

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES!



Part 1:

**What are
sustainable
communities and
how do they
relate to me?**

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

developed by



Smithsonian
Science Education Center

in collaboration with

iap **SCIENCE
HEALTH
POLICY**
the interacademy partnership

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Smithsonian Science Education Center Module Development Staff

Executive Director - Dr. Carol O'Donnell

Division Director for Curriculum, Digital Media, and
Communications- Laurie Rosatone

Science Curriculum Developer - Heidi Gibson

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Find out More!

For additional resources and activities, please visit the *Sustainable Communities!* StoryMap at <https://bit.ly/2YdHNqB>.



Planner

Activity	Description	Materials and Technology	Additional Materials	Approximate Timing	Page Number
Task 1: What is the problem?					
Discover	Explore the concept of community using your class as an example.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper Pens or pencils 		20 minutes	7
Understand	Investigate five different parts of the classroom community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper Pens or pencils 		55 minutes	9
Act	Connect parts of a classroom with your local community and imagine a perfect community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class board or poster paper 		25 minutes	12
Task 2: How is the problem of sustainable communities related to me?					
Discover	Develop a personal identity map showing the different parts of who you are. Compare with teammates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper Pens or pencils Objects that represent you (optional) 		25 minutes	15
Understand	Create a team identity map.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper Pens or pencils 		15 minutes	17
Act	Gather your team's knowledge about parts of your community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class board or poster paper Sticky notes (optional) 		20 minutes	19
Task 3: What skills do we need to do our research?					
Discover	Interview teammates to find out about their ideas about a perfect community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pens or pencils Paper (optional) 	<u>My Perfect Community</u> (Task 1) <u>My Identity Map</u> (Task 2)	20 minutes	21
Understand	Explore different perspectives on what makes a perfect community.			25 minutes	22
Act	Come to consensus on the most important goals for your local community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper Pens or pencils Class board or poster paper 	<u>My Perfect Community</u> (Task 1)	25 minutes	24



Activity	Description	Materials and Technology	Additional Materials	Approximate Timing	Page Number
Task 4: Where do we notice the problem?					
Discover	Consider connections between problems and knowledge in different places.			20 minutes	28
Understand	Investigate how the UN Sustainable Development Goals connect to the Thriving Community Goals you developed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class board or poster paper • Sticky notes (optional) • Bag of small items (Option B: Activity) 	<u>Thriving Community Goals</u> (Task 3) * StoryMap extension available	30 minutes	30
Act	Decide where your research area will be.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper • Pencils • Local map (optional) 		20 minutes	34
Task 5: How will we achieve our goals?					
Discover	Consider what you already know about your community and what you need to find out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper • Pens or pencils • Class board or poster paper 	<u>Thriving Community Goals</u> (Task 3)	20 minutes	38
Understand	Decide which Parts of the guide you will use.			15 minutes	40
Act	Reflect on your thoughts and concerns about being an action researcher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper • Pens or pencils 		20 minutes	42

*StoryMap extension found at <https://bit.ly/2YdHNqB>



1

Part 1: What are sustainable communities and how do they relate to me?

Remember: In this guide you and your team are in charge. You can always change the instructions in the steps to make them work better for you and your team.

Task 1: What is the problem?

In this guide you will become an **action researcher** to identify and help solve problems in your **community**. The knowledge you have as a member of your community is an important place to start. First you will **discover** what you already know in your community. Action researchers also use the tools of science and **social science** to understand the world around them. You will **investigate** to **understand** your community better. After thinking about all the information they know, action researchers **act** on what they have learned to improve their communities. In this guide you and your team are in charge. Your ideas and your investigations will help you decide the actions you will take in your community.

Ready? Let's get started.



Discover: *What are the parts of my classroom community?*

We all are part of different groups. These groups are sometimes called communities. This guide will help you create a better community. First you will start by noticing the community around you right now. You are in a classroom or other learning space. The people around you are a community. After learning about your classroom community, you can apply those lessons to your local community.

1. Action researchers start by remembering what they already know. Write down or share with a classmate what you already know about your classroom or other learning space and how people use it. For example, can you answer:
 - a. Where is your classroom located?
 - b. How many people learn together in your classroom?
 - c. What types of activities do people do in your classroom?



2. There are other things you know about your classroom community as well. For example, in your classroom you probably have shared and personal things and spaces. If you want, you can show this by playing a game. Here's how you play.
 - a. When your teacher says "shared thing," move to, point to, or say out loud something in your classroom that everyone shares.
 - b. When your teacher says "personal thing," move to, point to, or say out loud something in your classroom that is just yours.
 - c. When your teacher says "shared space," move to, point to, or say out loud a space in the classroom that everyone uses.
 - d. When your teacher says "personal space" move to, point to, or say out loud a space that is just for you.
3. If you would rather not play a game, that's fine too. Just talk to a partner about what types of spaces and things in your classroom are shared or personal.
4. Action researchers also make careful **observations**. To **observe** means to use your senses to get information about something. This is an important step in science. Practice making observations by looking closely at the things and people around your classroom.
5. In small groups or as a class, record your ideas by writing, drawing, or discussing your observations.
 - a. What can you see or notice in your classroom or learning space?
 - b. How are the things you notice used by people in the classroom?
 - c. For the items you notice, what are some things that usually stay in the classroom (like a desk) and some things that get used up (like a piece of paper)?
6. As a class or small group, take a moment to discuss why you need a classroom community. Share your answers to these questions.
 - a. How does the space in your classroom help you learn better?
 - b. How do the things in your classroom help you learn better?
 - c. How do the people in your classroom community help you learn better?
 - d. How do you help others in the classroom community?
 - e. Why do we need classroom communities?



Emotional Safety Tip

There are no wrong or right answers. Different people can have different opinions. Considering different opinions helps the group think better together. It may feel difficult to disagree with someone or have them disagree with you. Remember, disagree with ideas, not with people. For example, you could say, "I disagree with that idea because . . ."



Understand: Why are the different parts of my classroom community important?

You just thought about what you already know. Action researchers also need to find out new information. Now you will be investigating, or finding out more information about your classroom community. There are a lot of ways to investigate. In this activity you and your team are going to try some of them. Later you will apply what you learn to help you understand all communities better.

1. Read *More About Communities*. You may notice *More About Communities* is in a blue box. Blue boxes contain information or investigation instructions.

