

Cooperate or go it alone? Influence of community assets on local policymakers' attitudes towards interjurisdictional collaboration

Meg Streams, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Public Administration

Soumen Ghosh, Ph.D.

Professor, Economics & Finance

Julie Roberts

Doctoral student, Public Administration

Oct. 1, 2015 | SECoPA



How do local officials' perceptions of their communities' strengths and difficulty funding public services relate to their anticipation that their jurisdiction would initiate collaboration?

- **Community asset base strength**, broadly defined across a variety of capital stocks, was significantly and positively associated with the likelihood that TN local officials anticipate interjurisdictional collaboration in a hypothetical grant scenario.
- Greater perceived **difficulty funding public services** only played a role when **interacted** with community asset strength.
- **City managers** were more likely to anticipate collaboration than city executives and legislators.

Key literatures

■ **Interjurisdictional collaboration**

- Feiock 2008 – Institutional Collective Action (ICA) framework
- Focus on local officials as actors; cost/benefit calculus; decision setting; transactions costs; features of collaboration

■ **Assessing community assets**

- Traditional economic development view vs. modern sustainable development view; e.g., Greenwood and Holt 2010; Kitson et al. 2004; Blanke et al. 2011
- Moving from narrow productive/human capital focus to broad, multi-dimensional perspective (add cultural/natural, social/institutional, knowledge/creative capital stocks)

Methods: listening to local officials



- **Two focus groups**
 - Elected officials, development district staff
- **Online survey**
 - N = 266 TN local officials

<i>Role</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Role population</i>	<i>% of role pop'n responding</i>
<i>City Manager</i>	32	73	44%
<i>County Execs</i>	26	92	28%
<i>City/Metro Exec.</i>	42	345	12%
<i>County Legis.</i>	102	1,572	6%
<i>City/Metro Legis.</i>	42	1,684	2%
<i>Targeted roles (subtotal)</i>	244	3,674	7%
<i>Other City Official</i>	6		
<i>Other Public Role</i>	16		
<i>All respondents (total)</i>	266		

Dependent variable

ANTICIPATED COLLABORATION

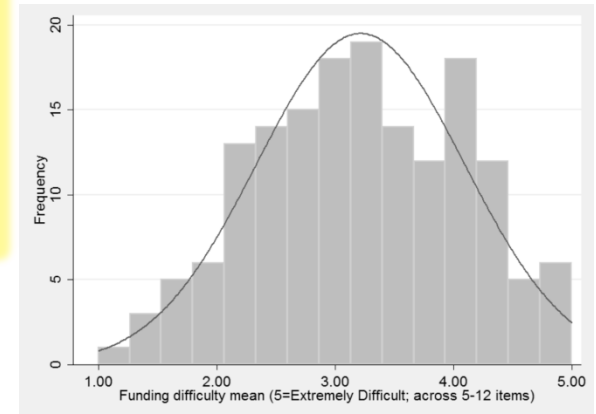
- with another local jurisdiction
- based on hypothetical grant scenario
- Dependent variable is dichotomous:
1 = Anticipates own jurisdiction would initiate collaboration

Variable	Summary statistics for all responses (N=266)	Summary statistics for regression sample only (n=161)
	Mean +/- SD or % of responses	Mean +/- SD or % of responses
<i>Resp. anticipates collaboration attempt?</i>		
Yes	53%	61%
No	32%	39%
Missing	15%	0%

Key independent variables

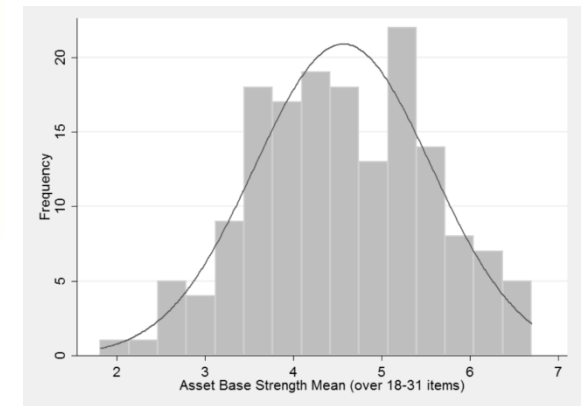
FUNDING DIFFICULTY

- Up to 12 public services (first, indicate if provided Y/N)
- 5-point Likert scale
1=“not difficult at all” to 5=“extremely difficult”
- Independent variable = Standardized mean value across min. of 5 services
- Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.935$, average interitem covariance 0.72



COMMUNITY ASSET STRENGTH

- Across up to 31 community characteristics
- 7-point Likert scale
1=“major challenge” to 7=“major strength”
- Independent variable = Standardized mean value across min. of 18 assets
- Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.926$, average interitem covariance 0.90



Anticipated cooperation (1/0) = f (asset base strength, funding difficulty, interaction term; jurisdiction and respondent characteristics)

overall N = 266, model n = 161

Estimation with logistic regression

Model (1): $\text{logit}(p_i) = \ln\left(\frac{p_i}{1-p_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 A_i + \beta_2 F_i + \beta_{x,i} \cdot x_i$

Model (2): $\text{logit}(p_i) = \ln\left(\frac{p_i}{1-p_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 A_i + \beta_2 F_i + \beta_3 A_i F_i + \beta_{x,i} \cdot x_i$

Odds Ratios

	(1)	(2)	
Asset Base Strength, std.	1.979 ***	2.196 ***	H1
Funding Difficulty, std.	1.170	1.186	H2
Asset Base Strength, std. * Funding Difficulty, std.		1.556 **	H3
<i>Jurisdiction characteristics</i>			
Suburban vs. Urban	1.420	1.545	
Rural or Mixed Rural/Suburban vs. Urban	1.820	2.160	
Middle vs. West TN	0.806	0.786	
East vs. West TN	0.608	0.641	
County vs. City	3.319 **	3.055 **	
<i>Respondent characteristics</i>			
Exec. vs. Legis	2.583 *	2.541 *	H4
Manager vs. Legis.	10.768 **	13.486 ***	
Full-time vs. part-time	0.746	0.746	
Female vs. male	1.689	1.895	
Under 56 vs. 56 and over	1.033	1.060	
Four-year college degree vs. less than 4-year degree	0.870	0.854	
Graduate degree vs. less than 4-year degree	0.630	0.678	
5 - 10 vs. less than 5 years of service	2.229 *	2.280 *	
11 - 15 vs. less than 5 years of service	2.281	2.297	
More than 15 vs. less than 5 years of service	1.763	2.141	
Constant	0.293	0.280	
% obs. correctly classified	69.6%	71.4%	

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Thank you!

