

# COMMUNITY READINESS ASSESSMENT REGIONAL AND COUNTY - YEAR 1

SAN LUIS VALLEY PREVENTION COALITION NETWORK – 1/20/17

This final report contains Year 1 results indicating the San Luis Valley’s readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. It begins with a brief description of the assessment process. Regional (valley-level) results and local (county-level) results include scores, themes, and recommendations.

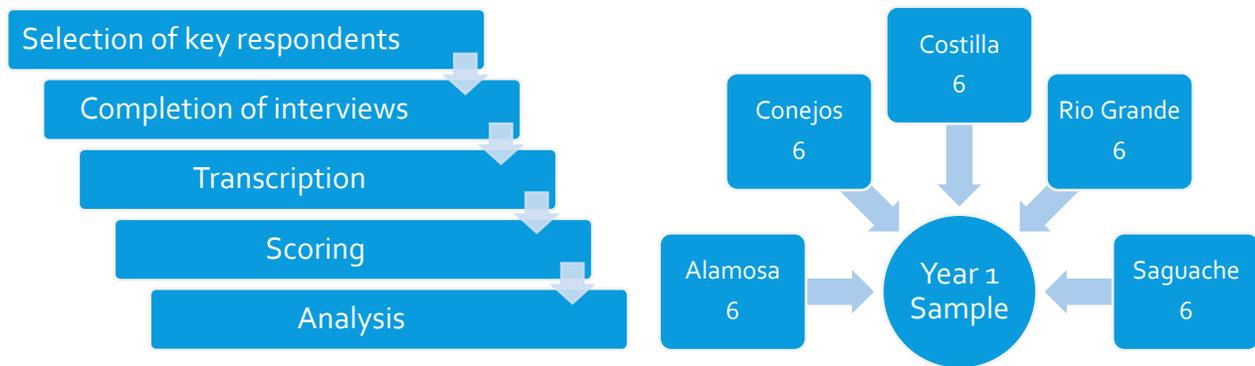
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## COMMUNITY READINESS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

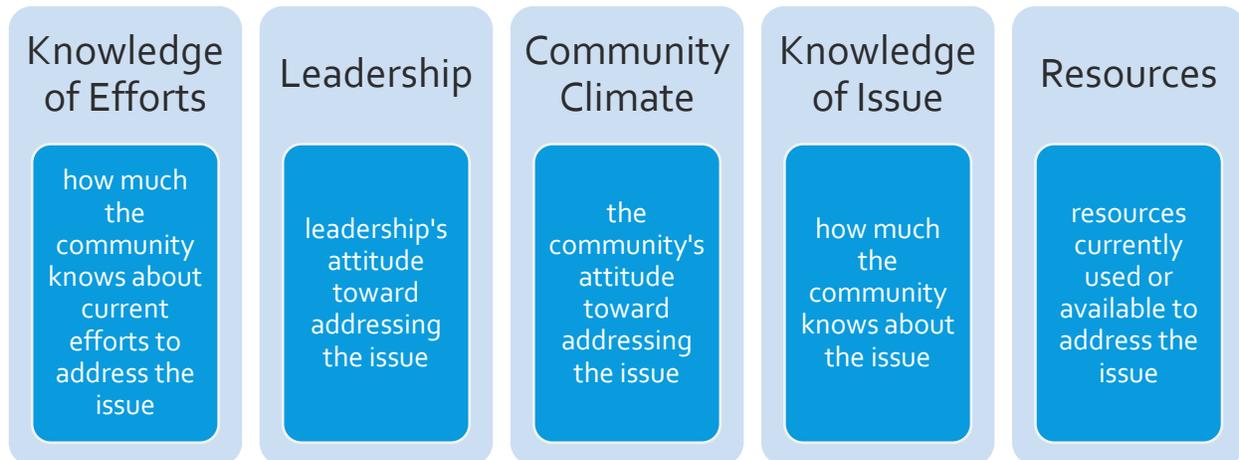
The Community Readiness Assessment process contained six phases following issue identification and community and interview preparation. The Community Readiness Model handbook served as a guide (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2014). A total of 30 respondents – 6 participants per county in 5 counties – participated in phone interviews which lasted 30 minutes to an hour. Two co-scorers utilized a multi-stage scoring process to determine the stages of readiness for each dimension of readiness.



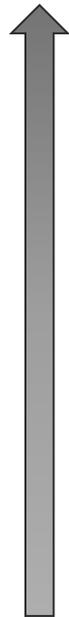
## READINESS DIMENSIONS

*Issue:* the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other substances.

*Community:* 5 counties in San Luis Valley, Colorado.



## READINESS STAGES

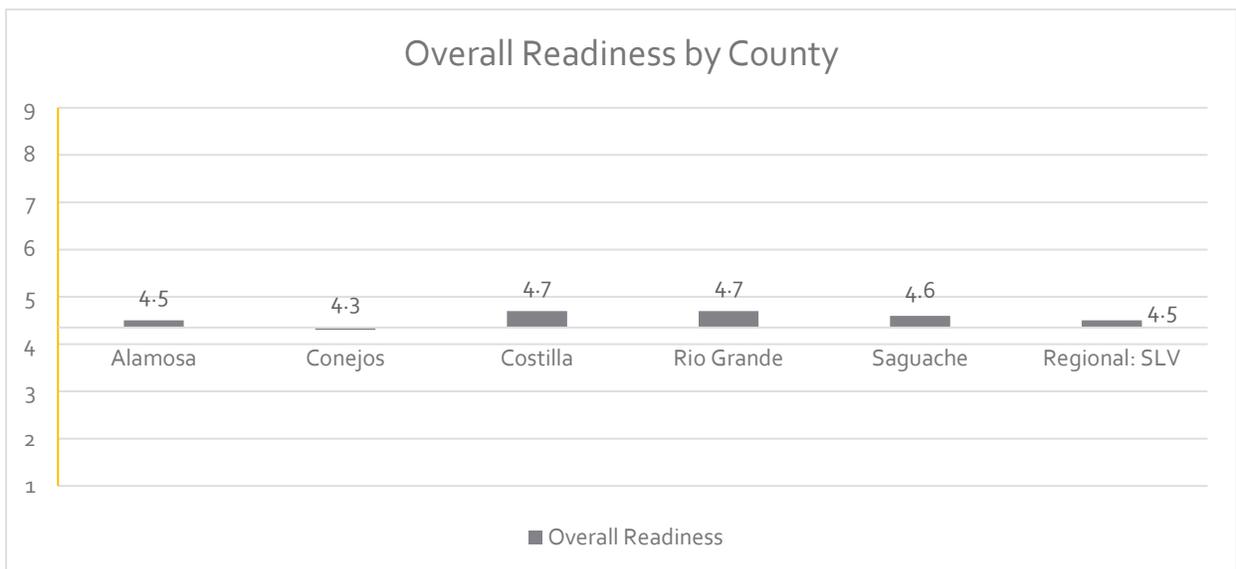


- 9 Community Ownership
- 8 Expansion/Confirmation
- 7 Stabilization
- 6 Initiation
- 5 Preparation
- 4 Preplanning
- 3 Vague Awareness
- 2 Denial/Resistance
- 1 No Awareness

## REGIONAL READINESS: VALLEY-LEVEL

Final results include overall readiness scores and dimensional readiness scores. This section contains results for San Luis Valley. It concludes with recommendations for Valley-level initiatives.

The chart below displays overall readiness by county. Three counties have slightly more readiness than the regional average: Costilla and Rio Grande at 4.7 (out of 9) and Saguache at 4.6 (out of 9). Alamosa ties the regional average at 4.5 (out of 9) and Conejos has slightly less readiness than the average at 4.3 (out of 9).