More About Communities

In the Discover activity you thought about the people in your classroom. You also thought about how the classroom space is used, shared and personal spaces and things, things that are always in the classroom, and things that get used up. These different parts all work together to create a place for you to learn with your classmates. These are all parts of your classroom community **system**. A system is something made up of parts that work together.

The parts of the classroom community system are like parts of your local community system. Right now, you will investigate these parts in your classroom to learn more about how they work. Later you will apply this information to your local community.

Remember, any community is **complex**—a system made up of many parts. Your research today is about understanding the different parts of your classroom community and how they work together to make your classroom a good place to learn.



2. As a class, break into five groups. Each group will investigate one part of the classroom community. If you prefer, you can use only one group and cover all five parts within the group. Just make sure someone investigates each part. Your group is going to act as a research team to investigate your classroom community.
3. Gather with your group. Pick the part you will discuss from the list in Parts of the Classroom Community.
4. With your group, think about your questions so you can decide what you need to investigate. What questions do you have about the different parts of your classroom community? Think about what you need to know to understand whether each part is working well. How does the part you are investigating help make a community where everyone can learn?
5. Write down your questions about your part. You will use these questions to investigate your classroom community.

Parts of the Classroom Community

Part 1: People

People in a classroom talk, play, and learn with one another. Communicating and doing activities with others is called **interacting**. Interacting with others can help make a classroom a good place for learning. What can you ask about the ways people interact in your classroom community? For example, "How do people in my classroom share ideas with one another?"

Part 2: Shared Spaces

Classrooms have shared spaces that can help make them a good place for learning. What can you ask about the shared spaces in your classroom community? For example, "What space do people use the most in my classroom community?"

Part 3: Personal Spaces

Classrooms often have personal spaces that can help make them a good place for learning. What can you ask about the personal spaces in your classroom community? For example, "When do people use their personal spaces?"



Part 4: Infrastructure—Things that Stay in Your Classroom

Classrooms have **infrastructure** that can help make them a good place for learning. Infrastructure in a classroom means things that stay in the classroom, like the walls, boards, desks, and shelves. Infrastructure can be used again and again. What can you ask about the infrastructure in your classroom community? For example, “How do people use the shelves in my classroom community? Is everyone in my classroom community able use the shelves?”

Part 5: Resources—Things that Are Used Up

Classrooms have **resources** that can help make them a good place for learning. These things sometimes are used only for a short time. Resources in your classroom are things that get used up, like a piece of paper or a pen. What can you ask about the resources in your classroom community? For example, “How do we use the things we have in our classroom?”

6. You have listed your questions as a group. Now you will do an investigation to find out the answers. With your group, pick the best way to investigate. You could:
 - a. Talk to a leader. For example, you could talk to your teacher to learn more about why they set up the classroom the way it is.
 - b. Do a community **survey**. For example, you could talk to people in your classroom community about how it feels to learn in the classroom and be a part of the community.
 - c. Conduct an experiment. For example, if you want to understand why an object or item is important, you could take it away and see what happens.
 - d. Conduct community observations. For example, you could take some time and watch carefully to notice how your classmates are using spaces or things in your classroom.
7. Plan your investigation with your group.
 - a. What do you need to do?
 - b. Who will do it?
 - c. For example, if you want to talk to a leader, who will you talk to? What questions will you ask? Who will ask the questions? Who will record the answers?



8. Conduct your investigation.
9. Write down or discuss what you find out.
10. Talk with your group about the results of your investigation.
 - a. What new information did you find out?
 - b. Why is the part you researched important to the whole classroom community system?
11. Share your ideas with the rest of the class.
 - a. What do you now know about the part you researched?
 - b. Why is it important to your classroom community?
12. As a class, talk about connections you see between the different parts of the classroom community. Remember, those parts are people, classroom space, personal space, infrastructure, and resources. Discuss:
 - a. If one part was missing would it affect the other parts?
 - b. How do all the parts work together to build a classroom community that helps everyone?



Act: *How does my classroom community relate to my local community?*

Action researchers apply what they learn to make their local communities better. People living, playing, and working together make up a local community. Your local community might be your city, town, village, or other local area. It includes you, your family, your neighbors, and friends who live nearby. This guide is about helping you make choices to make your community better. You can start by thinking about how your classroom community is similar to your local community.

1. As a class, think about how each part of your classroom community system might be like a part of your local community system. For example, you may have a desk as your personal space in your classroom. What would be the personal space you and the people you live with have in your local community?
2. Write this list someplace everyone can see. Draw two columns. Label one "Classroom Community." Label the other "Local Community." Under the *Classroom Community* column, list the parts you explored in the Understand activity. Figure 1.1 shows an example.



Classroom Community	Local Community
People	
Shared spaces	
Personal spaces	
Infrastructure (things that stay in the community)	
Resources (things that get used up)	

Figure 1.1: Sample of a classroom and local community list

3. Next, list the matching parts under the *Local Community* column. Think:
 - a. Who are the people in your local community?
 - b. What are the spaces everyone shares in your local community?
 - c. Where do you have personal space just for you and the people you live with in your local community?
 - d. What infrastructure, like roads, are always there in your local community?
 - e. What resources, like water or food, do people use up in your local community?
4. Take out a piece of paper and title it *My Perfect Community*. In this guide you will be investigating different parts of your local community system. This will help you find out information about what is going on in your local community right now. You will also need to think about what you believe *should* be happening in your local community. The difference between what *is* happening and what *should* be happening is where you can help when you take action.
5. Start to imagine how you think a community should be. Don't worry, we know life is not always perfect. Right now, it is time to dream.
6. Write or draw some ideas about your perfect community. If you would like to record this information a different way, you can do that. Just make sure you can save it and use it later. You can use some or all of these questions to help you think.
 - a. What needs do you have that would be met in a perfect community?
 - b. What wants do you have that would be met in a perfect community?
 - c. What do you think you would see or notice in a perfect community?
 - d. What would you not see or notice in a perfect community?
 - e. How would you expect to feel in a perfect community?



7. Your classroom community helps people learn together. Local communities can help people live together. Living together includes time you spend playing, working, learning, and being with others. Think about all the things people are doing in a community. How would these things change in a perfect community? If you have any new ideas about your perfect community, add them to your paper.
8. Keep the My Perfect Community paper. You will be using it later.