We gratefully acknowledge funding support from the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations as well as Tennessee State University

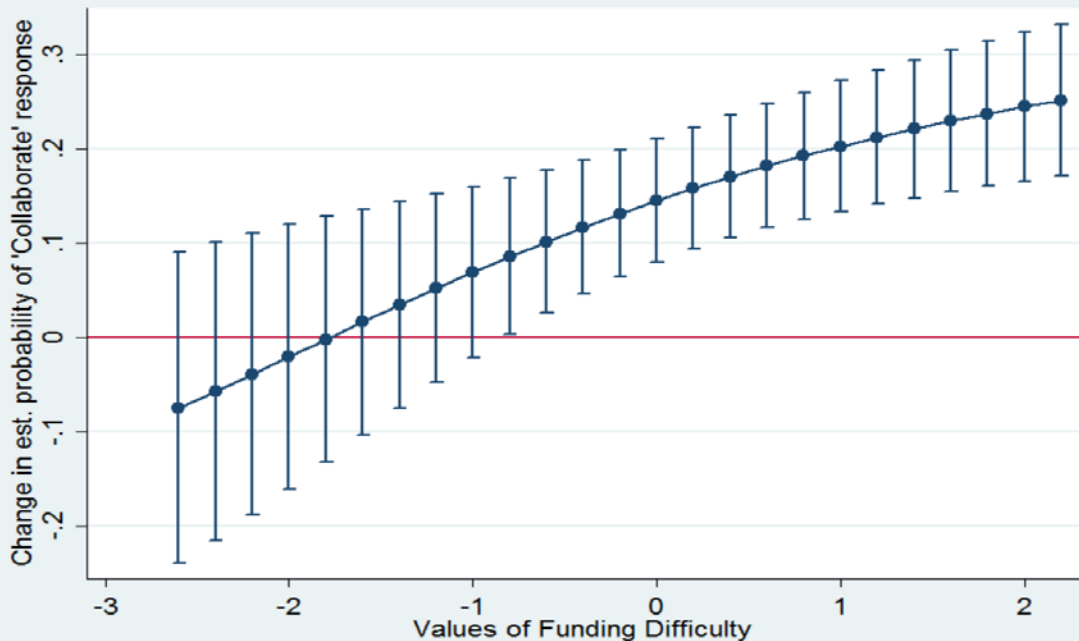
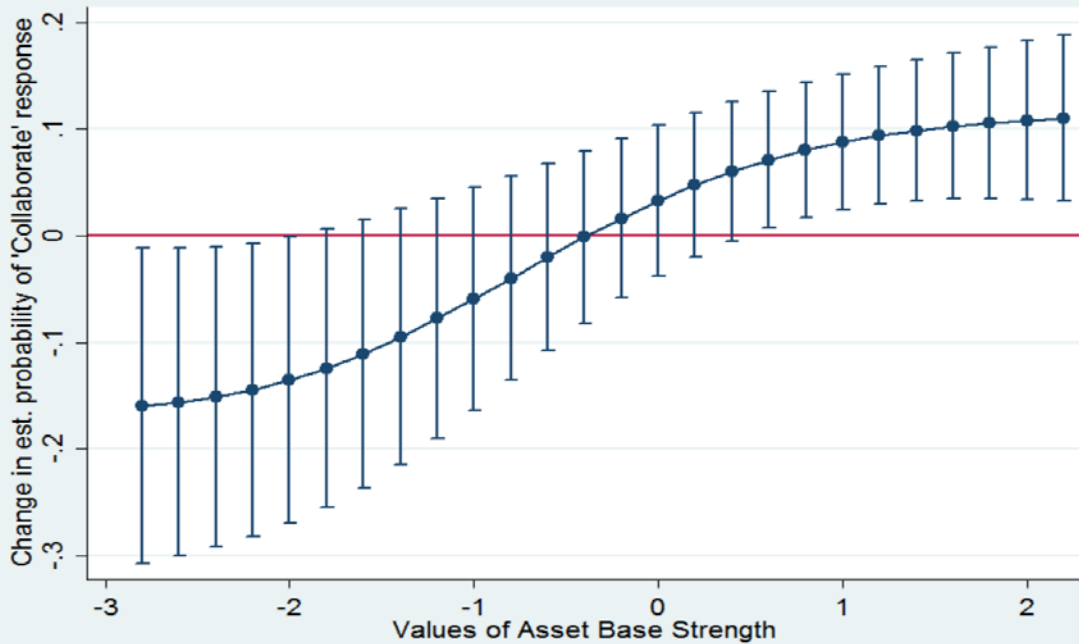
Logistical assistance from the Tennessee Development District Association, Tennessee County Services Association, Tennessee Municipal League, MTAS, and CTAS

Research assistance from MBA student Vania Patartchanova



Conclusions

- **Is it just about the \$\$\$?** No. Even controlling for funding difficulty, rural/urban, etc.: Greater community asset strength is associated with greater likelihood of anticipated collaboration
- Location can't be changed...
but we can **build community assets** like public institutions and relationships, social capital and attitudes, and cultural features
- Openness to **collaboration between jurisdictions** appeared to come from a place of community asset strength, not weakness



Diagnostics and deciding between the two models

N	161	161
Model p-value	0.024	0.008
Cragg & Uhler's pseudo R ²	0.233	0.268
AIC	220	217
Log likelihood (constant only model)	-107.3	-107.3
Log likelihood (full model)	-92.2	-89.6
chi ² , Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test (10 groups)	10.6 (p=0.228)	9.67 (p=0.289)
p(_hatsq) from linktest	0.996	0.183
mean VIF, uncentered	2.73	2.66
% obs. correctly classified	69.6%	71.4%

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

7. Imagine that the following scenario applies to your jurisdiction:

A grant has become available to fund a new community asset, which meets a major need for your jurisdiction. The grantor will only fund one such asset in your area.

Your neighboring jurisdiction has the same need and knows of the grant opportunity. It would be technically possible for one asset to serve both jurisdictions.

Jurisdictions may apply individually or jointly for a grant. The grantor has not made clear whether it favors single or joint applications.