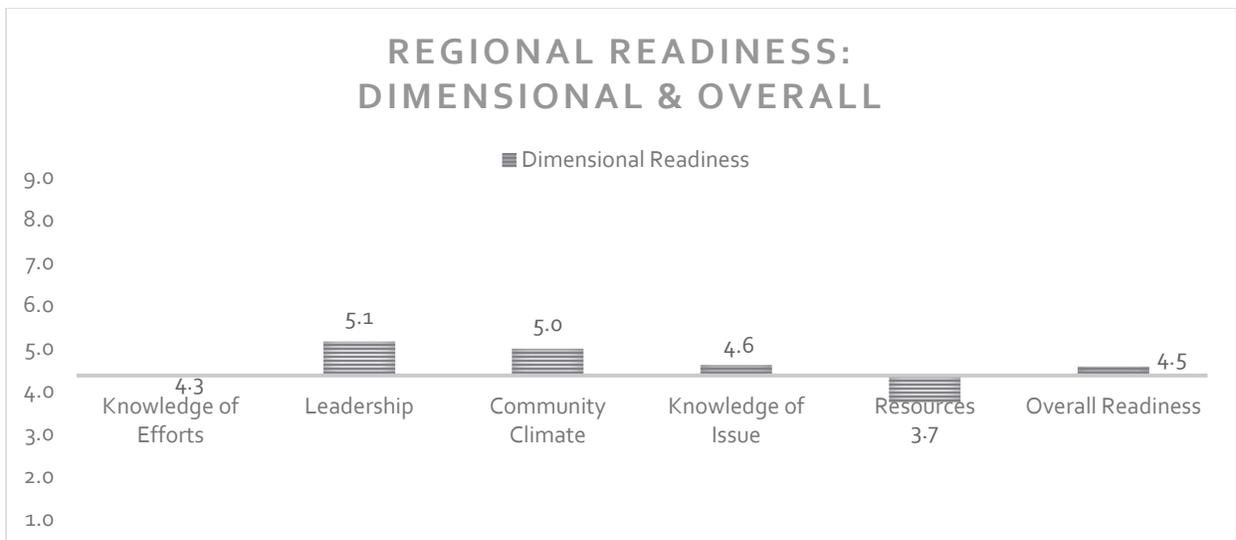


All 5 counties are in the preplanning stage of readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. A shared stage of preplanning indicates these San Luis Valley counties have similar amounts of overall readiness with a county-level sentiment similar to the regional sentiment. Overall, members and leaders in these communities are concerned about substance use and want guidance to address it.

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## REGIONAL DIMENSIONAL READINESS

The chart below displays Valley-level scores for dimensional and overall readiness. Regional overall readiness aligns with a level of 4 (out of 9) and the stage of *preplanning*. This indicates a sentiment in the San Luis Valley about the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances that “This is important. What can we do?” (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2014, p. 7).



San Luis Valley’s readiness to address substance use ranges from 3.7 (out of 9) for resources to 5.1 (out of 9) for leadership. Two dimensions – knowledge of efforts and knowledge of issue – share the overall readiness stage of preplanning while two other dimensions – leadership and climate – surpass it at the next highest stage. Resources emerged at the stage below overall regional readiness.

The remainder of this section addresses regional readiness by dimension.

## Dimensional Readiness for the San Luis Valley Region

	<b>9</b>	Community Ownership
	<b>8</b>	Expansion/Confirmation
	<b>7</b>	Stabilization
	<b>6</b>	Initiation
<b>Leadership Climate</b>	<b>5</b>	Preparation
<b>Knowledge of Efforts Knowledge of Issue</b>	<b>4</b>	Preplanning
<b>Resources</b>	<b>3</b>	Vague Awareness
	<b>2</b>	Denial/Resistance
	<b>1</b>	No Awareness

### Knowledge of Efforts

San Luis Valley’s knowledge of efforts to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is currently at the stage of preplanning. This indicates “some community members have heard of local efforts and are familiar with the purpose of the efforts.” Knowledge of efforts scores ranged from 3.9 to 4.7 (out of 9), indicating a small amount of variance between counties.

Knowledge of efforts appears largely dependent on one’s own involvement in the community (e.g., with schoolchildren in one’s family or local volunteer/work). This knowledge may be hampered by lack of targeted advertising campaigns and, in some locations, a general lack of prevention efforts.

### Leadership

Leadership within these San Luis Valley county communities is currently at the stage of preparation to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. This indicates “some leadership is participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts.” Of the five dimensions, leadership had the least variance in scores between counties: a range of only .6 points (4.9 to 5.5). Counties vary little regarding the level of leadership readiness.

A theme that emerged in leadership was the stark divergence between leaders who have actively championed this as a cause and/or platform versus those who appear uninterested or in denial. Respondents noted some community leaders have recently increased support and priority for

addressing this issue, often in response to increased prevalence of substance use and its impact and in response to rising community concern.

### **Community Climate**

The climate among these San Luis Valley communities is currently at the stage of preparation indicating some community members are also engaging in efforts to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. Of the five dimensions, climate had one of the broadest score ranges (.9 points) between counties with the lowest (Conejos at 4.6) and highest readiness (Rio Grande at 5.5). Nonetheless, this range is comparatively small, indicating climate readiness is fairly consistent across the region.

Climate in the San Luis Valley toward substance use seems splintered between those who are very concerned about the issue and others who have little concern. Those with concern may not know how they can take action to address it.

### **Knowledge of Issue**

San Luis Valley's knowledge of the issue - use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances - is currently at the preplanning stage. This indicates that "some community members are aware that the issue occurs locally" and "know a little about causes, consequences, signs and symptoms." Knowledge of issue scores ranged from 4.3 to 5.1 (out of 9), indicating a small amount of variance between counties.

Knowledge about the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances seems to contain some misconceptions and may be overly informed by personal experience (e.g., one's own use or witnessing a family member). Respondents indicated knowledge about local prevalence is clearly growing within San Luis Valley communities.

### **Resources**

San Luis Valley's lowest readiness is in resources to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. The stage of vague awareness indicates some resources are available to further efforts with "little or no action to allocate these resources to this issue." Though resources scores had one of the broadest score ranges (.9 points), it is still comparatively small and all but one county's resources scores aligned with vague awareness stage. Only Rio Grande surpassed the regional readiness stage with a 4.1 score (out of 9) for preplanning.

With only a few exceptions, respondents reported a discrepancy in this dimension based on the type of resource. Resources are generally scarce, particularly money and available local expertise. However, the majority of communities appear to have at least some event space and volunteers available for current and future efforts to address substance use.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAN LUIS VALLEY**

Regional readiness for the San Luis Valley to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is at the stage of *preplanning* (a level of 4 out of 9). All counties share this stage and the

score range between counties was as small as .4 points. This clear communality indicates that regional initiatives aimed at increasing readiness (i.e., from preplanning to preparation) should be appropriate for all counties.

Communities engaging in readiness assessment and action planning “should work first to raise the levels” of the dimensions with the lowest scores. It is recommended that San Luis Valley initiatives first target resources, knowledge of efforts, and knowledge of issue because they received the lowest average scores: 3.7, 4.3, and 4.6 (out of 9) respectively.

This section contains regional recommendations for increasing readiness these three dimensions. Next steps include using the Community Readiness Model to develop goals and objectives (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2015, pp. 31-42) specific to these data and recommendations. When planning ways to accomplish the objectives, remember that readiness initiatives at these levels should be creative, engaging, and fun.

### **Resources**

Resources include: logistical necessities for prevention such as money, space, time, and people. Resources was the dimension of lowest regional readiness (3.7 out of 9) and of lowest local readiness for all but Rio Grande county. With resources scores in vague awareness and preplanning only, Valley-wide and county-level initiatives to increase resources readiness are recommended.

While counties appear to have event space and volunteers, they lack the resources of long-term space, money for efforts, and expertise. Resource-focused readiness initiatives may include one-on-one meetings with leaders and members about specific resource needs, inter-organizational meetings to discuss shared resources, and broader public information campaigns about the need for resources to address the issue.

It seems important to note that plans to quickly allot these missing resources without first increasing overall readiness may struggle to be sustainable if community climate is unfavorable toward the use of the resource for this purpose. Community climate and specific surveys may help gain input as part of an ongoing decision-making process. Focus groups can also aid in the development of community-informed strategies.