Task 2: How is the problem of sustainable communities related to me?

Action researchers need to **discover** their own **identity** and opinions. Then **understand** other people's identities and opinions. Finally, when you **act** you can use that information to make decisions that are good for everyone. In this task you will think about how identities relate to goals for your community.



Discover: *Who am I?*

You may have noticed during Task 1 that some of your classmates had different ideas than you. Our different experiences, backgrounds, and ideas give each of us a unique identity. Your identity is what makes you you. Our different identities often lead to different **perspectives**. Perspectives are the way we think about the world around us. Understanding your own identity and perspective can help you understand other perspectives. This activity will help you think about your own identity.

1. Take out a piece of paper and title it My Identity Map. If you prefer, you can make an identity map using objects or digital tools. There are more details on how to do that in step 6.
2. On the paper, write your name in the center of the page, or draw a small picture of yourself.
3. Draw a circle around your name or picture.
4. Answer the question "Who am I?" or "What describes me?" The list below can give you some ideas to consider. You can also include things that are not on the list. Record anything you can think of that is important to who you are.
 - Age
 - School or class
 - Race and/or ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Country or place where you live
 - Country or place that is important to you or your family
 - Topics or subjects that interest you
 - Hobbies or things you like to do for fun



- Physical traits (such as tall, black hair, blue eyes, wears glasses)
 - Personality traits (such as loud, funny, sad, kind)
 - Roles you have in your household (such as big sister, helper, cousin)
 - Groups you belong to
5. Write each answer on the page around your name. Draw a line between your name and each answer. Figure 1.2 is an example of a written identity map. You can put your answers at the end of each line.

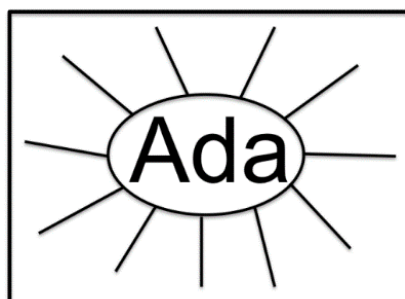


Figure 1.2: Example of a written identity map

6. If you prefer, you can use objects around your home to create your map. To keep your map, you can take a picture or just remember it. Figure 1.3 is an example of an identity map using objects. You could also make a digital map using recordings or photos.



Figure 1.3: Example of an identity map using objects

7. Now form a team. You will be working with your team for the rest of this guide. You already know you are an action researcher while you are using this guide. You will also be part of a research team made up of your classmates. Using scientific tools, you will work together to understand your community and make it better. Your team may be your whole class, or it may be a smaller group. Either is fine.



8. Find out what you have in common with your team. Try to find matching identities with your teammates. For example, if you like to read for fun, see if you can find someone else who likes to read for fun. Find a few matching identities. Then move on to the next step.

Emotional Safety Tip

Sharing your identity with someone else can help build trust between you and that person. But it can be hard to share your personal identity with someone else. Only share parts of your identity map that you feel comfortable talking about.

9. Now try to find teammates who have different identities than you. It is good to have different identities. Everyone is unique. This means you have different information to share. For example, if you were born in the place where you live but your teammate was born somewhere else, you each may know different things. Find a few people who have different identities than you. Then return to your place.
10. As a team, discuss:
- How did you feel when you found teammates with matching identities?
 - How did you feel when you found teammates with different identities?
 - What could you find out from your teammates who had different identities?



Understand: *Who is on my team?*

You just made an identity map that shows who you are personally. Your team also has an identity that includes all the members of the team. In this activity, you will build a team identity map. Sometimes there are differences between your personal and team identities. These differences may affect the decisions you or the team make. For example, you may love listening to a certain type of music. However, your teammates



might love another kind of music. Imagine you were deciding what type of music to play. It would be important to have all the information when you make a decision. Your team may have many different perspectives. This is because you have many different identities. Different perspectives help you make better decisions.

1. Think about your identity map. What are some things that make you unique? Circle one item that may help you bring new information to your team.
2. You will have many discussions with your team as you work through this guide. Read through the following guidelines. Use these during your team discussions.

Guidelines for Team Discussion

- Remember, listening to many different perspectives and viewpoints is good.
- Open yourself to new ideas and perspectives.
- Actively listen by facing the person and show them you are paying attention.
- Collaborate with others to change things for the better.

3. Pick one person on the team to lead the discussion.
4. Have the team leader take a piece of paper and title it Team Identity Map, or write it on the board. Write the word “Team” at the top and circle it. You can look at Figure 1.1 for an example.
5. The team leader will start by sharing the one item they circled about their identity from the Discover activity. They will also share why they circled this item.
6. The team leader will write their item on the Team Identity Map, just as you did on your My Identity Map in the last activity.
7. Then the team leader will ask another team member to share. The next team member should share their name and the item they circled from the Discover activity. They should also share why they circled this item. Write this item on the Team Identity Map.
8. Repeat until all members of the team have shared and added one item to the Team Identity Map.



9. Discuss the following questions in your team.
 - a. How is your personal identity map like the team map? How are these two maps different?
 - b. Does including everyone's identity on the Team Identity Map help everyone feel part of the team? What would it feel like if only some people were included?
 - c. Why should we care about the identity of other people on the team?
10. Save the Team Identity Map by keeping the paper in a safe place or taking a picture of the board.



Act: *What does my team know about my community?*

In this guide you will think about how to help your local community become better. Your role is very important because you and your team are experts on your local community. Your team probably knows a lot about your local community. Now you will get ready to use the knowledge and experiences of your whole team.

1. Do you remember the parts of your classroom and local community systems? If you made a table matching the five parts of your classroom community system with the parts of your local community system, it might be a good idea to look at that table again (you can find it in Task 1, **Act**, step 3). If you do not have that table, here is a list of the five parts to think about in your local community system.
 - a. People in your community
 - b. Shared spaces where people can interact, like parks, community centers, and markets
 - c. Personal spaces, such as **housing**, which is the way most people have personal space in a local community
 - d. Infrastructure, things that stay in your community and get used again and again, like roads, bridges, buildings, or buses
 - e. Resources, things that get used up by people, houses, and businesses, like electricity, water, or food
2. As a team, write each part on a separate piece of paper or a different part of the class board. If you use paper, you might want to put it on the wall near your team.