7a. In this scenario, do you think your jurisdiction's local government would...

- Wait to see if Jurisdiction B approaches your government to collaborate
- Initiate the process of collaborating on a grant application with Jurisdiction B
- Apply for the grant as a single jurisdiction

Variable	Summary statistics for all responses (N=266)	Summary statistics for regression sample only (n=161)
	Mean +/- SD or % of responses	Mean +/- SD or % of responses
<i>Resp. anticipates collaboration attempt?</i>		
Yes	53%	61%
No	32%	39%
Missing	15%	0%
Asset base strength (n=229, 7-point scale)	4.6 +/- 1.0 (range 1.8 - 6.9)	4.6 +/- 1.0 (range 1.8 - 6.7)
Asset base strength (std.)		0.0 +/- 1.0 (range -2.7 - 2.1)
Funding difficulty (n=190, 5-point scale)	3.2 +/- 0.9 (range 1.0 - 5.0)	3.2 +/- 0.9 (range 1.0 - 5.0)
Funding difficulty (std.)		0.0 +/- 1.0 (range -2.5 - 2.0)
<i>Jurisdiction composition</i>		
Urban or Mixed Suburban/Urban	12%	11%
Suburban	9%	12%
Rural or Mixed Suburban/Rural	64%	76%
Missing	15%	0%
<i>Jurisdiction region</i>		
West TN	17%	18%
Middle TN	38%	43%
East TN	30%	39%
Missing	15%	0%
<i>Jurisdiction type</i>		
City	46%	50%
County	48%	50%
Missing	6%	0%
<i>Respondent public service role</i>		
Legislator (County or City)	54%	53%
Executive (County or City)	26%	30%
Manager (City)	12%	17%
Other public service role	8%	*
Missing	0%	0%

Variable	Summary statistics for all responses (N=266)	Summary statistics for regression sample only (n=161)
	Mean +/- SD or % of responses	Mean +/- SD or % of responses
<i>Public Service Role type</i>		
Part-time	50%	60%
Full-time	34%	40%
Missing	15%	0%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	62%	79%
Female	23%	21%
Missing	15%	0%
<i>Age</i>		
56 and over	57%	71%
Under 56	27%	29%
Missing	15%	0%
<i>Education</i>		
Less than four-year college degree	29%	31%
Four-year college degree	30%	40%
Graduate degree	25%	29%
Missing	15%	0%
<i>Tenure in public service role</i>		
Less than five years	31%	36%
5-10 years	24%	30%
11-15 years	14%	17%
More than 15 years	16%	17%
Missing	15%	0%
<i>Race</i>		
White	80%	**
Non-white	3%	**
Missing	17%	**

So...what can we work on?

Public assets

Harmony - between own and other local gov'ts
Harmony - within own local gov't
Harmony - betw. own local gov't and local business
Efficiency of the local gov't structure
Strength of local gov't leadership

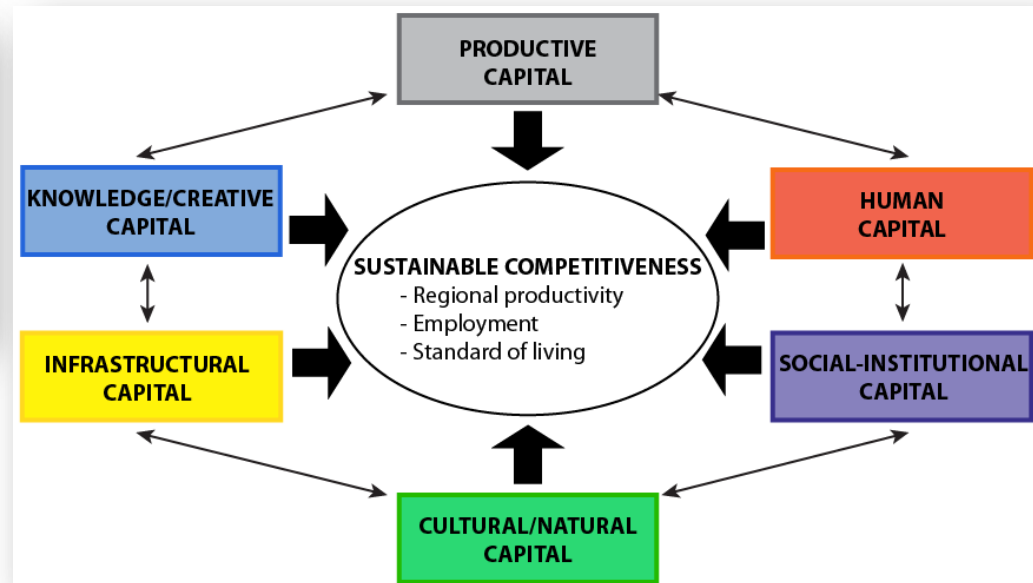
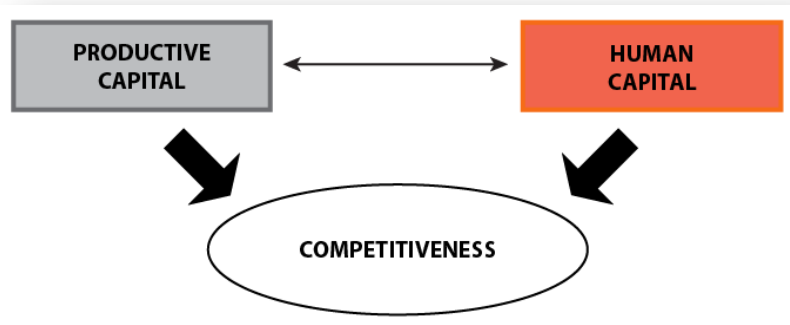
Social assets

Attitude of residents towards change
Attitude of residents about necessity for public services
Desire educ. young ppl. to stay local

Cultural assets

Avail. special events for rec./tourism
Avail. historical monuments/sites/neighborhoods
Distinct identity for marketing
Residents' entrepreneurial ability
Avail. public activities for children/youth

Traditional vs. newer theories of local “competitiveness”



Traditional advice for localities:

Narrow focus on location advantages, tax base and job creation

Newer advice for localities:

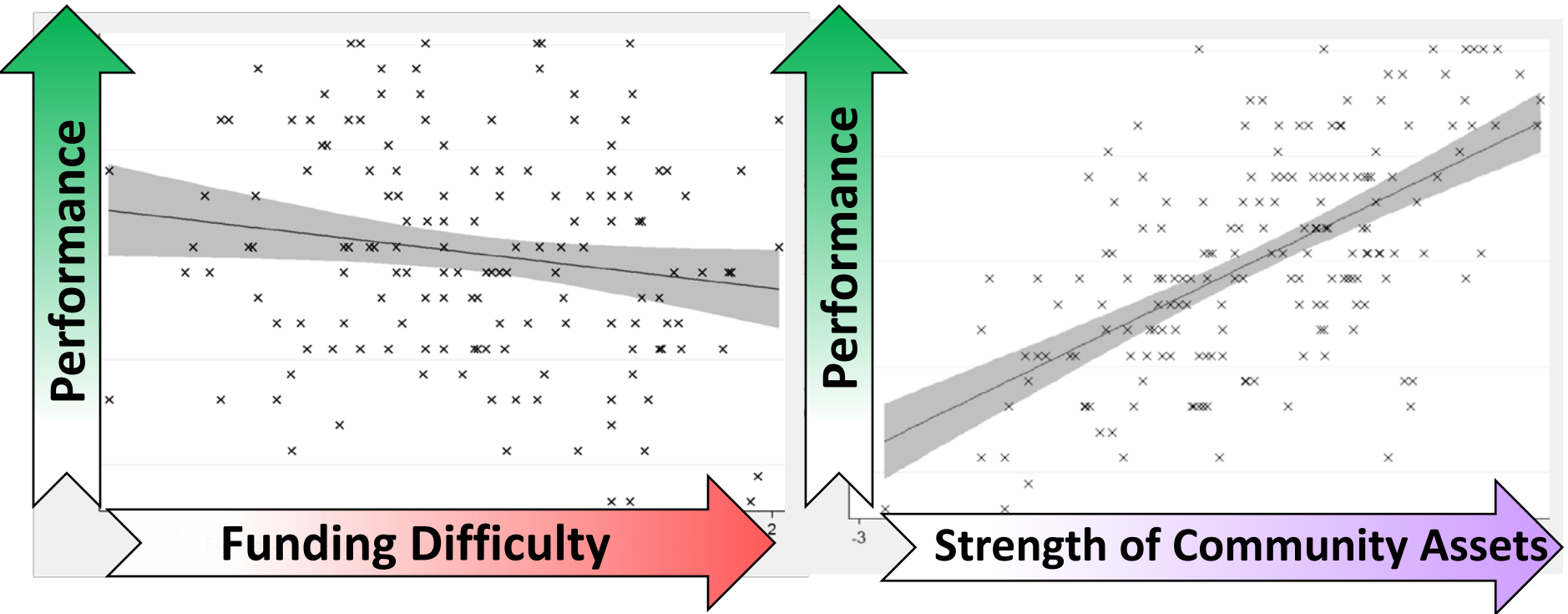
Broaden focus to include quality-of-life measures; equity; long-run outcomes; “sustainable competitiveness”

What is *sustainable competitiveness*?

Emphasizes “development that satisfies the [economic, social, and environmental] needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”

- Blanke et al. 2011, World Economic Forum

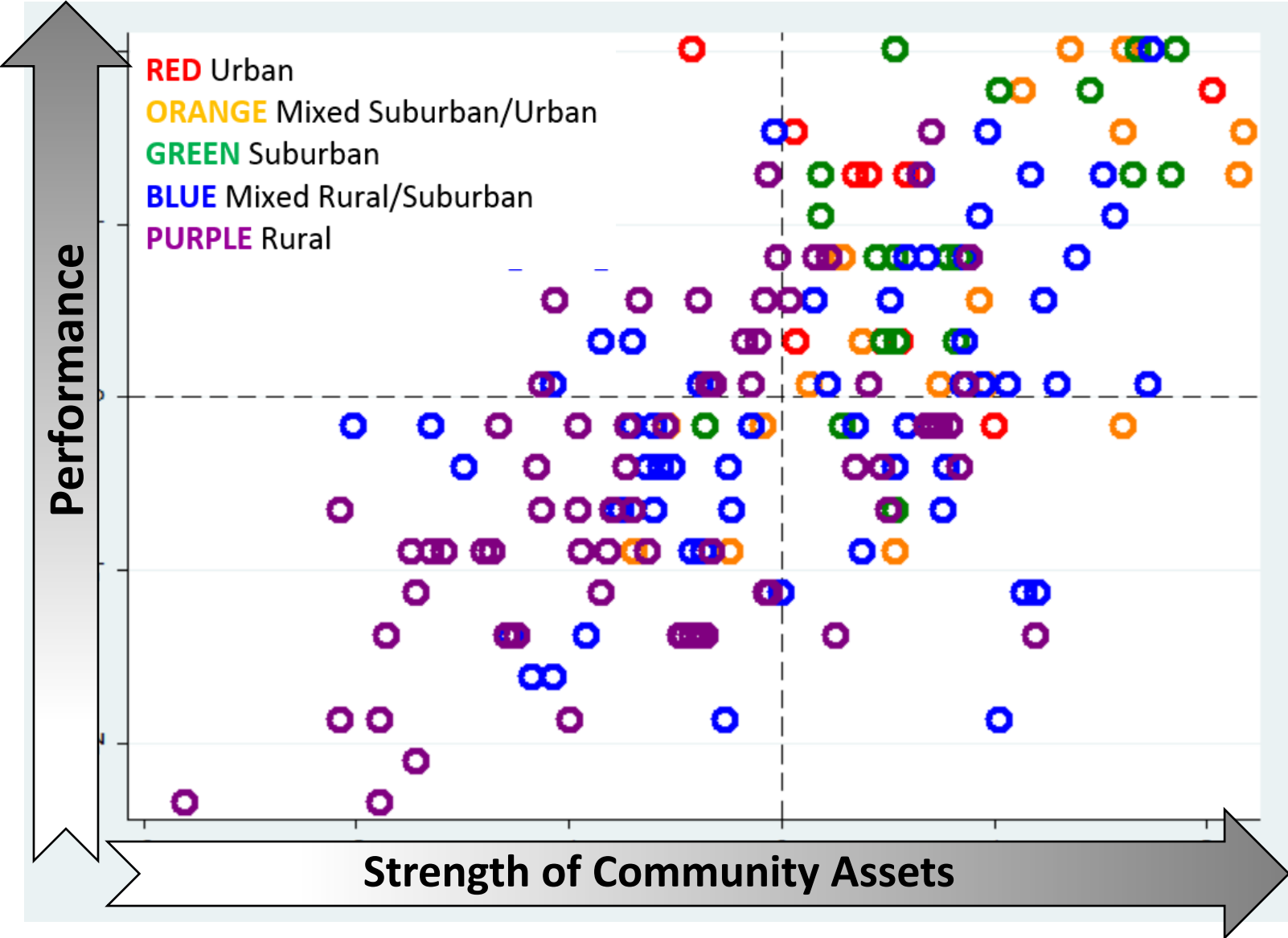
Jurisdiction performance



Only a weak relationship


A strong positive relationship


Performance vs. community asset strength: Rural challenges



Grant scenario:


What makes cooperation more likely ?

