these practices with **strong agreement** on the top five.**



When looking at the spread of responses, agreement (green text) exceeds 80% on seven of the practices, and disagreement (blue text) only exceeds 20% on two.



Unlike in the commitment section above, identifying opportunities to improve our implementation scores is less straightforward. It requires looking at additional data and will be discussed further in the next section. One factor to consider is where participants express a desire for support.

Participants would like to receive support with all these practices, and almost half want support with the top four. Even the practice at the bottom of the chart was selected by 25% of respondents.



Please note that support was not defined. Therefore, respondents to this question could intend several different meanings. For example, this could indicate that staff have too many things to do and not enough time for this work. In which case support might look like hiring more staff and redistributing job responsibilities. It could also signify that staff do not possess the knowledge or skills for this work and would like training and guidance as they learn.

## Comparing Commitment and Implementation

The chart below compares the system averages for commitment and implementation (commitment minus implementation). The larger the number, the larger the difference and vice versa. The graph is sorted from smallest to largest difference (top to bottom).

**The practices with the largest difference between commitment and implementation present the greatest opportunity for furthering implementation efforts.**



Scores were higher for commitment than implementation on all practices, except one. This is not surprising because implementing these practices takes work, which is necessarily preceded by a commitment to doing that work. For practices where the difference is smaller, there is less opportunity to advance implementation and our focus should be on improving commitment (A2 and E2). Articulating how these practices are important to our organizations, can increase commitment and align our members around this shared understanding. This will ensure buy-in from our teams, which is essential for successful implementation.

There are opportunities for improving implementation of practices where the difference is larger. It is important to understand that this self-assessment does not actually measure implementation of these practices. It measures respondents' current opinions about implementation. Perceptions do not always align with reality and can change even when circumstances remain the same.

We know that respondents believe that implementation is lagging behind commitment, especially on C1, E1, E3, A3, and C2. We do not know if this is actually the case or if respondents are just unaware of work being done by their organizations. The latter could indicate a need to improve internal communications and relationships between different teams. We should discuss why implementation scores are lower for these practices and explore opportunities to improve implementation.

Participants were also asked if any changes had been made in the past 12 months to their organization's advocacy, community engagement, data, or equity practices. Organizations with at least two respondents were split on their responses. So, this data was excluded from this report and is included only in the organizational reports as a possible indicator of areas where internal communications may need to be improved.

## Feedback from Open Ended Questions

Twenty-four respondents from 12 organizations provided 55 comments in response to the open-ended questions in the OSA survey. The question "Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?" was asked about each category of practices and about your organization. In addition, each category contained a check all that apply question with an "other (please specify)" response option where respondents could write in a practice with which they would like to receive support.

All these responses were analyzed, and four main themes emerged. The first three themes look at how participating organizations are implementing the practices in this assessment. These comments either 1) just describe the activity,\* 2) describe a new activity or changes to an activity,\*\* or 3) describe a challenge in implementing the practices.\*\*\* The following quotes provide a few examples of these themes.

"[Our community engagement] has always centered around amplifying [the voices of overburdened and underserved communities] and ensuring access, presence, and representation." <sup>1</sup>

"We have a diversity educator/ consultant who provides trainings... on how disability is a part of the DEI movement." <sup>1</sup>

"...we ask our clients what they need and how we as organization can help them become the best of themselves." <sup>1</sup>

"We started a dedicated [data analysis] team last year... to build and use reports." <sup>2</sup>

"Not really changed our practices. Simply taken on a couple more issues more deeply..." <sup>2</sup>

"We adopted a DEI policy within the last year."<sup>2</sup>

"[We have] gone through a significant number of changes over the past few years, including leadership and staff turnover, as well as organizational restructuring."<sup>3</sup>

"Schedules are a problem, especially schedules that allow working people and low-income people to fully participate."<sup>3</sup>

"[Having a diverse board] has been difficult to sustain."<sup>3</sup>

\* Theme 1 is based on nine comments from eight individuals at seven organizations.

\*\* Theme 2 is based on 14 comments from 12 individuals at seven organizations.

\*\*\* Theme 3 is based on 11 comments from nine individuals at five organizations.

The fourth theme was comments that provided additional context about the respondent or their organization. Presumably, these comments were made to aid in interpreting the participants' responses to other questions in the assessment. An example of this is "DEI work is highly encouraged, but it is not mandatory for staff." This theme is based on 21 comments from 16 individuals at six organizations. There was also an "other" category containing comments like "no" and "Thank you!"

## Conclusion

It is affirming to see so many of ENTF's partner organizations committed to and implementing the organizational practices assessed in this report. These practices are not a traditional part of essential needs work and show a dedication to creating better organizational cultures and changing our systems to address the root causes of financial insecurity. ENTF provides resources and trainings to build organizational capacity for advocacy, community engagement, data, and equity work. We also provide one-on-one support in these areas as requested by partner organizations.