3. Now list the things you can think of that make up each part in your local community system. For example, under *Personal Spaces* you might list different types of places where people live in your community.
4. Think about each part by yourself. Think about experiences you have had with that part. Think about what you personally know about that part. For example, think about the transportation infrastructure you use to get to school or go other places. Or maybe you know about a shared space, like a park, where people go to play.
5. Have each team member write down their thoughts. You can write directly on the paper or a section of the board. Or you can write on and attach a separate piece of paper or a sticky note. Figure 1.4 shows an example. Then move on to the next piece of paper or section of the board.

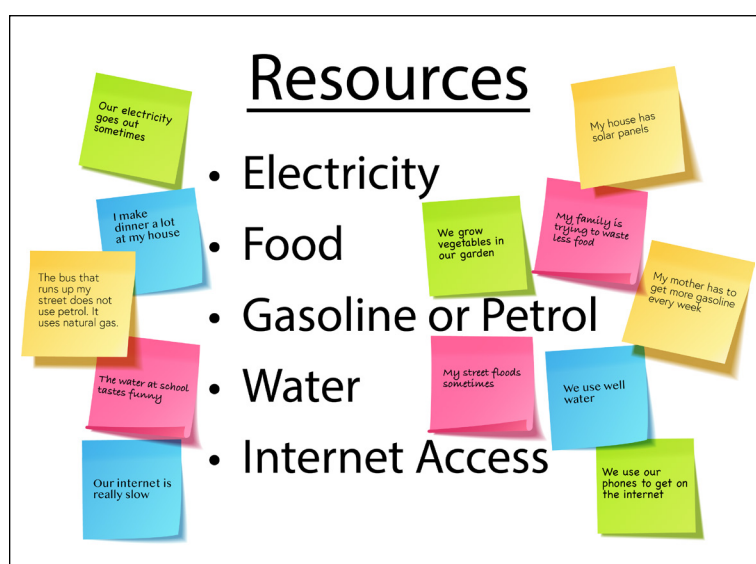


Figure 1.4: A sample community system list for the Resources part, including the things that are resources and team knowledge and thoughts about them

6. Notice the experiences and knowledge other team members listed. Consider:
 - a. Do you notice anything that surprises you?
 - b. Do other people have different knowledge and experiences than you?
7. As a team, discuss:
 - a. Do you know things that you might not have known if you weren't working together?
 - b. How do the different identities of group members help make the team stronger?
8. As action researchers, you will work together as a team to find the best way to help your community. The different identities and experiences of each member of your team will help you make better decisions.



Task 3: What skills do we need to do our research?

Action researchers use information to make decisions. In this task you find out information about different opinions in your community. This will help you understand how to help your community. You will **discover** the opinions of your team. Then you will **understand** different types of perspectives. Finally, you will **act** on this information to decide what is important to your community.



Discover: *What do I want for my community?*

Discovering what your teammates and other community members are thinking is important. This activity will help you discover how your teammates are thinking about a perfect community.

1. Remember the end of Task 1 when you thought about your perfect community? Take out your My Perfect Community paper.
2. If you are using paper, turn it over and divide it into four sections.
3. You are now going to interview your teammates to discover their ideas about a perfect community.
4. Interview four of your teammates about the ideas they wrote, drew, or thought for their perfect community. Also allow yourself to be interviewed by four different teammates.
5. During your interviews you can write or draw notes in the four sections of your paper to remind yourself about what your teammates said.

Interviewer Tips

- Face the person sharing their ideas.
- Show the person you are paying attention.
- Remember your teammates might have very different ideas from you. This is good. Learning about different ideas helps you understand your community and make better decisions.
- As an interviewer, do not to share thoughts you might have. Your role is to pay attention to the other person's ideas.



6. When you have finished interviewing and being interviewed, return to your place. Look at your results. Consider:
 - a. Did anyone you interview have different ideas than you?
 - b. What did your interviews tell you about different ways of thinking about a perfect community?
7. As a team, discuss your results.
 - a. Did everyone have the same ideas?
 - b. Take out your *My Identity Map* from Task 2. Now think about when you had a different idea than someone you interviewed. Is there something about who you are or what you have done that makes you think the way you do? For example, you may think that a perfect community would have lots of sports fields because you love to play sports. However, your teammate may love to play music and so they think sports fields are less important.
 - c. Remember, communities are made up of lots of different people with lots of different ideas.
 - d. Why is it important to get ideas from many different people when trying to imagine what your community should be like?



Understand: *How can we consider other perspectives when making decisions?*

Action researchers must understand different points of view, or perspectives. Thinking about different perspectives can help you understand why people might approach a problem differently. It can also help you understand what people value. In this activity you are going to explore different perspectives on what makes a perfect community. You will be talking more about how these perspectives work soon.

1. Break into four groups and move away from each other into four areas, such as the corners of a room. If your class would rather do this activity together, you can just go through all four perspectives one at a time.
2. Read *The Four Perspectives*. Each of the four groups is going to explore one perspective.



The Four Perspectives

The perspectives you will explore in this guide are social, environmental, economic, and ethical. People using different perspectives believe different parts of the community system are most important to consider.

- **Social** is about the interaction of people in a community. The health, education, and well-being of people are the most important thing.
- **Environmental** is about the natural world. Protecting the Earth and its natural systems is the most important thing.
- **Economic** is about money, income, and use of wealth. Economic growth, including making sure people have jobs and enough money, is the most important thing.
- **Ethical** means the fairness of something. Doing what is right and having a just community where everyone is treated fairly is the most important thing.

3. Decide or have your teacher assign you a perspective. Make sure one group is thinking about each perspective.
4. In your group, remember your ideas about a perfect community. This time you will think about what a perfect community would be like if everyone was only thinking about your assigned perspective. For example, if you are considering an economic perspective, think about what a perfect community would look and feel like if the economy was the most important thing to people in the community. If people valued making money and having jobs above everything else, how would your community look and feel?
5. After you have discussed your perspective in your group, take turns sharing your ideas with the rest of the class.
6. Now you will take a different approach to understanding your perspective. Sometimes the easiest way to understand the importance of something is to remove it and see what happens. Back in your group, think about and discuss what life in your community would be like if no one valued your assigned perspective. For example, if your assigned perspective is “ethical” and no one thought about fairness, what would your community look and feel like?