Compete		38%
Cooperate		62%



Stronger community assets associated with more cooperation
– even considering funding difficulty

	What would be most significant for the success of the collaboration?	% ranking most significant
#1	Elected officials have good relationship	30%
#2	Elected officials are innovative	22%
#3	Gov'ts had past positive collaboration	20%
#4	Professional staff have good rel'nship	15%
#5	Business leaders support the project	12%



Focus Groups

- Where?
- **Who?**
 - **12 Elected Officials** – from 12 counties, 6 DDs; county-level (8) and city/town-level (4)
 - **12 Development District Staff** – 8 DDs; various roles (planning, environmental, community development, etc.)

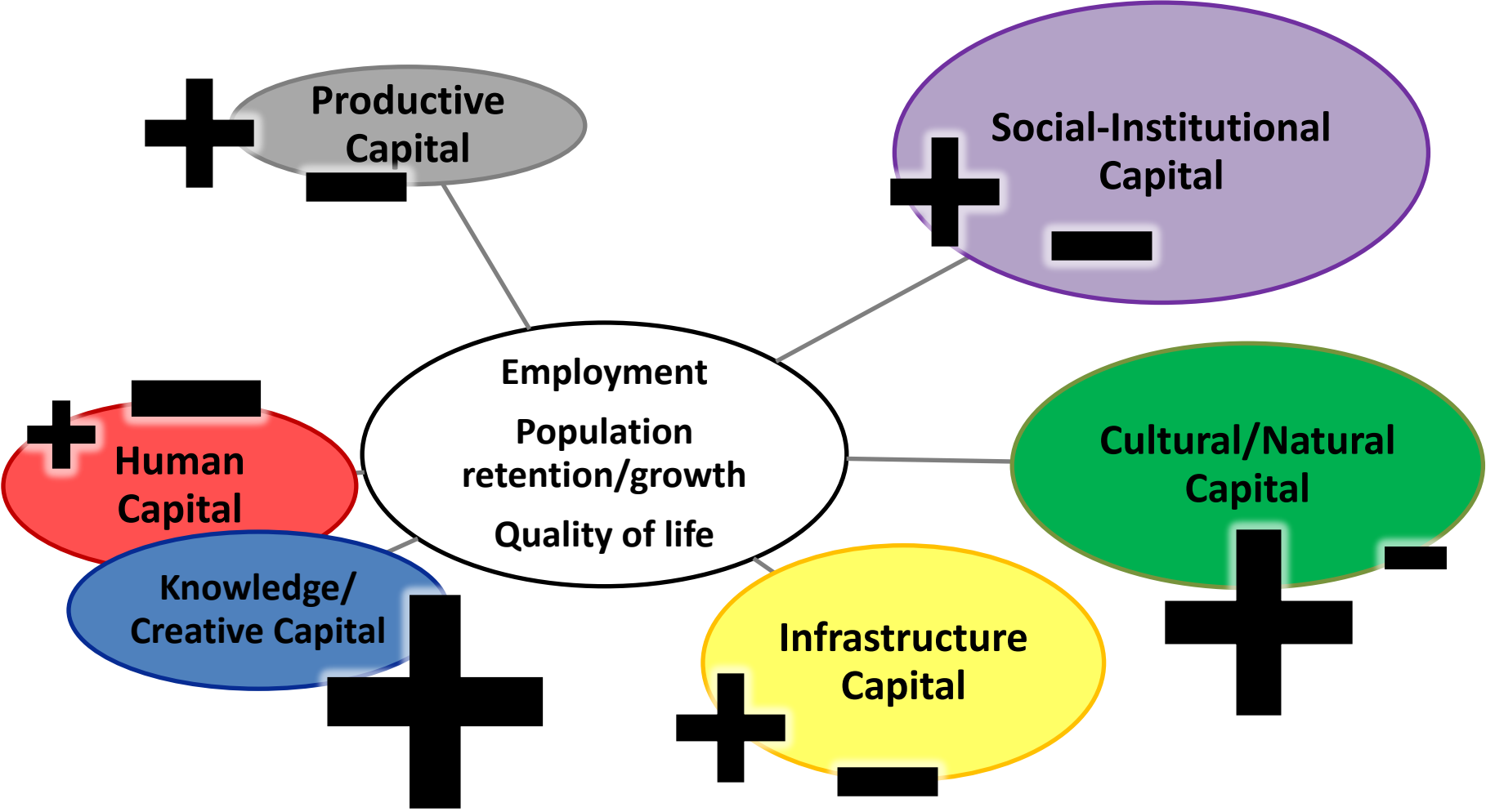
Focus Groups

- Who?
- **How?**
 - No details first:
“...issues that TN local gov'ts are facing as YOU see them”
 - Confidentiality
 - Getting feedback