The information in this report will help the Committee determine what to focus on throughout the year. The practices with the greatest opportunity for increasing commitment were A2 and E2. The practices with the greatest opportunity for improving implementation were A3, C1, C2, E1, and E3. Of these five, A3, C1, and C2 had the most demand for support from participants.

- A2 We engage in governmental planning and budgeting processes
- A3 We promote policies and practices that address the root causes of financial insecurity
- C1 We involve participants in our organizational and program planning
- C2 We empower participants to become leaders in our organization and community
- E1 Our board and staff are representative of the community we serve
- E2 Diversity, equity, and inclusion training is mandatory for our board and staff
- E3 Our communications explain the root causes of financial insecurity

Based on current capacity, ENTF staff recommend that the Committee select 1-4 of these practices to address over the next 12 months. The next step in prioritizing our efforts is to discuss the following questions as a group:

1. What in this report is the most surprising to you?
2. Are perceptions more positive or negative than you expected?
3. Where would you focus your attention and why?

## Participating Organizations

We are thankful to all those who participated in this the OSA this year. An asterisk has been placed by the names of the organizations that received an organizational report.

Alpha Grand Rapids*	Puertas Abiertas*
Disability Advocates*	Strong Towns Grand Rapids
First Steps Kent*	The Source
Goodwill	Together West Michigan*
GRCC - MTEC	Urban League
Hope Network	WMCAT
Kent District Library*	West Michigan Works!*
Literacy Center	Women's Resource Center
Our Community's Children	

This is the first year the WFD Committee has conducted an OSA. This project was guided by the WFD Measuring System Success Action Team. The full survey can be viewed in the appendix.

You can contact our team at [entf@hwmuw.org](mailto:entf@hwmuw.org) or reach out directly to our data analyst, Emily Madsen, at [emadsen@hwmuw.org](mailto:emadsen@hwmuw.org).

## Appendix

# Organizational Self-Assessment Survey

The ENTF Economic and Workforce Development Committee invites you to take part in an organizational self-assessment. This project will help us understand your perspectives on organizational practices around:

- Community engagement
- Data
- Advocacy
- Equity

All responses are voluntary. You may skip questions that you do not understand or prefer not to answer. If you do not provide your email address, your response will be anonymous. If you provide your email, your response will be kept confidential by ENTF.

ENTF will create two types of reports.

1. System Report – This report will look at the results from all the organizations that participated in the project. In it your organization's results will be anonymized or aggregated with other organizations. This report will be made publicly available.
2. Organizational Reports – These reports will look at individual organization's results and will only be created for organizations with five or more respondents. In them individual responses will be anonymized or aggregated with other respondents. These reports will only be provided to the corresponding organizations and will be kept confidential by ENTF.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Emily Madsen.

- Email: [emadsen@hwmuw.org](mailto:emadsen@hwmuw.org)
- Phone: 616-752-8623

Before getting started, please tell us the name of your organization.

*This is required.*

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# Community Engagement

This section looks at how your organization includes participants in its work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

We involve participants in our organizational and program planning.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We adjust our programs based on participants' feedback.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We empower participants to become leaders in our organization and community.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

- Involving participants in our organizational and program planning
- Adjusting our programs based on participants' feedback
- Empowering participants to become leaders in our organization and community
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

Has your organization changed its community engagement practices within the past 12 months?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

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# Data

This section looks at how your organization uses data in its work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

We have a clear understanding of how our programs contribute to our mission.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We identify and track outcomes, not just outputs, for our programs.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We adjust our programs based on data.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

- Building understanding of how our programs contribute to our mission
- Identifying and tracking outcomes for our programs
- Adjusting our programs based on data
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

Has your organization changed its data practices within the past 12 months?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

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# Advocacy

This section looks at how your organization engages with elected officials and other policy makers to inform their work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

We actively look for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We engage in governmental planning and budgeting processes.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We promote policies and practices that address the root causes of financial insecurity.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

- Looking for local, state, and national advocacy opportunities
- Engaging in governmental planning and budgeting processes
- Promoting policies and practices that address the root causes of financial insecurity
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

Has your organization changed its advocacy practices within the past 12 months?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

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# Equity

This section looks at how your organization embeds equity in its work.

Please rate your organization on the following statements.

Our board and staff are representative of the community we serve (e.g. geographic, race/ethnicity, experience, income, etc.).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Diversity, equity, and inclusion training is mandatory for our board and staff.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Our communications explain the root causes of financial insecurity.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
We are committed to this in theory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have implemented this as practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to receive support with these practices? *Select all that apply.*

- Attracting and retaining board members and staff that are representative of the community we serve
- Providing diversity, equity, and inclusion training for our board and staff
- Explaining the root causes of financial insecurity in our communications
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

Has your organization changed its equity practices within the past 12 months?

- No
- Yes
- Don't know

Is there anything else you would like us to know about this?

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## Before you go...

Please consider providing your email address if you would like support with any of the practices in this assessment.

*This is optional. Your survey will no longer be anonymous, but your responses will be kept confidential.*

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Is there anything else you would like us to know about your organization?

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