7. As a group, come up with a creative way to share your thoughts. For example, you could act out life without your perspective, tell a story about life without your perspective, or find another way to show the rest of class.
8. Share your ideas with the rest of your class.
9. Then, as a class, think about and discuss:
 - a. Were there any of the four perspectives that were not important?
 - b. What happened if one perspective was not valued?
 - c. Why is it important to balance all four perspectives?
10. When you can balance all four perspectives in a way that works for a long time, that is called **sustainable**. A **sustainable community** balances the needs of living things and the resources available in a way that does not hurt future generations. Your goal while using this research guide is to understand how to help make your community better in a sustainable way.



Act: *How can we come to consensus to help our community?*

Balancing different perspectives is the key to sustainable communities. Your research team will make decisions about the best actions to take in your community. Making good decisions as a group can be hard. Not everyone in the group can always get everything they want. Good teams try to come to **consensus**. Consensus is not competing to win or lose. Coming to consensus means working together to find a balanced decision that works for everyone. In this activity your team will come to consensus on the most important goals for your local community.

1. Get out your My Perfect Community paper. On one side you will see your ideas about a perfect community. On the other side you will see some of your teammates' ideas about a perfect community.
2. Read Thriving Community Goals.

Thriving Community Goals

Completely perfect communities do not exist. However, there are communities around the world that are **thriving**. When things are generally working well for people in a community, that is a thriving community.



As action researchers you need to figure out what you can do to help your community thrive.

Right now, you will set goals to help your community thrive. If you were taking a journey this would be like knowing where you want to end up. Your goals are your destination.

Later you will find out what is happening in your community right now. This is like understanding where you are right now on your journey.

Then you can make decisions about the actions you need to take to reach your goals. This is like figuring out how to get from where you are in your journey now to where you want to end up.

3. As a team, start building a list of team goals. Use a class board or a piece of paper and together make a list of possible goals. Team members can write their goal ideas on the board or paper.
4. Look again at the information you have on the *My Perfect Community* paper. Are there ideas on that paper that would be important goals? For example, maybe you thought that in a perfect community everyone would have a place to live. That is an important idea. Housing for all might be a goal of a thriving community.
5. Next, remember the social, environmental, economic, and ethical perspectives. Are there goals that need to be added related to those perspectives? For example, maybe you remember the group with the environmental perspective sharing what life would be like if no one cared about the natural world. Do you want to include any goals about caring for or protecting the natural world?
6. Team members can add any new goal ideas on the board or paper.
7. Now, with your team, use those ideas to come to consensus on a team list of the main goals for your community.
8. Take a few minutes to look at the board or think about what you have heard. Are there goals listed that are very similar? Part of coming to consensus is noticing when different people share the same values but are talking about it in a different way.



9. If you see two or more goals that are similar, you can group them together. This will help you narrow down your list. For example, maybe one team member wrote a goal of having people use cars less. Maybe another wrote a goal of having trains to connect your community. Both may value public transportation. Your team might be able to come up with one goal that includes both more trains and fewer cars.
10. Now that you have a list of the possible important goals for your community, look at the goals and decide which are the four you think are most important.
11. Turn to a partner and discuss your ideas. Listen closely to your partner's opinions and share your own thoughts about why the goals you chose are most important.
12. Together with your partner, pick the four goals that you two together think are most important. This is not about picking *your* ideas. It is about picking *the best* ideas. You can use these phrases to help you have a useful conversation:
 - I agree/disagree because . . .
 - I'd like to go back to what you said about . . .
 - I noticed that . . .
 - Couldn't it also be that . . .?
 - Can you explain why you think that?
13. As a pair, you should now have four goals. Write them down or remember them.
14. Next, you will have a chance to eliminate less-important goals.
 - a. If you are using a board or paper, put a mark next to the four goals you and your partner think are most important.
 - b. If you are talking as a team, have a teacher or team leader say the goals out loud. Raise your hand when someone says one of the goals you and your partner think are most important.
15. Either look at the board or think about who raised their hand. Are there any goals listed that no one thought were the most important? If so, cross those goals off the list. They may still be important, but not the most important.
16. For each goal, a team member who thinks the goal is very important should explain why to the team.
17. When you have finished all the goals, discuss:
 - a. Have you changed your mind about whether specific goals should be included?
 - b. Are there goals that you think the team is ready to take off the list?



18. As a team, see if you can narrow the number of goals down to between three and six. These are your thriving community goals.
19. Title a piece of paper Thriving Community Goals. Then list these goals underneath. You will have a chance to talk about them again. Don't worry if they are not yet perfect. You will have a chance to keep thinking about these goals later. Keep this piece of paper, you will need it later.



Task 4: Where do we notice the problem?

We are all a part of different communities. The people at your school are part of your school community. The people living near you are part of your local community. The people living in your country are part of your national community. All the people living around the world are part of the global community. Sometimes people in one community have problems that occur just in that place. However, you will **discover** that often problems that occur in one place are related to problems of the larger communities. During this task you will **understand** more about the relationship between problems of your local and global communities. Then you will **act** by deciding where you will do your research in your community.



Discover: *What connects problems in different communities?*

Communities may look different in different places, but many times they have problems that are similar. In this activity you will think about the connections between problems in different places.

1. Start off by thinking about a time when you had a problem and talked to a friend about it. Consider:
 - a. Was it helpful to talk to a friend?
 - b. If so, why?
 - c. If your friend had faced a similar problem, would that make talking to them more helpful?
 - d. If so, why?
2. As a class, come up with some reasons why it might be useful to talk to a friend, especially a friend who had a similar problem. Just like people, communities have problems too. When they do, it can be useful to connect with other communities that have similar problems.
3. Communities around the world sometimes work together to solve their problems. They also work with scientists and other researchers to help understand their problems better. As action researchers, you can get ideas and advice from other researchers, just as you would from a friend.



4. In this research guide you will find out information from researchers in other places. These researchers are also trying to understand problems in their local communities and help them thrive. The information from researchers can give you ideas about your research and actions.
5. One researcher, who you will meet a little later in the guide, took the photograph in her local community shown in Figure 1.5. Examine it carefully.