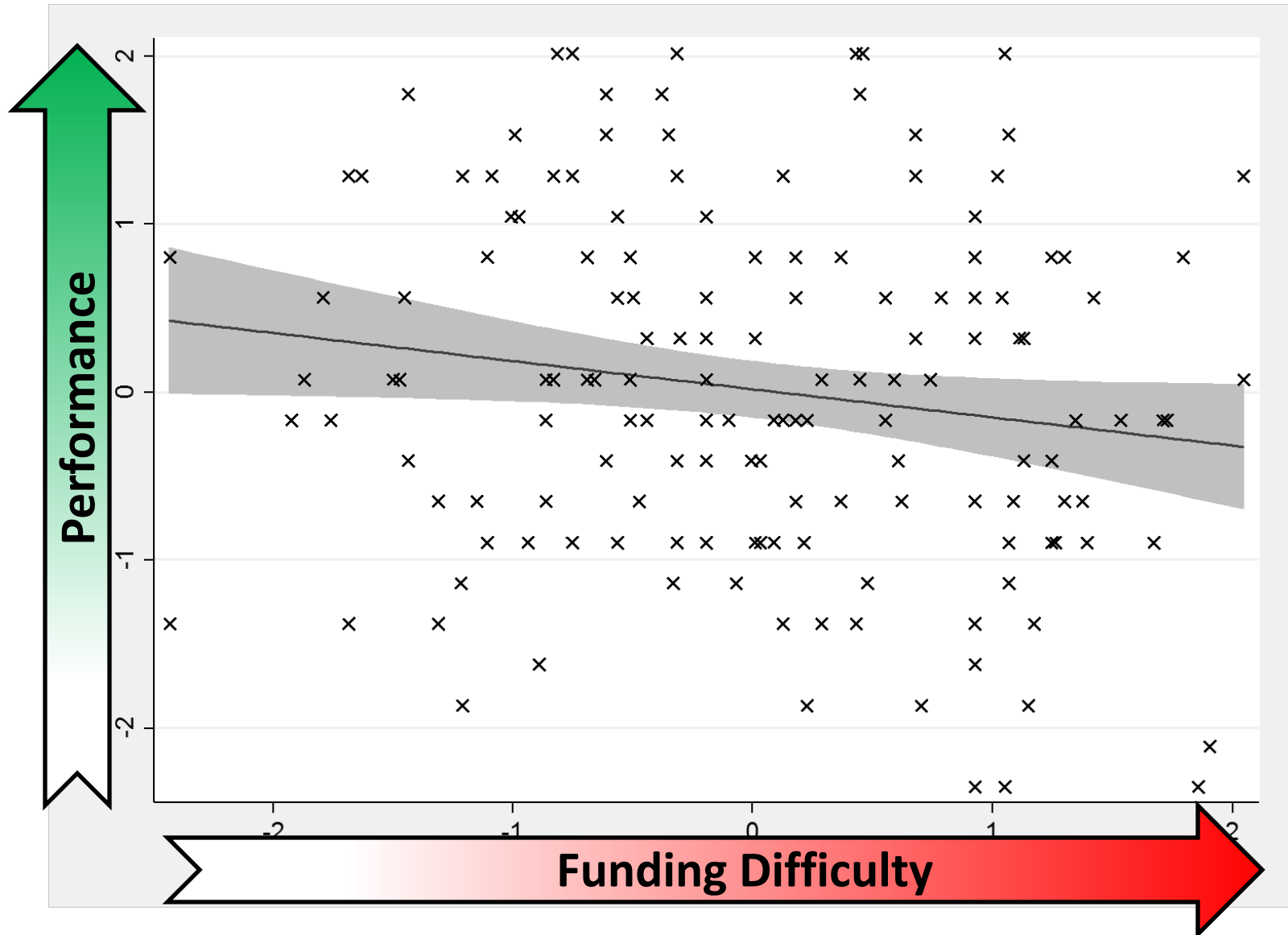
Understanding the **asset base**

- **Factor analysis** to extract a smaller number of multiple-variable, uncorrelated factors which explain variation in the full set of 32 items
- Mathematical process which does not use *a priori* input about which variables (you think) will be related to each other – **exploratory**
- Factor labels assigned **post hoc** (if possible) based on the variables strongly loaded onto each factor

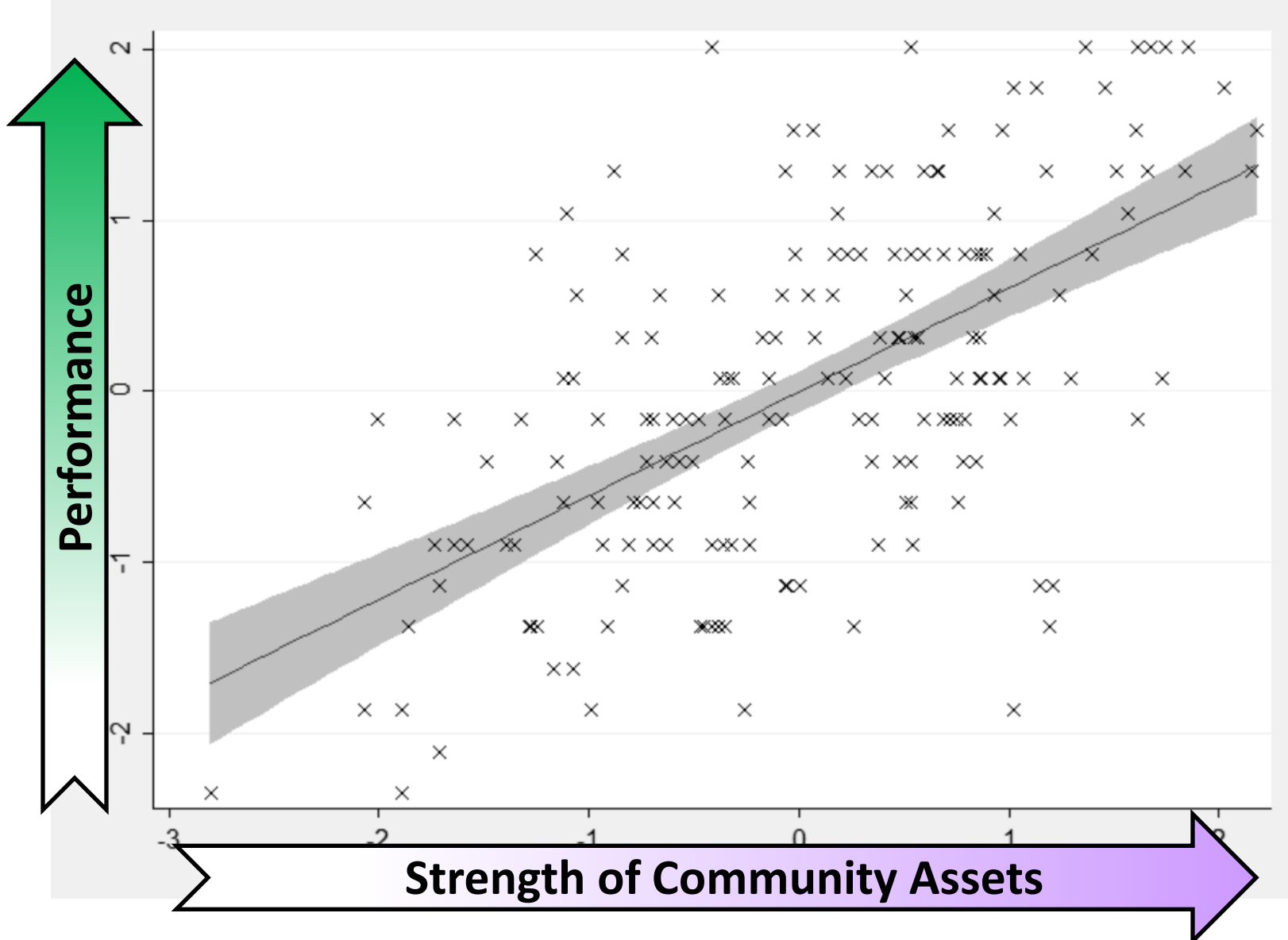
Community assets...two sides to the coin



