

Sustainable Competitiveness for Tennessee's Counties: A collaboration between TACIR and TSU

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TACIR Commission Meeting

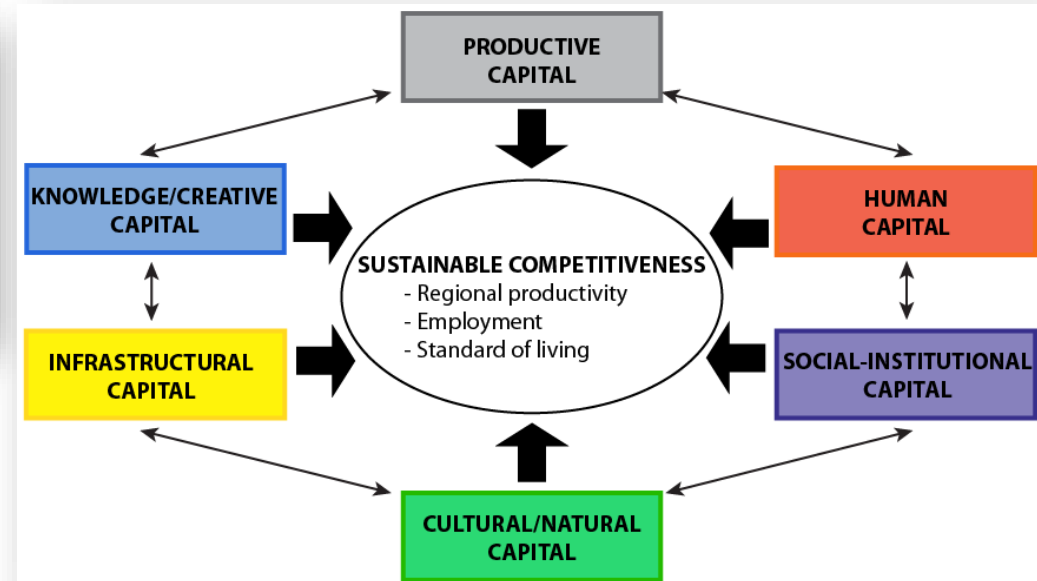
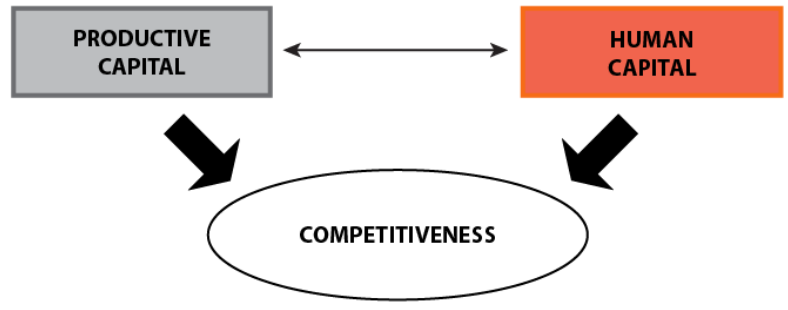


What is *sustainable competitiveness*?

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

From Blanke, J., Crotti, R., Hanouz, M. D., Fidanza, B., & Geiger, T. (2011). The long-term view: developing a framework for assessing sustainable competitiveness. *The Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012*. World Economic Forum.

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”

Our question: what about **policymakers'** vision?

- What do local TN officials consider to be the “**signs of success**” for a city or county? How do these signs align with traditional vs. new theories of local competitiveness?
- How do officials’ judgments of strengths and weaknesses in **community assets** relate to...
 - ...reported local **performance**?
 - ...attitudes towards **cooperation** with other jurisdictions?

Methods



- **Two focus groups**
 - Including 12 elected officials representing 7.2% of TN population

- **Online survey**

- 266 TN local officials responded

City managers

City, metro and county executives

City, metro and county legislators

(more details in overview in docket book)



Key survey measures - overview

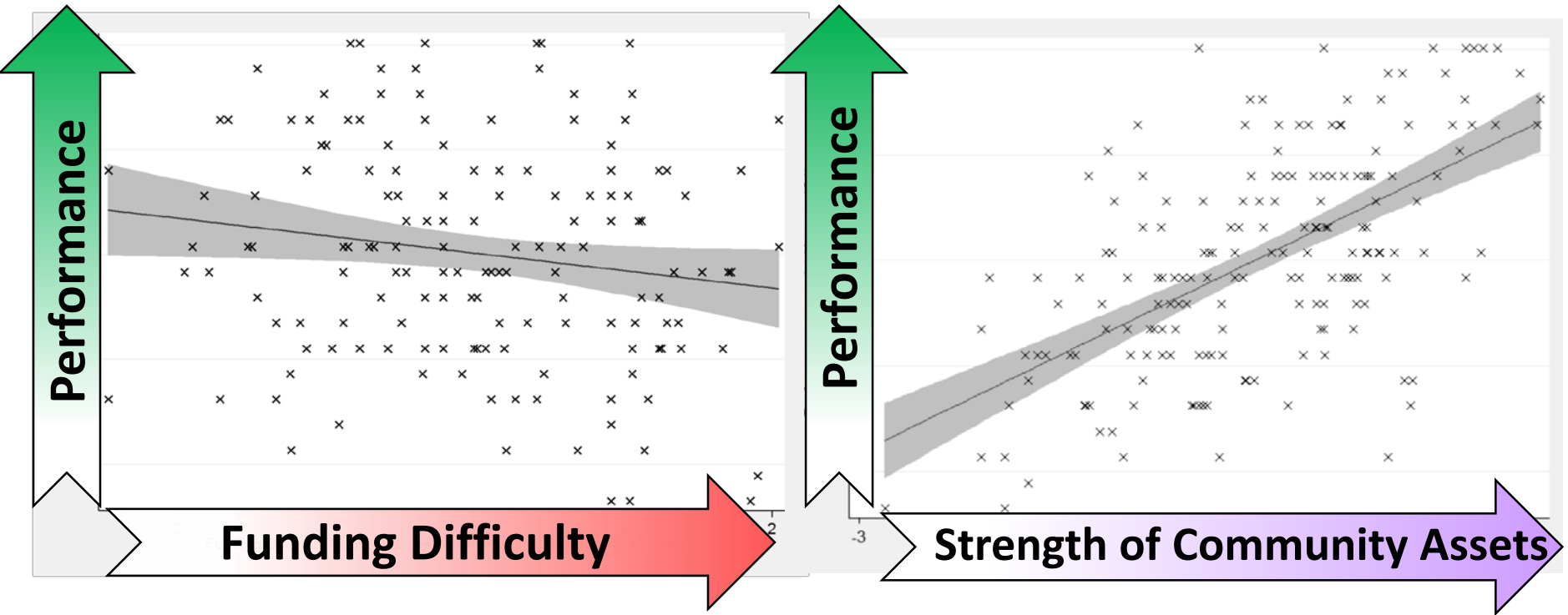
- Ranking of **SIGNS OF SUCCESS** in general
- Judgment of own jurisdiction's **PERFORMANCE** over last 3 years
- Difficulty of adequately **FUNDING** public services
- Assessment of **COMMUNITY ASSETS**: strengths/challenges
- Openness to **COOPERATION** with another local jurisdiction

“Signs of success” for localities

RANK	SIGN	N	Ranked as <i>meaningful</i>		Own locality's performance (last 3 years; judgment)		
			% who ranked as most meaningful sign	% who ranked among top 3 most meaningful signs	Lost ground	Stayed same	Made progress
#1	Ability to recruit/retain businesses <i>Trad'l</i>	216	28%	58%	20%	38%	42%
#2	Strong families <i>New</i>	245	19%	44%	8%	60%	31%
#3	Low crime rate <i>New</i>	212	12%	34%	9%	49%	42%
#4	Diversified local employment options	193	10%	33%	14%	56%	30%
#5	Residents' prosperity	222	9%	36%	13%	60%	27%
#6	Low unemployment	196	7%	31%	18%	47%	35%
#7	Ability to retain (#7) and attract (#8) young educated people	201	6%	27%	29%	51%	20%
#8		206	4%	25%	29%	51%	20%
#9	Viable, attractive downtown area(s)	215	4%	20%	24%	52%	24%
#10	Gen'l growth in pop'n <i>Trad'l</i>	211	4%	16%	9%	45%	46%



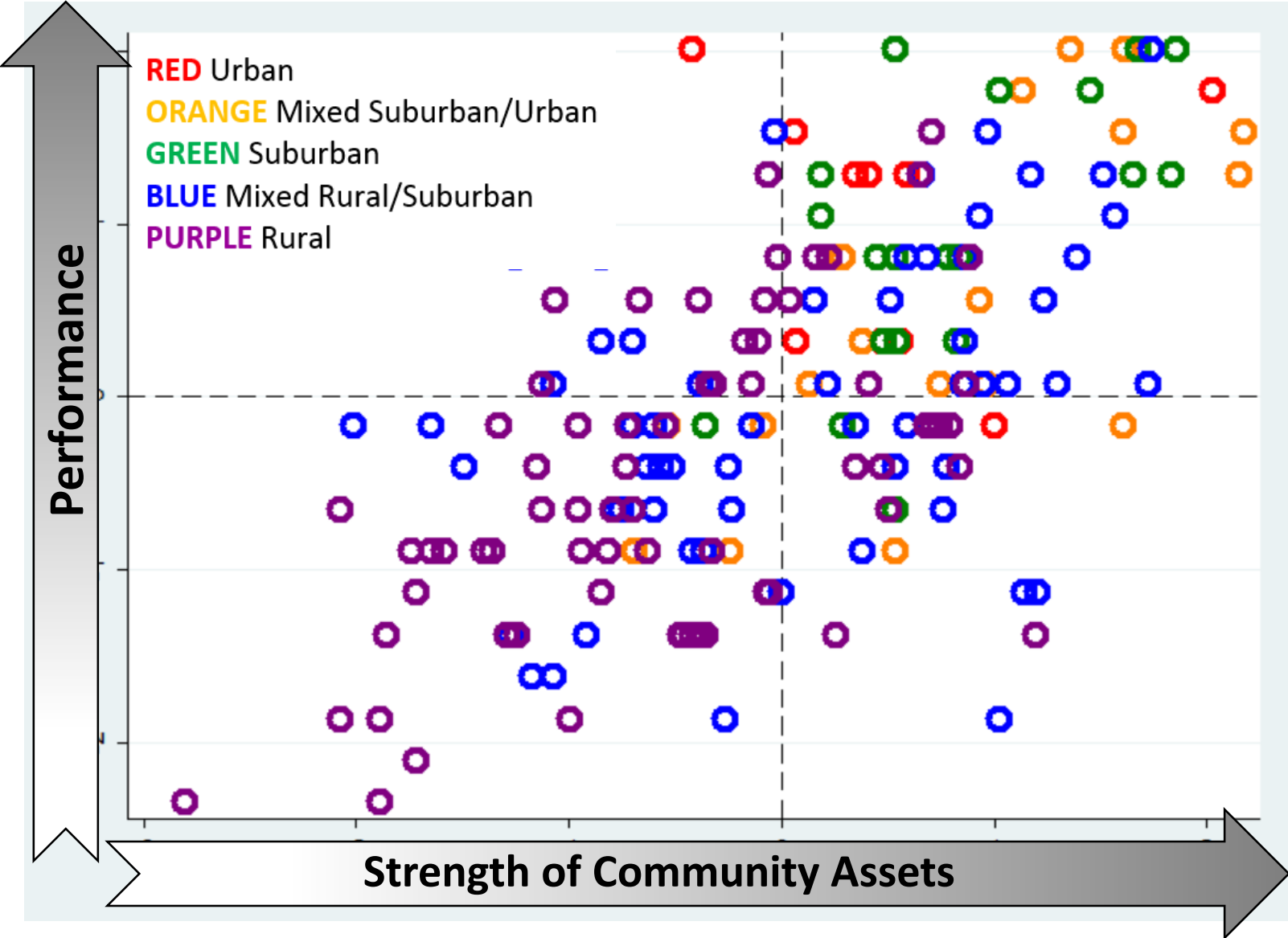
Jurisdiction performance



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%



Conclusions

- **Is it just about the \$\$\$?** No. Even controlling for funding difficulty, rural/urban, etc.: Greater community asset strength is associated with higher reported performance on signs of success
- 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 **cooperation between jurisdictions** comes from a place of community asset strength, not weakness

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

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