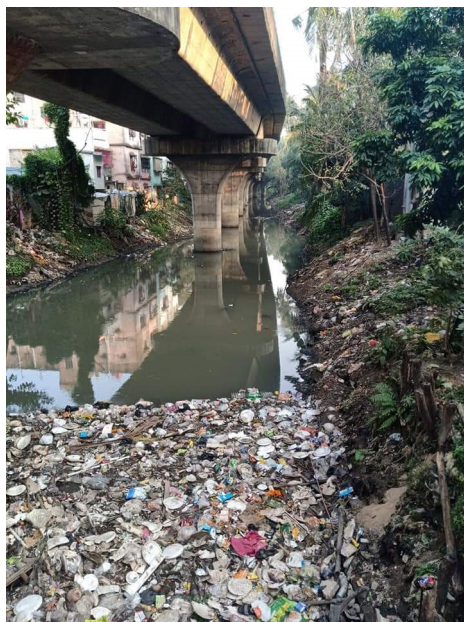


Figure 1.5: Local community photograph

6. Turn to a partner and discuss:
 - a. What do you notice in the photo that makes you happy? Try to pay close attention and be specific.
 - b. What do you notice about the photo that makes you worried?
 - c. A researcher took this photo in the community where she works. What kind of things do you think she might know about her community?
 - d. What do you wonder about the community where the photo was taken or the researcher who took this photo?
7. Now come together as a team and share the ideas you just discussed.
8. Problems in different places often have similar causes and solutions. Think about any connections between this photo and things you have noticed in your community. As a team, discuss:
 - a. Are there things you notice in this photo that you have also seen in your local community?



- b. Are there problems you notice in this photo that are the same as problems in your community?
 - c. If you could talk to the researcher who took this photo, what advice or ideas do you think she could give you about your community research?
9. Asking advice or ideas from other researchers can be an important part of building a knowledge **network**. A network is a set of connections between people, communities, and ideas. Networks extend all over the world to help scientists and other researchers work together to create new knowledge and solutions.
 10. As action researchers, you will use scientific and other tools to find out new information about your own community. This information can help you and your community. It can also help other communities by giving them new ideas, just as information from other communities can help you.



Understand: *How are global community goals related to my local community goals?*

Sometimes problems are so big that they really need the entire world to work together to make progress. As action researchers, you probably have thought of some of these problems already during your previous tasks.

1. By yourself or with your team, think about some problems that are so big that you think solving them requires people all around the world.
2. What do you know about organizations that help people around the world collaborate to solve problems? Read *The United Nations and the Sustainable Development Goals* to find out more.

The United Nations and the Sustainable Development Goals

Solving global community problems like the ones you just thought about is complex. It takes many people working together in many places to make these problems better. When many people are working together it helps to have someone organizing. The United Nations, also called the UN, is a global organization designed to help governments and people around the world collaborate.



A few years ago, the UN asked countries and people around the world to imagine a better world. They worked together to determine a list of goals. Then the countries of the UN came to consensus on the most important goals needed to get to a better world. These goals for the global community are called the UN Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs.

The process used by the UN is like the process you used to determine your Thriving Community Goals. You imagined a better community and thought about which goals were most important. Then you came to consensus on your Thriving Community Goals.

3. Now break into teams.
4. Examine the SDGs in Figure 1.6.
 - a. Do you see any of the big global problems you just talked about in step 1?
 - b. Are there any goals you would add to the SDGs?
 - c. Share your ideas with the rest of your team.



Figure 1.6: UN Sustainable Development Goals

5. Next, list your thriving community goals on a board or other place where everyone can have access to them.



6. Think quietly to yourself:
 - a. How do any of the SDGs connect to your *Thriving Community Goals*?
 - b. Hint: Yes, Goal 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, probably connects, but also look at some of the other SDGs to see if they connect.
7. Each team member should go to the list of *Thriving Community Goals*. Then put the number of the SDGs that connect to each thriving community goal. You can write a number, add a sticky note, or use another way to record your ideas. Add as many SDG numbers as you think connect to your goals.
8. As a team, examine the list of *Thriving Community Goals* and then discuss:
 - a. Are there many connections between your thriving community goals and the SDGs?
 - b. What do you think those connections mean about the connection between goals in your local community and goals in the global community?
 - c. Why is it important to remember those connections when thinking about how to solve problems in your community?
9. Next you can either have a discussion or do an activity. Choose either Option A: Discussion or Option B: Activity.

Option A: Discussion

If you want to have a discussion, talk about the following questions with your team.

- a. As action researchers you try to understand problems in your community and find the best way to solve them. How can your work in your local community help the global community make progress on the SDGs?
- b. Why is it important for everyone around the world to participate in achieving the global goals of the SDGs?

Option B: Activity

In this activity, your class will collaborate to solve a problem. Here are the steps.

1. A teacher or class leader should take a bag of dried rice, lentils, corn, stones, or other small items and spread them around on the floor. There should be enough items that it would take one person a long time to pick them up.



2. As a class or a large team, divide up the floor area so each person is in charge of one area.
3. Pick up the items in your area. If necessary, cooperate with the team members next to you to make sure all the items between you are picked up.
4. When you have finished picking up all the items in your area, look around to see if anyone else needs help.
5. Return the items to a container provided.
6. Now come back together and discuss with a partner:
 - a. Why was it important to have many people working together to pick up the items?
 - b. What would it have been like if only some people in your team participated?
 - c. How did you work together with the people near you to clean up the items together?
 - d. Did everyone pick up the items using the same technique? Why were there differences?
 - e. Did anything change while you were picking up the items? Did you learn new ideas from anyone else?
7. As a pair, share your thoughts with the team or class.
8. Now think about the items as problems that need to be solved. As a team, discuss:
 - a. Could one person working alone solve all the problems (pick up all the items) easily?
 - b. How is this activity like people around the world working together in their local spaces to help solve a global problem?
 - c. In this activity, you worked with team members around you to make sure all the items were picked up. If you were trying to solve global problems, who do you think might be the most important people to work with?
 - d. Maybe some of your team members used different techniques to pick up their items. How is this like different people or communities solving global problems in different ways?



10. Read Local-Global Connection and consider how you feel about the ideas.

Local-Global Connection

One of the most important parts of achieving global progress is people around the world taking action in local communities. You will act to help your local community work toward your Thriving Community Goals. Your local actions will also help the world make progress on the SDGs. If all local communities around the world acted to make their communities better, then the whole world would improve quickly.