Jurisdiction performance vs. funding difficulty: only a weak relationship



Jurisdiction performance vs. community asset strength: a strong positive relationship



“Asset Base” factors extracted from responses to 32 strength/challenge Likert items (7 point scale)

Strength / Challenge Variable

Avail. special events for rec./tourism
 Avail. historical monuments/sites/neighborhoods
 Distinct identity for marketing
 Residents' entrepreneurial ability
 Avail. public activities for children/youth
 Avail. cultural inst. for arts
 Ability to pass on Main Street culture
 Avail. public rec. areas

Factor 1

0.75
 0.71
 0.70
 0.65
 0.64
 0.50
 0.49
 0.40

Strength / Challenge Variable

Attitude of residents towards change
 Attitude of residents about necessity for public services
 Desire educ. young ppl. to stay local
 Coping w/effects of drug abuse
 Coping w/jail/corrections needs/mandates
 Preparing next generation of public servants
 Desire workforce to acquire approp. skills
 Consensus around shared vision
 Level of workforce degrees, skills, qual.

Factor 3

0.72
 0.69
 0.63
 0.60
 0.54
 0.53
 0.52
 0.52
 0.47

Strength / Challenge Variable

Harmony - between own and other local gov'ts
 Harmony - within own local gov't
 Harmony - betw. own local gov't and local business
 Efficiency of the local gov't structure
 Strength of local gov't leadership
 Ability to pass on Main Street culture
 Consensus around shared vision

Factor 2

0.82
 0.80
 0.80
 0.78
 0.78
 0.49
 0.41

Strength / Challenge Variable

Afford. avail. housing
 Prov./maintain adequate water/sewer
 Quality avail. housing
 Avail. emergency services
 Access. health care
 Zoning to safeguard QOL while allowing ED
 Avail. sufficient cell/internet

Factor 4

0.62
 0.60
 0.57
 0.54
 0.51
 0.50
 0.46

“Asset Base” factors extracted from responses to 32 strength/challenge Likert items (7 point scale):

CULTURAL CAPITAL

<u>Strength / Challenge Variable</u>	<u>Factor 1</u>
Avail. special events for rec./tourism	0.75
Avail. historical monuments/sites/neighborhoods	0.71
Distinct identity for marketing	0.70
Residents' entrepreneurial ability	0.65
Avail. public activities for children/youth	0.64
Avail. cultural inst. for arts	0.50
Ability to pass on Main Street culture	0.49
Avail. public rec. areas	0.40

PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL CAPITAL

<u>Strength / Challenge Variable</u>	<u>Factor 2</u>
Harmony - between own and other local gov'ts	0.82
Harmony - within own local gov't	0.80
Harmony - betw. own local gov't and local business	0.80
Efficiency of the local gov't structure	0.78
Strength of local gov't leadership	0.78
Ability to pass on Main Street culture	0.49
Consensus around shared vision	0.41

ATTITUDINAL/SOCIAL CAPITAL

<u>Strength / Challenge Variable</u>	<u>Factor 3</u>
Attitude of residents towards change	0.72
Attitude of residents about necessity for public services	0.69
Desire educ. young ppl. to stay local	0.63
Coping w/effects of drug abuse	0.60
Coping w/jail/corrections needs/mandates	0.54
Preparing next generation of public servants	0.53
Desire workforce to acquire approp. skills	0.52
Consensus around shared vision	0.52
Level of workforce degrees, skills, qual.	0.47

BASIC NEEDS

<u>Strength / Challenge Variable</u>	<u>Factor 4</u>
Afford. avail. housing	0.62
Prov./maintain adequate water/sewer	0.60
Quality avail. housing	0.57
Avail. emergency services	0.54
Access. health care	0.51
Zoning to safeguard QOL while allowing ED	0.50
Avail. sufficient cell/internet	0.46

Focus Groups

- **How?**



Focus Groups

- How?



3 hrs.

29 pgs.

164 pts.



Sustaining the future

“...what I have noticed in my communities is that there is **a strong interest in wanting to pass on the small town, and community that they have, on to their children...’Main Street’**” (DD)

It goes back to what somebody said, **how are we developing people who will take our place when we retire?** There are very few young people in the pipeline - and I am not guessing here - that have the public service thoughts that we had. (EO)

*“Is that a general consensus among a lot of you that the workforce is not ready for the challenges that are coming? [agreement] But you also talked about [specific educational institution/program]... -Let's kind of clear that up - **I don't think it's because they don't have an opportunity to learn the jobs** - it's lack of desire to do the job.”* (EO)

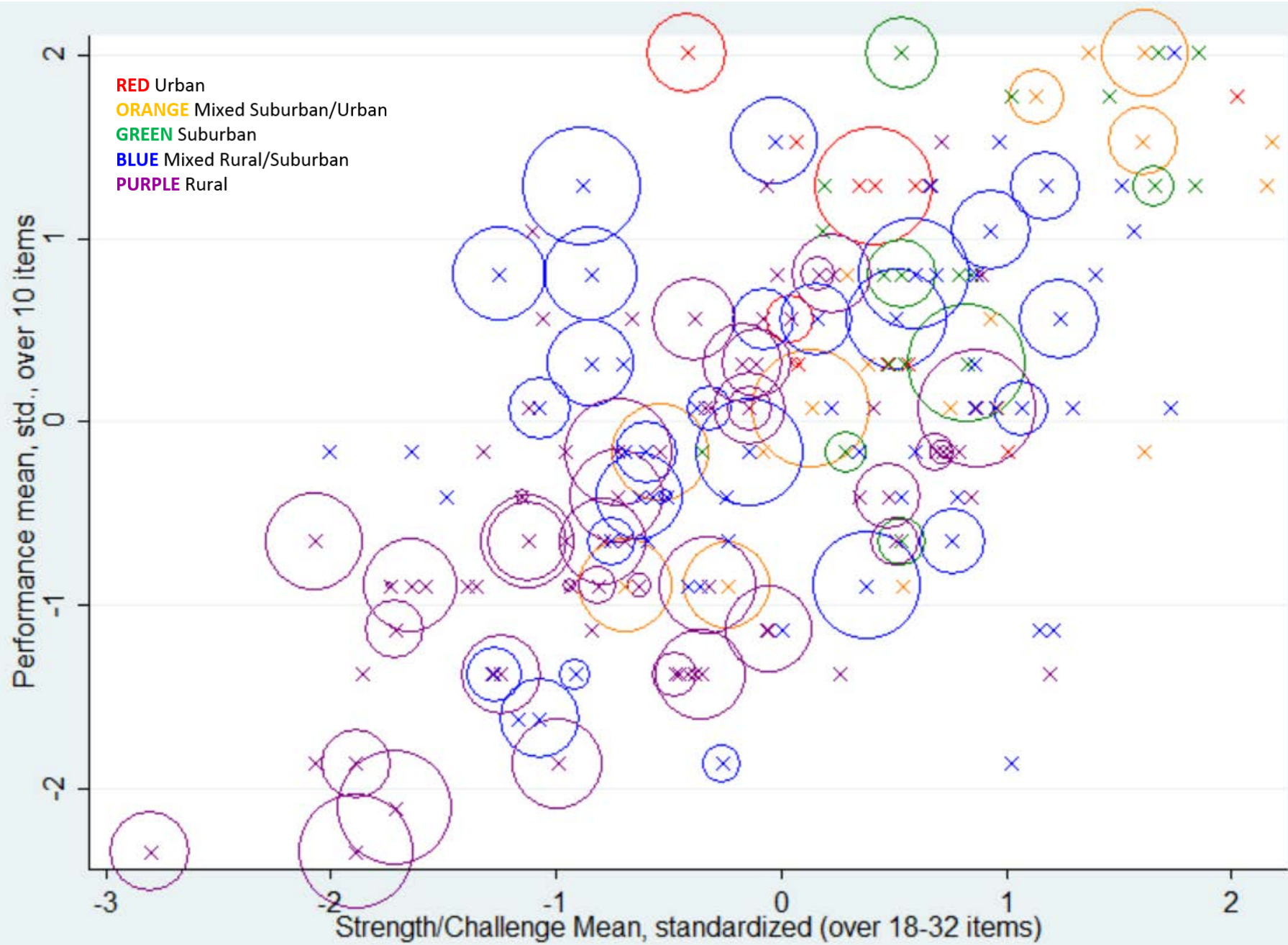
“Harmony” vs. the “train wreck”

“When you address an issue, do you find a way to solve it - that means, **working with other local gov'ts, not just talking about it**, but addressing it by way of resolving it.”
(EO)

“...how well everybody gets along in that community. And I know that's - any of the mayors in this room will tell you, that's almost impossible at times - **but, I know many of us just bite our tongues and let things go, rather than cause a rift, because those type of things don't help your community.** It's better to lose a few battles than to lose the war. (EO)

“I think one of other strengths that I have down - our county has [multiple] cities/towns (incorporated areas) and **it is just amazing to see the harmony between the towns and the county.** Harmony is one of our strengths with all the elected officials.” (EO)

“- when they get along it helps a lot. **If they don't get along - it's terrible - it's terrible - It's like watching a train wreck - where you're just waiting for the next headline in the newspaper,** so they don't get along. I think cooperation is a big key in a good community, in order for growth.”
(DD)



Results and Discussion

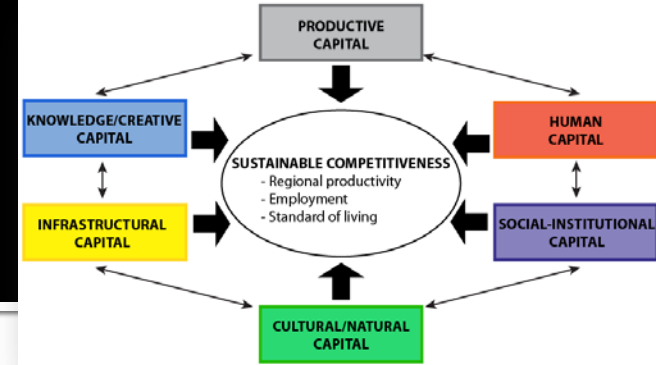
Respondents to survey by public service role and percent of total response

<i>Role</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percent of total response</i>
<i>County Legis.</i>	102	38%
<i>City/Metro Exec.</i>	42	16%
<i>City/Metro Legis.</i>	42	16%
<i>City Manager</i>	32	12%
<i>County Exec.</i>	26	10%
<i>Other City Official</i>	6	2%
<i>Other Public Role</i>	16	6%
<i>Total</i>	266	100%

Signs of success: results

- **What do TN local officials consider to be the “signs of success” for a jurisdiction and how do their judgments align with traditional vs. new visions of jurisdiction competitiveness?**
- **Forced ranking**
 - Trad. ED vision still strong: #1 “recruit and retain business”
 - Newer visions also showing a strong influence: quality of life measures ex. #2 families, #3 crime
 - Recognition that gen’l growth in pop’n is not in itself a solution (#10)
- Reported performance on the 10 signs of success generates index we use as dependent variable...

Asset base: development



- **How does their assessment of their jurisdictions' diverse asset base relate to reported performance?**
- 32 7-point Likert strength/challenge items from focus groups
- Factor analysis
- Factors do hang together in patterns (not imposed):
cultural capital; attitudinal/social capital; public institutional capital; basic needs (infrastructure)
- Use factor scores for the 4 asset classes to predict performance index, controlling for jurisdiction and respondent characteristics