### **Knowledge of Efforts**

Another primary target to increase regional readiness to address substance use is knowledge of efforts since this dimension scored 4.3 (out of 9), aligning with the preplanning stage. Knowledge of efforts includes:

- being aware that regional/local efforts exist to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances
- knowing what the efforts are called, where they are held, etc.
- knowing their purpose and target audience
- understanding how they work
- understanding how well they work.

Community members may have misconceptions or incorrect information about efforts and/or have perceptions about their success, obstacles, strengths, or weaknesses.

A lack of efforts may contribute to a lower readiness score for knowledge of efforts. Nonetheless, it is important to ensure development and implementation of new efforts includes community communication plans to align future growth in efforts with growth in the community's knowledge about them. Community communication plans that address these knowledge elements may utilize advertising/marketing campaigns, outreach campaigns, and educational communications that disseminate information to community members about the methods and effectiveness of the efforts.

Community members with historically high community involvement may be more aware of community efforts in general, likely through traditional sources such as committee meetings, the newspaper, and community group newsletters. Initiatives to increase knowledge of efforts across the community may need to use traditional sources as well as methods that are less traditional for disseminating information, such as social media, focus groups and in-home meetings, and diversely-distributed public signage.

### **Knowledge of Issue**

Another target for increasing readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is knowledge of issue. The knowledge of issue regional score and stage were 4.6 and preplanning. Knowledge of issue includes:

- signs and symptoms
- causes
- consequences (i.e., to the individual and/or the community)
- effects on family and friends
- local prevalence
- options for prevention or treatment.

Community members may have misconceptions or incorrect information about any of these knowledge areas and/or issues with accessing or using the information.

It appears many community members in the region know about the issue of substance abuse either through their professional training or personal experience with a loved one who uses substances. Most community members are aware that substance use has increased; however more detailed information about such increases and the implications of that use may be lacking. Those who learn through professional training may have correct knowledge but a more distant attitude while those who learn through personal experience may have misconceptions or feel helpless to address it. A multi-layered knowledge of issue plan seems needed in which: (1) basic data and information is distributed widely and broadly to address lack of knowledge, misconceptions, and also attitude; (2) initiatives to address misconceptions and response alternatives for laypeople include informal and formal conversations; and (3) information aimed at paraprofessionals and professionals also addresses attitudes and beliefs about substance use.

### **Additional Themes for Consideration**

Several respondents across counties commented on overlapping missions of individuals and organizations who are engaged in similar work but not in collaboration with each other. They described this situation as “fractured” and stated that the largest local/regional need was for a person or persons to actively coordinate communications between those working to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and/or other substances.

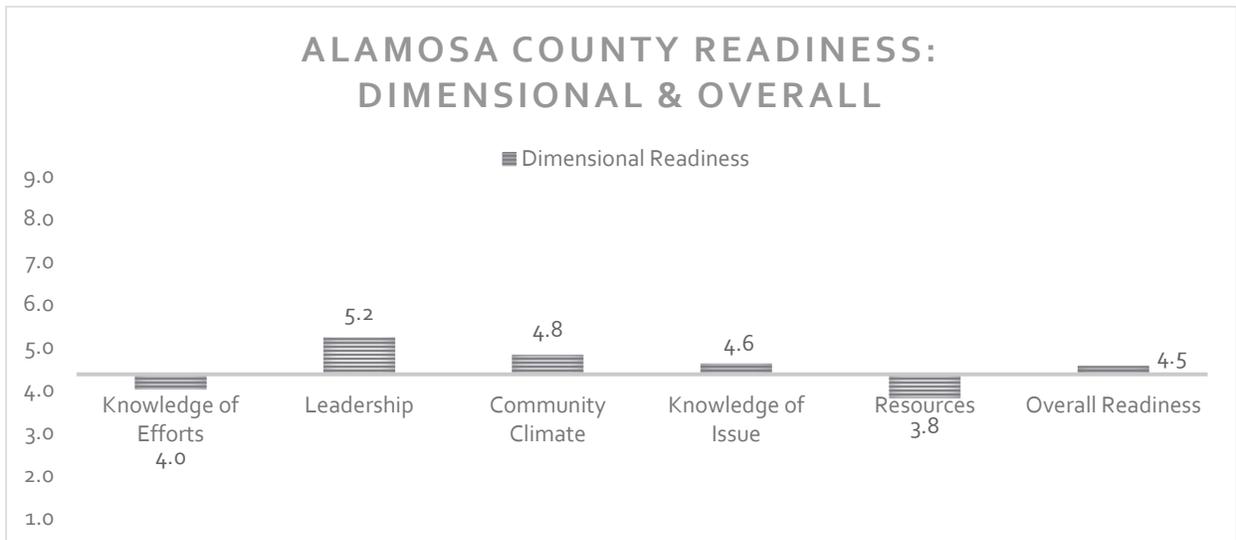
## LOCAL READINESS

This section contains results for each of the 5 counties, including overall and dimensional readiness. Each county's section concludes with recommendations for initiatives to increase readiness.

### ALAMOSA COUNTY

The chart below displays Alamosa County scores for dimensional and overall readiness. Alamosa County's overall readiness aligns with a level of 4 (out of 9) and the stage of *preplanning*. This indicates a sentiment in Alamosa County about the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances that "This is important. What can we do?" (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2014, p. 7).

Alamosa County's readiness to address substance use ranges from 3.8 (out of 9) for resources to 5.2 (out of 9) for leadership. Three dimensions – knowledge of efforts, climate, and knowledge of issue – share the overall readiness stage of preplanning while one dimension – leadership – surpasses it at the next highest stage. Resources emerged at the stage below overall regional readiness. Alamosa County's only dimension to differ in stage from regional dimensional readiness is climate: Alamosa County's climate readiness is at the preplanning stage, a stage below the regional climate readiness of preparation.



Respondent scores for Alamosa County showed the least dimensional divergence of all counties: score ranges were as low as 1 or 2 points for some dimensions. Alamosa County respondents' similar dimensional scores indicate a common perception exists among community members about the county's readiness to address substance use.

The remainder of this section addresses Alamosa County's readiness by dimension.

## Dimensional Readiness for Alamosa County

	<b>9</b>	Community Ownership
	<b>8</b>	Expansion/Confirmation
	<b>7</b>	Stabilization
	<b>6</b>	Initiation
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>5</b>	Preparation
<b>Knowledge of Efforts</b>		Preplanning
<b>Climate</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Knowledge of Issue</b>		
<b>Resources</b>	<b>3</b>	Vague Awareness
	<b>2</b>	Denial/Resistance
	<b>1</b>	No Awareness

### Knowledge of Efforts

Alamosa County’s knowledge of efforts to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is currently at the stage of preplanning (4 out of 9). This indicates “some community members have heard of local efforts and are familiar with the purpose of the efforts.” Respondents’ knowledge of efforts scores ranged from 3 to 5.5 (out of 9), indicating a small variance in perspectives about the county’s readiness based on knowledge of efforts.

### Leadership

Leadership in Alamosa County is the only dimension to surpass overall county and regional readiness by scoring 5.2 (out of 9): the preparation stage to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. This indicates “some leadership is participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts.” Respondents’ leadership scores ranged from 4 to 6.5 (out of 9), indicating a small variance between community members about the county’s readiness based on leadership.

### Community Climate

The Alamosa County climate readiness is currently at the stage of preplanning (4.8 out of 9) indicating some community members believe substance use is a concern in Alamosa County “and that some type of effort is needed to address it.” It is like that only a few community members are actively participating in developing or implementing such efforts. Alamosa County respondents’ climate scores ranged from

4 to 6 (out of 9), indicating a small variance between community members about the county's climate readiness. Additionally, Alamosa County's climate readiness is a stage below regional climate readiness. Relevant implications appear in the Recommendations section.

### **Knowledge of Issue**

Alamosa County's knowledge of the issue - use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances - is currently at the preplanning stage (4.6 out of 9). This indicates that some in the community "are aware that the issue occurs locally" and "know a little about causes, consequences, signs and symptoms." Knowledge of issue scores ranged from 3.5 to 6 (out of 9), indicating a small variance between community members.

### **Resources**

Like almost all of the 5 counties, Alamosa County's dimension with the lowest readiness is resources. Alamosa County's score of 3.8 (out of 9) with a high level of agreement between respondents (range: 3 to 4 out of 9). This places the county at a stage of vague awareness indicating some resources to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances but there is "little or no action to allocate these resources to this issue." Despite perspectives from respondents in other counties that Alamosa County has more resources than the rest of the region, Alamosa County's resources readiness ranked in the middle of the 5-county scores.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALAMOSA COUNTY**

Alamosa County's overall readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is at the stage of *preplanning* (a level of 4 out of 9). Local initiatives aimed at increasing readiness should focus first on raising levels of readiness for dimensions with the lowest scores. It is recommended that Alamosa County initiatives first target resources and knowledge of efforts because they received the lowest scores: 3.8 and 4.0 (out of 9) respectively.

This section contains recommendations for increasing local readiness for these two dimensions. The Community Readiness Model process for developing goals and objectives should help specify these initiatives (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2015, pp. 31-42).

### **Resources**

Resources include: logistical necessities for prevention such as money, space, time, and people. Alamosa County shares resources as its dimension of lowest readiness (3.8 out of 9) with almost all other counties assessed. Alamosa County respondents largely agreed that grant money, event space, and volunteers were ample resources in the community. The presence of people with expertise in substance use appears moderate, but differs based on the organization or unavailable to take on another effort.

Money from businesses appears low as local business owners are considered "already tapped-out" and/or holding the perspective that substance use prevention is not their responsibility. Some private

individual and church donors provide financial support. Treatment or longer-term care space is largely lacking.

It seems important to note that plans to quickly allot these missing resources without first increasing overall readiness may struggle to be sustainable if community climate is unfavorable toward the use of the resource for this purpose. Surveys about Alamosa's community climate toward substance use and prevention efforts and surveys specific to options under consideration may provide community input in decision-making.

### **Knowledge of Efforts**

Another primary target to increase Alamosa County's readiness to address substance use is knowledge of efforts, which is in the preplanning stage (4.0 out of 9). Knowledge of efforts includes:

- being aware that regional/local efforts exist to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances
- knowing what the efforts are called, where they are held, etc.
- knowing their purpose and target audience
- understanding how they work
- understanding how well they work.

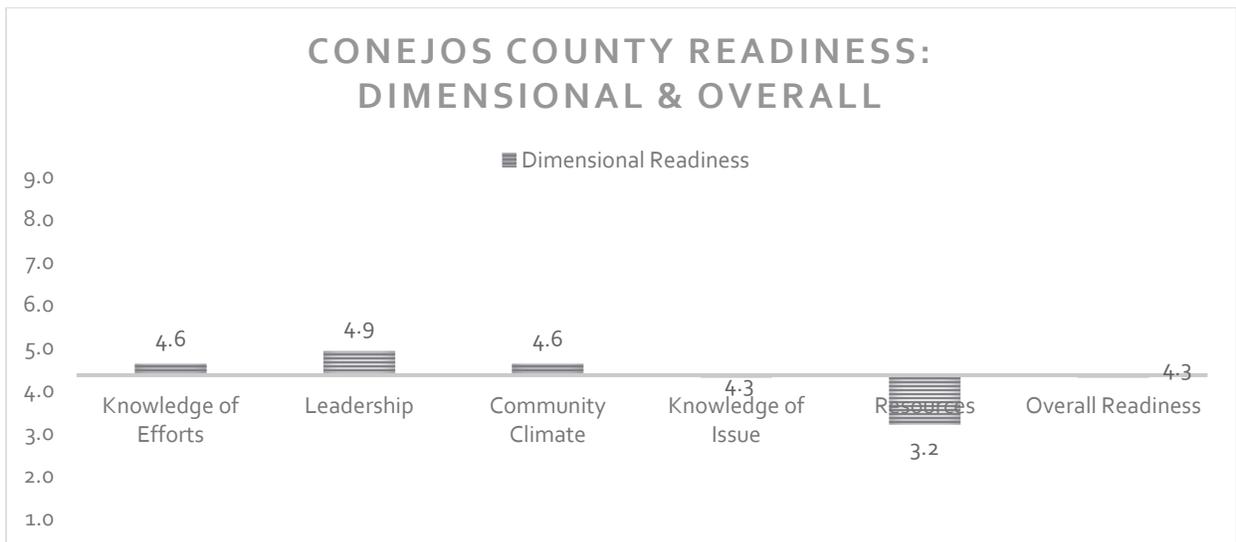
All respondents named a few or several local efforts to address substance use. Only one respondent indicated misconceptions about efforts among Alamosa County community members: some misunderstandings about effects of law enforcement, mental health, and medical interventions to address substance use. The greater issue in Alamosa County related to knowledge of efforts appears to be that the community lacks awareness and a deeper understanding of the intent and effectiveness of the efforts. Respondents described members having "only surface level" knowledge about efforts that most gained through involvement with their local government, schools, or churches. Those not involved in this way, such as residents without children or church attendance and those temporarily living in Alamosa County for school or work, may be unaware of any efforts. While some respondents mentioned reading something in the newspaper, they could not recall many details of the articles and attributed lack of knowledge about efforts to: (1) a lack of public awareness campaigns, (2) a lack of follow-up communication after deployment of an effort, and (3) the start and stop nature of some efforts. A couple wondered if ongoing stigma toward the issue was an obstacle for these communications.

Planning should include considerations for increasing and improving informational methods and content. Any current communications may need to be broadened to include more diverse sectors of the community (e.g., via mailings to new neighborhoods or via web-based exposure). Those who support the efforts may need to establish plans to evaluate efforts and to disseminate evaluation information to the public or to targeted community groups. Given that Alamosa County's leadership readiness in the preparation stage indicates involvement in the issue and efforts by some leaders, key leaders may be willing to speak out with messages about current efforts to address substance use.

## CONEJOS COUNTY

The chart below displays Conejos County scores for dimensional and overall readiness. Conejos County's overall readiness aligns with a level of 4 (out of 9) and the stage of *preplanning*. This indicates a sentiment in the county about the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances that "This is important. What can we do?" (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2014, p. 7).

Conejos County's readiness to address substance use ranges from 3.2 (out of 9) for resources to 4.9 (out of 9) for leadership. All dimensions share the overall readiness stage of preplanning except resources, which emerged at the stage below overall regional readiness. Two dimensions have readiness at stages below that of the regional average: Conejos County's leadership and climate is at preplanning, one stage below the region's stages of preparation. These results indicate all dimensions should be a focus for future readiness initiatives in Conejos County, particularly resources. Further implications appear in the Recommendations section.



Respondent scores showed some of the most divergence of all counties: score ranges between respondents were between 3 and 5 for all but one dimension (resources). This suggests Conejos County members having differing perceptions about the county's readiness to address substance use.

The remainder of this section addresses Conejos County's readiness by dimension.

## Dimensional Readiness for Conejos County

	<b>9</b>	Community Ownership
	<b>8</b>	Expansion/Confirmation
	<b>7</b>	Stabilization
	<b>6</b>	Initiation
	<b>5</b>	Preparation
<b>Knowledge of Efforts</b>		Preplanning
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Climate</b>		
<b>Knowledge of Issue</b>		
<b>Resources</b>	<b>3</b>	Vague Awareness
	<b>2</b>	Denial/Resistance
	<b>1</b>	No Awareness

### Knowledge of Efforts

Conejos County’s knowledge of efforts to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is currently at the stage of preplanning (4 out of 9). This indicates “some community members have heard of local efforts and are familiar with the purpose of the efforts.” Respondents’ knowledge of efforts scores ranged from 3 to 7 (out of 9), indicating a moderate variance in perspectives about the county’s readiness based on knowledge of efforts.

### Leadership

Conejos County’s leadership score of 4.9 (out of 9) is just below the stage threshold and only two points below the regional average. However, it places Conejos County at the preplanning stage for leadership’s attitude and support for addressing the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. This indicates that some leadership believes the community is concerned about substance use and that “some type of effort is needed to address it.” Only a few leaders in the county are actively engaging for future or current efforts. Respondents’ leadership scores ranged from 4 to 7 (out of 9), indicating some variance between community members about the county’s readiness based on leadership.

## Community Climate

Conejos County's climate readiness is currently at the stage of preplanning (4.6 out of 9) which is a stage (and 4 points) below regional climate readiness. Some Conejos County community members believe substance use is a local concern "and that some type of effort is needed to address it." It is like that only a few community members are actively participating in developing or implementing such efforts. Conejos County respondents' climate scores ranged from 2 to 7 (out of 9), indicating notable variance between community members about the county's climate readiness.

## Knowledge of Issue

Conejos County's knowledge of the issue - use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances - is currently at the preplanning stage (4.3 out of 9). This indicates that some in the community "are aware that the issue occurs locally" and "know a little about causes, consequences, signs and symptoms." Knowledge of issue scores ranged from 3 to 6.5 (out of 9), indicating some variance between community members.

## Resources

Like almost all of the 5 counties, Conejos County's dimension with the lowest readiness is resources. Conejos County shares the regional readiness for this dimension with a stage of vague awareness (3.2 out of 9). This indicates some resources available in the county to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances but there is "little or no action to allocate these resources to this issue." It may important to note that Conejos County's received the lowest resources readiness score in the region in the region. This score also represents the lowest readiness across all dimensions and all counties in the assessment.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONEJOS COUNTY

Conejos County's overall readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is at the stage of *preplanning* (a level of 4 out of 9). Local initiatives aimed at increasing readiness should focus first on raising levels of readiness for dimensions with the lowest scores. It is recommended that Conejos County initiatives first target resources and knowledge of issues because they received the lowest scores: 3.2 and 4.3 (out of 9) respectively.

Climate may also be a worthy target for increasing readiness since Conejos County's climate readiness is a stage below the regional climate average and contrasts in respondents' climate scores were notable (2, 3.5, 4, 5, 6, and 7 out of 9). This may indicate local climate toward substance use and related efforts differs between community subgroups. Heterogeneous focus groups may elucidate views of subgroups and inform future readiness initiatives and prevention efforts.

This section contains recommendations for increasing local readiness for these two dimensions. The Community Readiness Model process for developing goals and objectives should help specify these initiatives (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2015, pp. 31-42).

## Resources

Resources include: logistical necessities for prevention such as money, space, time, and people. Conejos County shares resources as its dimension of lowest readiness (3.2 out of 9) with almost all other counties assessed, and has the lowest resources readiness score of all counties. Respondents indicated Conejos County has some event space and some grant opportunities. However, longer-term intervention or treatment space does not exist and grant requirements and the writing process are obstacles. They explained there are not enough community volunteers, not very many experts on the issue, and little financial support available from local businesses for substance use prevention or other issues.

Other resources-related themes that may impact planning relate to a historic lack of funding and high poverty in the county. Several respondents commented that “everything’s in Alamosa,” namely the allocation of funding and services. This creates transportation obstacles and the need for future initiatives and efforts to be highly localized to Conejos County.

Given Conejos County’s climate stage in preplanning, it seems particularly important to avoid quickly allotting missing resources without first increasing overall readiness and a climate unfavorable toward the use of the resource for the specified purpose. In addition, many respondent conversations about resources and knowledge of issue related to climatic obstacles for building resources and knowledge such as:

- (1) stigma toward people who use substances as “subhuman,” which has created “another layer of discrimination;”
- (2) denial – that substance use is a problem or is locally prevalent and “It won’t happen to me/my kid;” and
- (3) substance use as a “hidden” issue that is “swept under the rug” or “kept close to the cuff.”

Recommendations include surveys and/or focus groups about Conejos County’s community climate and resources for substance use and prevention efforts that are general in nature and also specific to resource options under consideration. These conversations represent community-driven decision-making.

## Knowledge of Issue

Another target for increasing Conejos County’s readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is knowledge of issue. The knowledge of issue score and stage of 4.3 and preplanning indicates members of Conejos County have missing or incorrect information about substance use. Knowledge of issue includes:

- signs and symptoms
- causes
- consequences (i.e., to the individual and/or the community)
- effects on family and friends
- local prevalence
- options for prevention or treatment.

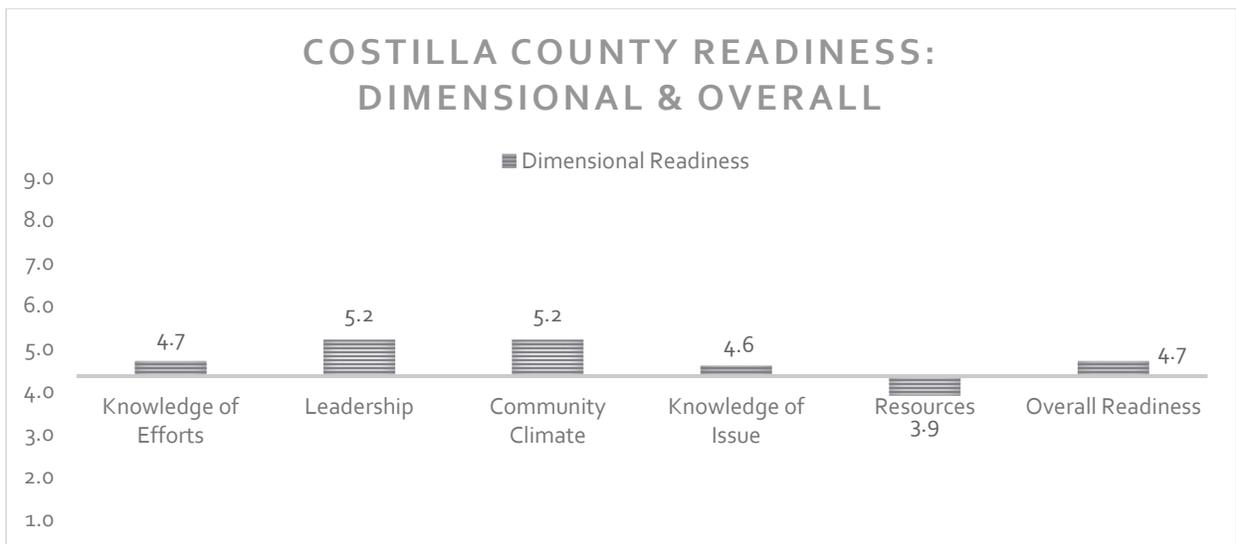
Respondents indicated Conejos County community members have some knowledge about signs and symptoms, consequences, and effects on family and friends of substance use; however, they commented that much of the knowledge is derived from personal experience using or having a friend or family member who uses. Community members appear to have little to no knowledge about causes of substance use or prevention and treatment. Their awareness of local prevalence is low, but growing, particularly because of personal experience, conversations, and media coverage about higher drug-related crime. Two primary and contradictory misconceptions exist. Community members think that anyone can easily stop using substances. Conversely, substance use across generations in one's family and addiction as a medical issue has led to the understanding that some people are simply fated to use substances.

Any actions from previous stages intended to target knowledge of substance use should continue, such as visual and narrative event presentations; flyers, posters, and billboards; and informational blurbs and longer articles in written and electronic media. A strategy could be to broaden the informational campaigns to include topics and populations specifically requested by community members such as those that emerged in this assessment for Conejos County: youth substance use and intersections of mental health and substance use.

## COSTILLA COUNTY

The chart below displays Costilla County scores for dimensional and overall readiness. Costilla County's overall readiness aligns with a level of 4 (out of 9) and the stage of *preplanning*. This indicates a sentiment in Costilla County about the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances that "This is important. What can we do?" (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2014, p. 7).

Costilla County's readiness to address substance use ranges from 3.9 (out of 9) for resources to 5.2 (out of 9) for leadership and climate. Two dimensions – knowledge of efforts and knowledge of issue – share the overall readiness stage of preplanning while two other dimensions – leadership and climate – surpass it at the next highest stage. Resources emerged at the stage below overall regional readiness. These results closely mirror those of the San Luis Valley region.



Respondent scores for Costilla County show some divergence: scores differed between respondents by 3 to 4 points. This indicates community members have somewhat different perceptions about the county's readiness to address substance use.

The remainder of this section addresses Costilla County's readiness by dimension.

## Dimensional Readiness for Costilla County

	<b>9</b>	Community Ownership
	<b>8</b>	Expansion/Confirmation
	<b>7</b>	Stabilization
	<b>6</b>	Initiation
<b>Leadership Climate</b>	<b>5</b>	Preparation
<b>Knowledge of Efforts Knowledge of Issue</b>	<b>4</b>	Preplanning
<b>Resources</b>	<b>3</b>	Vague Awareness
	<b>2</b>	Denial/Resistance
	<b>1</b>	No Awareness

### Knowledge of Efforts

Costilla County’s knowledge of efforts to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is currently at the stage of preplanning (4 out of 9). This indicates “some community members have heard of local efforts and are familiar with the purpose of the efforts.” Respondents’ knowledge of efforts scores ranged from 4 to 7.5 (out of 9), indicating some variance in perspectives about the county’s readiness based on knowledge of efforts.

### Leadership

Leadership readiness in Costilla County is at the preparation stage (5.2 out of 9): to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. This indicates “some leadership is participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts.” Respondents’ leadership scores ranged from 3 to 7 (out of 9), indicating a moderate variance between community members about the county’s readiness based on leadership.

### Community Climate

Costilla County’s climate readiness is currently at the stage of preparation (5.2 out of 9) indicating “some community members are participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts” to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. Costilla County respondents’

climate scores ranged from 3 to 7 (out of 9), indicating moderate variance between community members about the county's climate readiness.

### **Knowledge of Issue**

Costilla County's knowledge of the issue - use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances - is currently at the preplanning stage (4.6 out of 9). This indicates that some in the community "are aware that the issue occurs locally" and "know a little about causes, consequences, signs and symptoms." Knowledge of issue scores ranged from 3 to 6 (out of 9), indicating some variance between community members.

### **Resources**

Like almost all of the 5 counties, Costilla County's dimension with the lowest readiness is resources. Costilla County's score of 3.9 (out of 9) places it at a stage of vague awareness indicating some resources to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances but there is "little or no action to allocate these resources to this issue." Resource scores ranged from 2 to 5 (out of 9), indicating some variance between community members.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COSTILLA COUNTY**

Costilla County's overall readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is at the stage of *preplanning* (a level of 4 out of 9). Local initiatives aimed at increasing readiness should focus first on raising levels of readiness for dimensions with the lowest scores; in this case, resources and knowledge of issues received the lowest scores: 3.9 and 4.6 (out of 9) respectively.

Compared to other counties, Costilla County has the highest readiness across multiple dimensions in that all dimensions scored at 4.6 and above for the county. In addition, Costilla County's readiness scores come the closest to matching those of the regional averages. As such, Costilla County could serve as a fitting pilot area for initiatives and efforts before potential regional deployment.

This section contains recommendations for increasing local readiness for resources and knowledge of issue. The Community Readiness Model process for developing goals and objectives should help specify these initiatives (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2015, pp. 31-42).

### **Resources**

Resources include: logistical necessities for prevention such as money, space, time, and people. Costilla County shares resources as its dimension of lowest readiness (3.9 out of 9) with almost all other counties assessed. Respondents indicated resources available in Costilla County are some event space, some grant funding, and some volunteers but not many. Some experts appear available to the county but live and work elsewhere. No funding to speak of is available from local businesses.

It is always important to remember that quickly allotting resources in the absence of community readiness may not fund sustainable efforts, particularly in communities with low climate readiness or unfavorable perceptions about specific resource use. Costilla County's climate readiness is in the preparation stage, indicating some community participation in efforts. Nonetheless, the county's

moderate divergence in climate scores may indicate a benefit to using surveys or focus groups about local climate and/or the options being considered for resource allocation.

### **Knowledge of Issue**

Another target for increasing Costilla County's readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is knowledge of issue. The county's knowledge of issue score and stage of 4.6 and preplanning indicates missing or incorrect information among members and possibly among leaders. Knowledge of issue includes:

- signs and symptoms
- causes
- consequences (i.e., to the individual and/or the community)
- effects on family and friends
- local prevalence
- options for prevention or treatment.

Respondents indicated Costilla County community members have knowledge of substance use in two areas: prevalence and the effects of use on family and friends. However, they are aware that substance use has increased in general and do not have more detailed information about for whom prevalence has grown. Respondents agreed very little to no knowledge exists about prevention and treatment. Their responses vastly differed about knowledge of signs and symptoms, causes, and consequences.

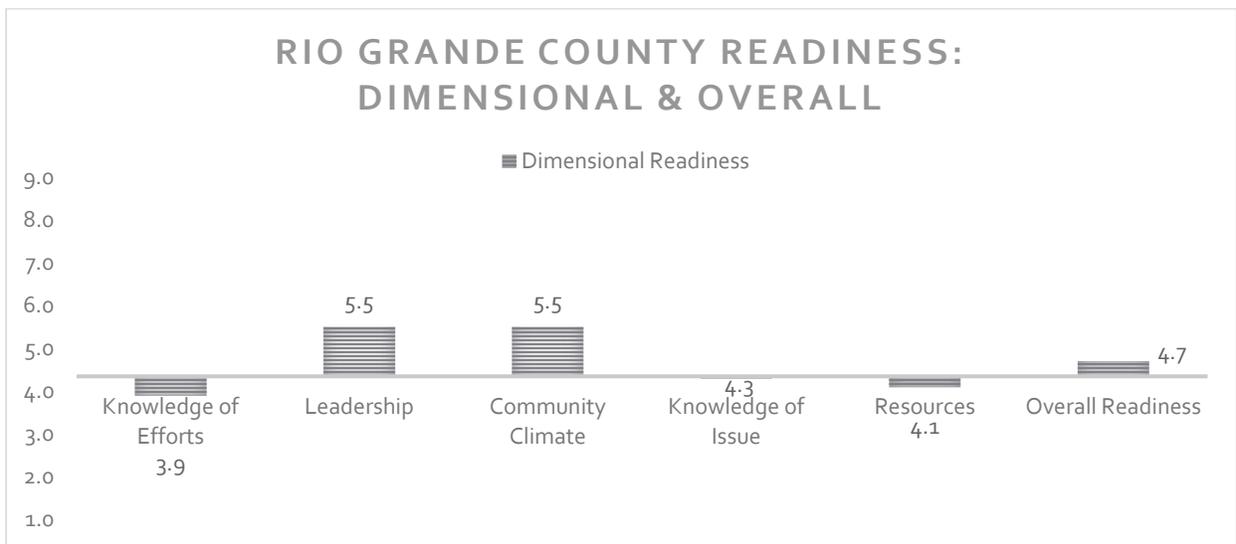
Any current informational campaigns on these knowledge areas should continue, such as visual and narrative event presentations; flyers, posters, and billboards; and informational blurbs and longer articles in written and electronic media. A strategy could be to broaden the informational campaigns to include topics and populations specifically requested by community members such as those that emerged in this assessment for Costilla County: the elderly and short- and long-term consequences of using alcohol, marijuana, and/or pain pills.

## RIO GRANDE COUNTY

The chart below displays Rio Grande County scores for dimensional and overall readiness. Rio Grande County's overall readiness aligns with a level of 4 (out of 9) and the stage of *preplanning*. This indicates a sentiment in Rio Grande County about the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances that "This is important. What can we do?" (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2014, p. 7).

Rio Grande County's readiness to address substance use ranges from 3.9 (out of 9) for knowledge of efforts to 5.5 (out of 9) for leadership and climate. Two dimensions – knowledge of issue and resources – share the overall readiness stage of preplanning while two other dimensions – leadership and climate – surpass it at the next highest stage. Knowledge of efforts emerged at the stage below overall regional readiness.

These results differ from other counties' results and from the averages for the San Luis Valley region in notable ways. Rio Grande is the only county for which dimension with the lowest readiness is not resources, but instead knowledge of efforts. It has the highest resources readiness of all 5 counties and the lowest readiness for knowledge of efforts of all 5 counties. Details follow.



Respondent scores for Rio Grande County showed little divergence: score ranges between 1.3 and 3 for all dimensions indicate a fairly common perception exists among community members about the county's readiness to address substance use.

The remainder of this section addresses Rio Grande County's readiness by dimension.

## Dimensional Readiness for Rio Grande County

	<b>9</b>	Community Ownership
	<b>8</b>	Expansion/Confirmation
	<b>7</b>	Stabilization
	<b>6</b>	Initiation
<b>Leadership Climate</b>	<b>5</b>	Preparation
<b>Knowledge of Issue Resources</b>	<b>4</b>	Preplanning
<b>Knowledge of Efforts</b>	<b>3</b>	Vague Awareness
	<b>2</b>	Denial/Resistance
	<b>1</b>	No Awareness

### **Knowledge of Efforts**

Rio Grande County’s knowledge of efforts to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is currently at the stage of vague awareness (3 out of 9). This indicates “some community members have heard of local efforts, but little else.” Respondents’ knowledge of efforts scores ranged from 3 to 5 (out of 9), indicating a small variance in perspectives about the county’s readiness based on knowledge of efforts.

### **Leadership**

Leadership readiness in Rio Grande County is at the preparation stage (5.5 out of 9): to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. This indicates “some leadership is participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts.” Respondents’ leadership scores ranged from 4 to 7 (out of 9), indicating some variance between community members about the county’s readiness based on leadership.

### **Community Climate**

Rio Grande County’s climate readiness is currently at the stage of preparation (5.5 out of 9) indicating “some community members are participating in developing, improving, or implementing efforts” to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. Rio Grande County respondents’

climate scores ranged from 4.5 to 6 (out of 9), indicating little variance between community members about the county's climate readiness.

### **Knowledge of Issue**

Rio Grande County's knowledge of the issue - use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances - is currently at the preplanning stage (4.3 out of 9). This indicates that some in the community "are aware that the issue occurs locally" and "know a little about causes, consequences, signs and symptoms." Knowledge of issue scores ranged from 3 to 6 (out of 9), indicating some variance between community members.

### **Resources**

Rio Grande County is the only county assessed for which resources was not the lowest readiness dimension. Rio Grande County's resources score of 4.1 (out of 9) places it at a stage of preplanning to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. This indicates some resources are "identified that could be used for further efforts" and that "community members or leaders have looked into or are looking into using these resources to address the issue." Resource scores ranged from 3 to 5 (out of 9), indicating a small variance between community members.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RIO GRANDE COUNTY**

Rio Grande County's overall readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is at the stage of *preplanning* (a level of 4 out of 9). Local initiatives aimed at increasing readiness should focus first on raising levels of readiness for dimensions with the lowest scores. In order, Rio Grande County's lowest scores (out of 9) are in knowledge of efforts (3.9), resources (4.1), and knowledge of issues (4.3).

This section contains recommendations for increasing local readiness for these two dimensions. The Community Readiness Model process for developing goals and objectives should help specify these initiatives (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2015, pp. 31-42).

### **Knowledge of Efforts**

Unlike all other counties assessed, Rio Grande County's lowest dimension is knowledge of efforts. Its score of 3.9 (out of 9) and placement in the vague awareness stage rank it the lowest knowledge of efforts readiness in the 5-county group. Knowledge of efforts includes:

- being aware that regional/local efforts exist to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances
- knowing what the efforts are called, where they are held, etc.
- knowing their purpose and target audience
- understanding how they work
- understanding how well they work.

Community members in Rio Grande County appear to have little knowledge about current efforts and several obstacles to knowledge of efforts. The county's low readiness in this dimension is not due to a

complete lack of efforts to address substance use or lack of communication efforts altogether. Respondents characterized the knowledge of efforts as “very basic information” that many access through their professional roles or through interactions with schools as parents of schoolchildren. In addition, they named knowledge sources such as communication efforts in newspaper articles, community sessions, radio spots, Facebook discussions, neighbor-to-neighbor conversations.

Obstacles to knowledge of efforts were low attendance to meeting, low newspaper readership, and divisions between geographic groups and professionals versus laypeople. Two respondents commented that community members who use substances seem to “outnumber” those who want to engage in efforts to address it. Hopelessness was also mentioned as well as lack of clarity about how a community member can contribute. These findings echo those of Rio Grande County’s climate stage wherein the community attitude is “We are concerned about this and we want to do something about it.” They elucidate the reality that county residents may not understand explicitly how they can act. Relevant readiness initiatives include future communications about efforts that: are disseminated publicly to reach the broadest audience, concretely address the role of attendees and general community members, and address how efforts work and how well they are working.

### **Resources**

Resources include: logistical necessities for prevention such as money, space, time, and people. Rio Grande County has the highest score and stage for resources readiness of all counties assessed: 4.1 (out of 9) and preparation. Respondents indicated Rio Grande County has space, but only a little financial support from businesses. Some volunteers, grant funding, and experts are available.

It is always important to remember that quickly allotting resources in the absence of community readiness may not fund sustainable efforts, particularly in communities with low climate or leadership readiness or unfavorable perceptions about specific resource use. However, Rio Grande County’s climate and leadership readiness are in the preparation stage with climate and leadership scores highest among all 5 counties assessed. Rio Grande’s support and participation among some community members and leaders indicates resources may be well-spent if allocated toward public forums to design strategies and initiatives to engage key leaders to speak out on efforts and the issue.

### **Knowledge of Issue**

Another target for increasing Rio Grande County’s readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is knowledge of issue. The knowledge of issue score and stage of 4.3 and preplanning indicates members of Rio Grande County have missing or incorrect information about substance use. Knowledge of issue includes:

- signs and symptoms
- causes
- consequences (i.e., to the individual and/or the community)
- effects on family and friends
- local prevalence
- options for prevention or treatment.

Respondents indicated Rio Grande County members have some knowledge about prevalence and the effects of substance use on one's family and friends. They have a little knowledge about consequences and signs and symptoms and no knowledge of causes or prevention and treatment. Several misconceptions appear in Rio Grande County:

1. that alcohol is benign, marijuana is even safer, and a "light user" of heroin will experience less temptation to continue using
2. that methadone is meth
3. that a person can simply stop using substance and/or treatment makes cessation easy, but that
4. "heroin is not fixable" and "can't be beat."

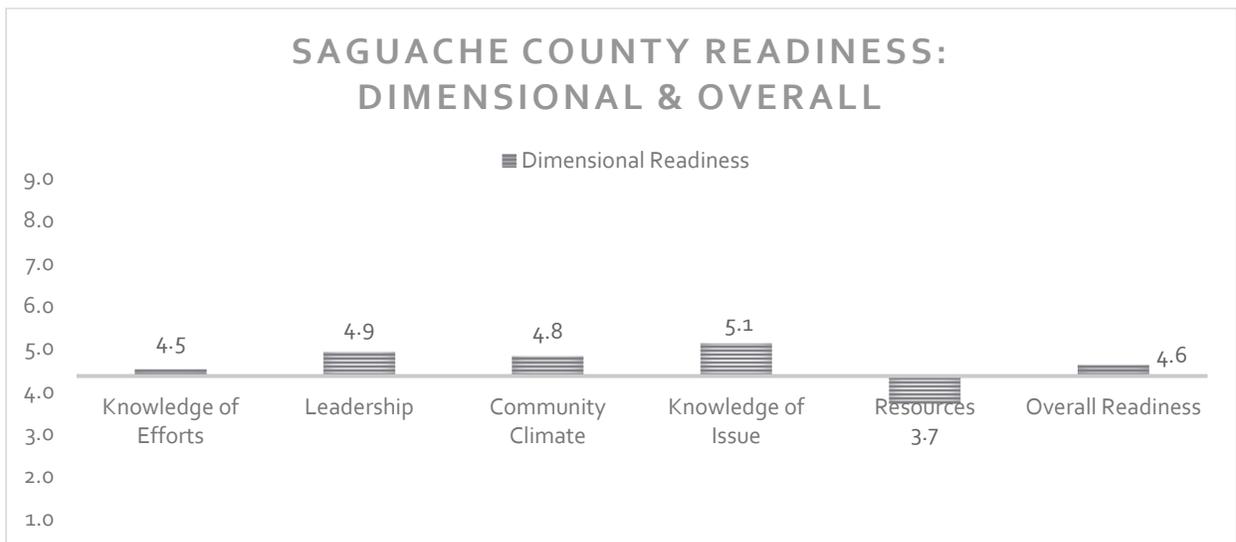
Any actions from previous stages intended to target knowledge of substance use should continue, such as visual and narrative event presentations; flyers, posters, and billboards; and informational blurbs and longer articles in written and electronic media. It appears informational initiatives targeting consequences of specific substances and prevention or treatment options are needed in Rio Grande County.

## SAGUACHE COUNTY

The chart below displays Saguache County scores for dimensional and overall readiness. Saguache County's overall readiness aligns with a level of 4 (out of 9) and the stage of *preplanning*. This indicates a sentiment in Saguache County about the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances that "This is important. What can we do?" (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2014, p. 7).

Saguache County's readiness to address substance use ranges from 3.7 (out of 9) for resources to 5.1 (out of 9) for knowledge of issue. Three dimensions – knowledge of efforts, leadership, and climate – share the overall readiness stage of preplanning while one dimension – knowledge of issue – surpasses it at the next highest stage. Resources emerged at the stage below overall regional readiness.

Saguache is the only county for which knowledge of issue is the highest dimension. Saguache County's knowledge of issue readiness is five points (and a stage) higher than the regional average for knowledge of issue. Details follow.



Respondent scores showed some of the most divergence of all counties: score ranges between respondents were between 3 and 5 for all but one dimension (resources). This suggests Saguache County members having differing perceptions about the county's readiness to address substance use.

The remainder of this section addresses Saguache County's readiness by dimension.

## Dimensional Readiness for Saguache County

	<b>9</b>	Community Ownership
	<b>8</b>	Expansion/Confirmation
	<b>7</b>	Stabilization
	<b>6</b>	Initiation
<b>Knowledge of Issue</b>	<b>5</b>	Preparation
<b>Knowledge of Efforts</b>		Preplanning
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Climate</b>		
<b>Resources</b>	<b>3</b>	Vague Awareness
	<b>2</b>	Denial/Resistance
	<b>1</b>	No Awareness

### Knowledge of Efforts

Saguache County’s knowledge of efforts to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is currently at the stage of preplanning (4 out of 9). This indicates “some community members have heard of local efforts and are familiar with the purpose of the efforts.” Respondents’ knowledge of efforts scores ranged from 2 to 7 (out of 9), indicating a notable variance in perspectives about the county’s readiness based on knowledge of efforts.

### Leadership

Saguache County’s leadership score of 4.9 (out of 9) is just below the stage threshold and only two points below the regional average. However, it places Saguache County at the preplanning stage for leadership’s attitude and support for addressing the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. This indicates that some leadership believes the community is concerned about substance use and that “some type of effort is needed to address it.” Only a few leaders in the county are actively engaging for future or current efforts. Respondents’ leadership scores ranged from 2.5 to 7 (out of 9), indicating a notable variance between community members about the county’s readiness based on leadership.

## **Community Climate**

Saguache County's climate readiness is currently at the stage of preplanning (4.8 out of 9) which is just two points below regional climate readiness; however, it is a stage below regional. Some Saguache County community members believe substance use is a local concern "and that some type of effort is needed to address it." It is like that only a few community members are actively participating in developing or implementing such efforts. Saguache County respondents' climate scores ranged from 4.6 to 5.5 (out of 9), indicating little variance between community members about the county's climate readiness.

## **Knowledge of Issue**

Knowledge of the issue - use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances - is Saguache County's highest readiness dimension and represents the highest score and a stage above the other counties' knowledge of issue readiness. Currently at the preparation stage (5.1 out of 9), some in the Saguache County community "know about causes, consequences, signs and symptoms" of substance use in addition to "how much it appears locally and its effect on the community." Knowledge of issue scores ranged from 3 to 6 (out of 9), indicating some variance between community members.

## **Resources**

Like almost all of the 5 counties, Saguache County's dimension with the lowest readiness is resources. With a score of 3.7 (out of 5), it shares the regional readiness stage for this dimension: vague awareness. This indicates some resources exist to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances but there is "little or no action to allocate these resources to this issue." Saguache County's resources readiness responses ranged from 2.5 to 5 (out of 9) indicating a small amount variance between community members' perceptions of resources readiness.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAGUACHE COUNTY**

Saguache County's overall readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances is at the stage of *preplanning* (a level of 4 out of 9). Local initiatives aimed at increasing readiness should focus first on raising levels of readiness for dimensions with the lowest scores. It is recommended that Saguache County initiatives first target resources and knowledge of efforts because they received the lowest scores: 3.7 and 4.5 (out of 9) respectively.

This section contains recommendations for increasing local readiness for these two dimensions. The Community Readiness Model process for developing goals and objectives should help specify these initiatives (Tri-Ethnic Center, 2015, pp. 31-42).

## **Resources**

Resources include: logistical necessities for prevention such as money, space, time, and people. Saguache County shares resources as its dimension of lowest readiness (3.7 out of 9) with almost all other counties assessed. Respondents indicated some event space is available in Saguache County but little to no longer-term spaces. A little grant funding and a few experts exist, but the experts are likely

too busy to take on something new. Respondents had differing responses about the availability of volunteers and individual/business contributions.

It seems important to note that plans to quickly allot these missing resources without first increasing overall readiness may struggle to be sustainable if community climate is unfavorable toward the use of the resource for this purpose. Surveys about Saguache County's community climate toward substance use and prevention efforts and surveys specific to options under consideration may provide community input in decision-making.

### **Knowledge of Efforts**

Another primary target to increase Saguache County's readiness to address substance use is knowledge of efforts, which is in the preplanning stage (4.5 out of 9). Knowledge of efforts includes:

- being aware that regional/local efforts exist to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances
- knowing what the efforts are called, where they are held, etc.
- knowing their purpose and target audience
- understanding how they work
- understanding how well they work.

Respondents indicated community members had some knowledge of efforts at best. It appears to depend primarily on one's involvement in the education system or other organizations providing targeted efforts and thus targeted advertising. Therefore, community members without children may be particularly unaware of current efforts to address substance use. Obstacles to knowledge of efforts in Saguache County were numerous including one's lack of community involvement, little public advertising or information, and little follow-up about efforts which leads to a decreasing knowledge over time as leadership changes and groups dwindle. A few respondents also mentioned a cultural climate wherein community members believe there are already "too many people in our business" and who would prefer to "handle it in the family." Preventionists may be mistaken as prohibitionists or otherwise attempting to tell people what to do with their lives and children.

It seems important to consider initiatives that might broaden efforts and their advertising and do so in a fun and engaging way. Those in strategic and program planning roles may need to be creative about addressing the misconceptions toward prevention efforts and about facilitating advertising and efforts among community members hesitant to share for fear of betraying family.

## CONCLUSION

All 5 counties assessed in the San Luis Valley – Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Rio Grande, and Saguache – share similar overall readiness to address the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other substances. The regional and local communities appear to share enough of a concern about the issue and enough leadership support to include active community members and leaders in increasing readiness in other dimensions. Valley-level initiatives to improve readiness related to resources, knowledge of efforts, and knowledge of the issue should first be undertaken as this will likely increase sustainability of any new/expanded future efforts. Additionally, counties with similar score impressions may benefit from partnering on strategic planning and readiness initiatives. These include: (1) Alamosa, Conejos, and Saguache and (2) Costilla and Rio Grande.

Recommendations for each county aligned with their dimensional readiness results. For many counties initiatives to increase resource readiness may need to go hand-in-hand with those to increase other dimensional readiness. Additional and more nuanced information may be desirable in counties with dimensional scores that strongly diverged among respondents (i.e., Conejos and Saguache). All counties appear to require initiatives that will identify the specific substance or consequence that receives the most local concern so that readiness initiatives and future efforts can be targeted to the specific community climate.