Act: *Where will we act?*

As action researchers, you will be conducting investigations into your local community. Before you can do this, you need to decide as a team what local community area you will be using as your research area. In this activity, you will decide and map the boundaries of your research area.

1. Your research area will be the place where you will conduct investigations. Think about the following ideas when you consider which area to choose to be your research area.
 - a. Try to choose a space that is not too big, so you can get to know the area and its problems well.
 - b. Choose an area that has a variety of places in it. For example, it probably would be a good idea to choose an area with some housing, some shops, and some public areas.
 - c. Think about a place in your community you would like to know more about.
 - d. Consider access. Make sure all your team members will be able to reach your research area. Be sure that they can all work there comfortably and safely. It may be best to have your research area near your school or near the places where team members live.
 - e. You can choose to have more than one research area if that works best for your team.
 - f. These decisions are all up to your team. It is also okay to change the size and number of research areas later as you collect more information.



2. By yourself, think about the area or areas that are best to do your community action research. Write or draw your ideas on a piece of paper. Or you can just think about the area you consider to be best.
3. With a partner or with your whole team, share your ideas about where it might be best to do your research.
4. Then decide with your team where you will do your research.
5. Now you and your team need to mark the edges or boundaries of your research area. You can do this using a map. Some boundaries you might want to consider include:
 - a. Team housing boundaries: set a boundary that includes all the homes of the team members, the meeting place of the team, and the surrounding area
 - b. Natural boundaries: mountains, rivers, different land features
 - c. Political or administrative boundaries: city or county lines, school district lines, neighborhood lines
 - d. Physical infrastructure boundaries: roads, transportation networks
 - e. Other boundaries: determine your own reasons for a boundary
6. As a team, you can either use an existing map or create your own to show your boundaries. You will continue to add details to this map throughout the guide, so make sure the map is big enough that you can add to it. Read *Using an Existing Map* and *Creating a New Map* to learn more.

Using an Existing Map

1. Obtain any maps of the community around where your team meets that may be useful to get you started.
 - a. Online: Use free online mapping programs, such as Google Maps, to download and/or print a map of the community.
 - b. Print: Good maps of the community are often published and available in local libraries, government planning offices, travel offices, road atlases, or tourist centers.
 - c. Local: Local community leaders or other local sources, such as elders, may have maps available to share.



- d. Accessible maps: People who are blind or have low vision sometimes use tactile or Braille maps. These maps used raised surfaces to describe where things are.
2. Next, mark the edges of your research area on the map. Figure 1.7 shows an example.



Figure 1.7: Example of using an existing map to define the research area

Creating a New Map

You can use a map that already exists to help you save time. But you and your team can also create your own map. If you are going to create your own map, here are some instructions that can help.

1. Use a blank piece of paper or grid paper. If you can look at a print or online map to help you draw, that might be useful.
2. If you don't want to use paper, you can make your map on a computer. Or you can draw your map outside in dirt, sand, or other material. You can also describe your map out loud with your team.
3. Start by marking on your map the location where your team meets. You will work outward from this location to determine your research site boundaries.



4. Your map should include:
 - a. Roads and other infrastructure
 - b. Businesses and other important buildings
 - c. Natural features such as rivers or forests
 - d. Parks or other shared spaces
5. Next, draw the edges of your research area on the map.
6. Your map does not need to be perfect; it just needs to make sense to you and your team. You can always add to it or fix it later.

7. When you have finished making and marking the boundaries on your My Research Area map, keep it in a safe place. You will use this map to help you decide where to do your research and to mark down important information.



Task 5: How will we achieve our goals?

As action researchers, you and your team will make choices about how to use this guide. You will **discover** which community system parts you want to **understand** through further investigations. Then you can **act** and reflect on your role as an action researcher.



Discover: *What do we need to know more about?*

The problem of creating thriving communities is complex. As a team you have picked your starting goals for a thriving community. Now you need think about how to achieve those goals. This activity will help you discover what you already know about your goals and consider what you still need to explore.

1. As a team, get out your *Thriving Community Goals*.
2. Write each goal across the top of a piece of paper or on the board. Then make three columns for each goal and label them "Notice," "Think," and "Wonder." If you don't have paper, you can just discuss these ideas.
3. If you want, you can move around your community to notice things related to your goals. If that is not possible, just try to remember what you have seen in the past.
4. Under the *Notice* column, write down everything you have noticed in your community related to your goal. For example, perhaps one of your thriving community goals is to have lots of parks or other spaces where people can interact with one another and with nature. Under *Notice* you might write down the natural shared spaces you have noticed in your community. Or if you noticed that there are no natural shared spaces, you could write that down.
5. Next, under *Think* write down what you think is happening in your community. For example, thinking about a goal related to parks, if you think there are enough green spaces for people to use, write that down. If you think people want more parks, write that down. If you think there are a lot of parks in one part of your research area but none in another part, write that down.
6. Finally, under *Wonder*, consider what you don't know.
 - a. What questions do you still have?



- b. At the end of this guide you will need to decide what to do to make your community better. What information about this goal do you need to help you make that decision?
 - c. For example, thinking about a goal to have lots of parks and green spaces, perhaps you wonder how people use parks. Or perhaps you wonder why there are parks in some places and not others. Or perhaps you wonder who makes decisions about parks.
7. The things you listed under *Notice* are things you already know. You probably need to find out more information about the things you listed under *Think* and *Wonder*. For example, you may think people want more parks, but you will need to find out if that is true. Or you may wonder who makes decisions about parks. Now you will think about how to get that information.
8. Remember the parts of your local community system? Just as a reminder, those parts are:
- a. People in your community
 - b. Shared spaces where people can interact in the community, like parks, fields, and markets
 - c. Personal spaces, such as housing, which is how most people have personal space in a local community
 - d. Infrastructure, things that stay in your community and get used again and again, like roads, bridges, building or buses
 - e. Resources, things that get used up by people, houses, and businesses, like electricity, water, or food
9. As a team, look at things you listed under *Think* and *Wonder*. Write or say how those questions or ideas connect to the parts your local community system. For example, under *Wonder* maybe you listed, "How do people use parks?" Think about which parts of the local community system you need to investigate to answer that question. In this case, you might need information related to people and shared spaces.
10. Record these ideas by keeping your paper, taking a picture of the board, or recording your voices. You will have a chance to return to these ideas in the next activity, when you will decide which parts you want to learn about.





Understand: What research will we do?

You will be leading the research for the rest of this Community Research Guide. You have already determined your starting goals. Then you thought about what you still need to know about those goals. In this activity you will decide how to spend the rest of your time as action researchers.

1. You need know how much time you have. Check with your teacher or leader. Are you able to do all seven parts of the Community Research Guide? If not, figure out how many parts you can do.
2. Read *Part Overview* to find out more about each part, to help you understand which parts are the most important for your team.

Part Overview

We suggest that you definitely plan to do Part 1, Part 2, and Part 7.

- Part 1 introduced the problem and helped you understand how it relates to your community. You have almost finished Part 1.
- Part 2 will help you understand how to listen to different people in your community and make good decisions. Part 2 is a very important part.
- Part 7 is when your team will decide which problem you want to help solve. Then you will act to solve it. Part 7 is also a very important part.

The rest of the Parts of this guide are matched to the parts of the local community system you have been thinking about already. Here is the list:

- Part 3: Community Space
- Part 4: Housing
- Part 5: Transportation and Infrastructure
- Part 6: Resource Use and Waste

3. Look back at the parts of your local community system you listed that were related to your *Think* and *Wonder* columns. Which parts of the system did you think you needed to investigate to get more information?



4. As a team, you will find out information and take action. Think about which Parts of this Community Research Guide your team would like to investigate.
5. It would be easiest for your class to all do the same parts. Now you need to decide as a class which parts to do.
6. As a class, discuss the Parts you think are most important for your class.
7. If you will be able to do all of the Parts of the guide, you can stop this activity now.
8. If you can only do some of the Parts, discuss which Parts are the most important for the largest number of goals. For example, maybe when you looked at the *Think* and *Wonder* columns there were questions for each goal that needed more information about resources. As a class you probably want to make sure you do Part 6, which is about resources.
9. Give everyone a chance to share their opinion, then spend some time coming to consensus. Think about:
 - a. Is there one Part that everyone thinks needs to be explored?
 - b. Is there one Part that no one thinks needs to be explored?
 - c. If you are having difficulty deciding, have team members talk about why they think one Part might be more important to explore.
10. After you have discussed all the ideas, you can try to come to consensus. Sometimes after a discussion it is clear to everyone what the decision should be. If the decision is still not clear, go on to step 12. If you think everyone agreed, then have a teacher or class leader list the Parts they think everyone has agreed on. You and other class members then have the option to:
 - d. Agree
 - e. Agree with reservations, like maybe you are a little uncertain or worried about the decision
 - f. Stand aside, meaning you don't agree but you are willing to go along with the group
 - g. Block, meaning you feel strongly the decision being made is the wrong one
11. If everyone agrees, then you can stop this activity now.
12. If there are a lot of class members who do not agree, especially if they are blocking the decision, it is best to go on and work more on finding consensus.



13. If people in your class are having trouble agreeing, you can try the following ideas:
 - a. List the good things and bad things about doing each Part. Discuss as a class.
 - b. Build a sense of group opinion. Each person can vote for as many parts as your class has time to do. For example, maybe you can only do two parts out of Parts 3, 4, 5, and 6. In that case, each person can vote for two parts. Look at the Parts that have the most votes, and perhaps you can see if everyone can agree to do those Parts.
 - c. Find a slow consensus. Find a partner and as a pair find consensus on which part or parts are most important. Then in a group of two pairs (four class members) you can find consensus. Then in a group of four pairs (eight class members) you find consensus. Keep adding together groups until you have found a class consensus.
14. When you have decided on the parts you will do, you are ready to complete Part 1 by finishing the Act activity. Then you can move on to Part 2.



Act: *What are my feelings about taking action?*

As action researchers you will work as a team. Using scientific and other methods, you will try to understand your local community and its problems. Then you will compare the way your community is to the way you want it to be. This difference is where you will act to help make your community better. By the end of this guide, your team will have come to consensus on what problem in your community you would like to address. Then you will put your plan into action.

1. The action researcher role may feel unfamiliar. Stop and think about how you are feeling before you go on to the rest of the guide.
2. Take a piece of paper and write “My Feelings” across the top. Then write down your answers to the questions in step 3 so you can look at them later.
3. Think about:
 - a. What worries me about being an action researcher?
 - b. What excites me about being an action researcher?
 - c. What do I hope I will learn about my community?
 - d. What do I hope I will learn about the topic of sustainable communities?



- e. How do I think my team will work together?
 - f. Do I feel ready to take action to make my community better?
 - g. How do I hope I will feel at the end?
4. Save these answers. At the end of the guide you can think about them again.

Congratulations!

You have finished Part 1.

Find out More!

For additional resources and activities, please visit the *Sustainable Communities!* StoryMap at <https://bit.ly/2YdHNqB>.



Glossary

This glossary can help you understand words you may not know. Feel free to add drawings, your own definitions, or anything else that will help. Add other words to the glossary if you would like.

Action researchers: People who use their own knowledge and information they find out from their community to make decisions and take action on important issues

Community: A group of people that have a place or other thing in common

Complex: Made up of many parts

Consensus: A balanced decision that works for everyone in the group

Economic: About money, income, and use of wealth

Environmental: About the natural world

Ethical: The fairness of something

Housing: A building or other structure where people make their home

Identity: Characteristics that make up each person or thing

Infrastructure: Built things that stay in your community (for example, bridges, buildings, train tracks)

Interacting: Communicating or doing activities with others

Investigate: Find out more information



Network: A set of connections between people, communities, and ideas

Observation: Recording what you notice without adding your own opinion

Observe: Use your senses to get information about something

Perspective: A specific way of thinking about the world around us

Reflect: Think carefully about something

Resources: Materials we use to meet our needs

Social: About the interaction of people in a community

Social science: Study of human communities and interactions

Survey: A list of questions that you can give to a group of people

Sustainable: A balanced, long-term approach to social, environmental, economic, and ethical concerns

Sustainable community: A group that balances the needs of living things and the resources available in a way that does not hurt future generations

System: Something made up of parts that work together

Thriving: Something that is working or growing well

Other words:

