



COLLABORATION STORY



for the
Maximize NWMO™
Regional Learning Collaborative

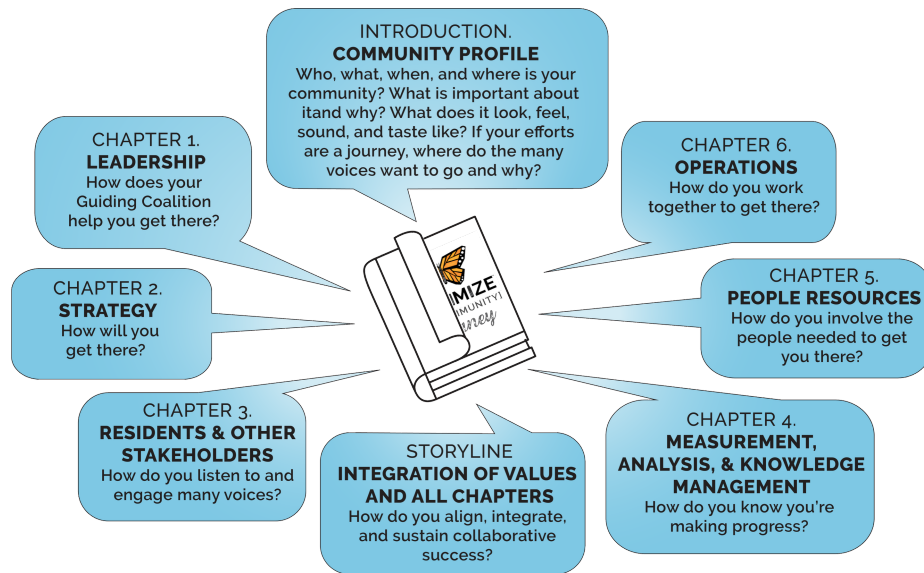
featuring the



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NOTE:

To best understand this learning tool, it will help if you “relate” rather than “compare” this case story with your local community. **Relate** means finding similarities you can use. **Compare** means finding differences you can reject.



© 2020-2025, The Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri's Maximize NWMO Navigation Team, adapted from The Communities of Excellence Framework.

Figure 1

Adaptation of The 2025-2026 Communities of Resilience & Excellence [C.O.R.E.] Guide, formerly Communities of Excellence 2026 for The Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri's Maximize NWMO Regional Learning Collaborative Programs,

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OUR COMMUNITY PROFILE:

The Description and Situation of Our Place and the People Who Live, Learn, Work, and Play Here

- Who, what, when and where is our community?
- What is important about it and why?
- What does it look, feel, sound, and taste like?
- Where do the many voices of our community want to go (our vision) and why?

FORWARD:

Monarch Town is a fictional Midwestern municipality within a multi-county region. It is an idea that gathers many promising practices into one story and named for being located in the middle of the North American migration path of millions of monarch butterflies. Monarch Town is based on several real places that have proven that the ingredients of the recipe for a thriving community are:

- A “can do” attitude,
- Willingness to invest in themselves, and
- Sustaining a commitment to develop diverse leadership from all generations who work together – CollaborACT – to systematically and intentionally improve over time.

The people living, learning, working, and playing in Monarch Town have a sense of agency and empowerment. Moreover, this case story assumes that their Maximize [My Community] Journey, leadership development, strategic planning and action mapping, resident engagement, sustainability, work system, and key processes started 20 years ago. Thus, their results and impacts reflect seasoned community development combined with collaborACTION.

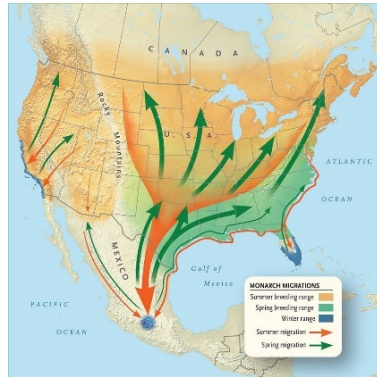


Figure 2

P.1 COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION:

What are Monarch Town's key characteristics?

P.1a COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

P.1a (1) Community Definition and Identity

- What geographic area defines our community?
- What are our community's population and growth data compared with that of other communities locally, regionally, or nationally?
- What demographic changes are occurring in our community that we need to consider?
- What is our community identity?

Monarch Town is in the middle corridor of the United States, a region that some outsiders call a “flyover place”. We call it home. This is our story. We want to maximize our potential to thrive, improve well-being, and lead a happy and meaningful life. In fact, our community draws its name from the monarch butterflies that migrate through the area every year inspiring festivals, art fairs, and cultural celebrations.

Farming and ranching on small and large acreages as well as outdoor recreation activities in our prairie groves of trees, the Milkweed River, and several lakes are woven into the fabric of the region and Monarch Town's identity. Our natural environment has not drastically changed since the Native Americans who hunted, foraged, and fished these same lands prior to pioneer settlements. Our community has a strong patriotic and political heritage being home to several state and federal elected officials and many brave veterans over 185+ years. We are a rural municipality of 2,100 residents at the center of a multi-county region that has a combined population of 50,000. A large urban area is located within two hours driving distance. The Sunflower Ridge Reservation with a population of 1,950 borders the western edge of Monarch Town's service region. Our community is the county seat of Monarch County, pop. 4,200, and the largest community in the county surrounded by several townships, small cities, and villages. We are the region's retail, economic, education and health care trade center.

Our story goes back to the 1830's as part of America's western expansion. For the sake of simplicity, we only include data from the last 50 years in this story, and there are two general time periods that contribute to the root cause of our current challenges and advantages: 1) Early days of change—1970-1999, and 2) Recent times of change—2000 to now. (Note: Some statistics are county level only because more specific data is not available. Figures 3 and 4)

Early days were tough, starting in the 1970's Monarch Town's decline due to the automation of agriculture and population loss. The profound change gave rise to a fierce anti-change and anti-government attitude. In the 1980's the farm crisis made things worse. The demise of community banking hurt, employment tanked, and a sense of hopelessness grew. In the 1990's our hospital, a key employer, faced a crisis that was eventually saved by becoming a critical access hospital with visionary leadership. Saving the hospital led to the creation of a "health care cluster" of related business growth. Out of that success grew a sense of possibility and healing in the social fabric of Monarch Town.

The 2000's decade was a turning point for Monarch Town from crisis and decline to making the necessary commitments to move into a cycle of progress and prosperity in economics, quality of life, education, health and wellbeing. It was a period of exploration, organizational development, community visioning and planning, working together to take action, and increased public and private investment that led to positive results that were not obvious to many of our residents until five, ten and now 20+ years later.

Figure 3

Our Macro Indicator Community Analysis

Population Decline Stabilized, Jobs and Income Improved over 50 Years

Monarch Town's Most Local Data Available				Annual % Change	
Monarch County	1970	2000	2020	Early Days 1970-2000	Recent Times 2000-2020
Population	5,739	4,649	4,190	-0.63%	-0.55%
Employment	2,598	2,711	3,038	0.14%	0.67%
Personal Income	\$125,473	\$153,715	\$194,985	0.56%	1.49%

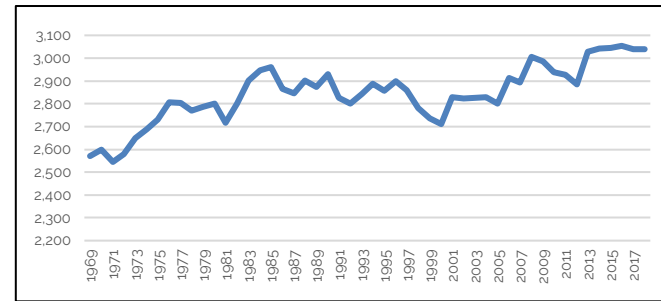


Figure 4

**Total
Employment
Trend 1969-2020**

The triad graphic on the right (Figure 5) is a simple representation of Monarch Town's Guiding Coalition's work. It is an evidence-based, non-prescriptive asset building approach that provides a playbook for Monarch Town's journey of community collaboration work towards excellence. It is the process our leaders have committed to in the interest of ensuring our children and grandchildren have a great rural place to inherit.

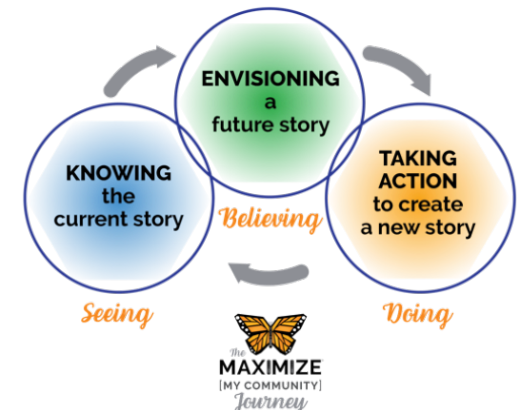


Figure 5

From 2010 to 2020 leadership development and capacity building became an intentional focus along with building a culture infused with a "can do" attitude and a willingness to invest in ourselves. We realized that no one individual, organization, or government entity is going to magically swoop in and save us. We must continuously work together better to save our community and way of life. Big picture thinking and recognizing how our survival is dependent on the relationships between all interconnected parts of our community has led to designing more effective and efficient processes for systems change. Systems leadership and progress over perfection have become the norm as each rotation of leaders continue to learn.

P.1a (2) Community Offerings

- What are our community's key offerings to our resident and other stakeholder groups in quality of life (health, natural environment, education, social connections, the economy, built environment, and housing)?
- What is the relative importance of these offerings?
- What major facilities, infrastructure, and resources (e.g., technology, housing, transportation, workforce development resources, education resources, and natural resources) support our community's key offerings?
- What recent changes has the community experienced in its needs for these assets?

Monarch Town has seven core interrelated aspects that define quality of life (Figure 6) and multiple groups of people and perspectives that impact our community offerings and inform our residents, stakeholders, and leaders.

Health

Our hospital is the hub of our “health care cluster” that covers public and private investment in wellness and fitness including a yoga studio that draws customers from a hundred-mile radius, nursing home, physician offices, obstetrics and maternal care (key for young families), and clinical and diagnostic relationships with the University Medical Center including telemedicine. Monarch Town also has three dental practices and two pharmacies as well as more than 13 miles of safe walking and biking trails. We also experience a sense of safety with a very low crime rate in our county.

Natural Environment

The air quality in Monarch County is better than most areas of the United States – rural or urban. Our percentage of days exceeding national ambient air quality standards is only .18% compared to the .64% national average. Drinking water quality is also excellent with no safety violations in the last 20 years measured by the EPA. We are within the migration pattern for millions of birds and attract bird watchers and waterfowl hunters annually.

Figure 6

SEVEN CORE ASPECTS OF QUALITY OF LIFE



Monarch County is home to a small state park, large lake, and several other outdoor recreation areas busy with campers, hikers, stargazers, and horseback riders.

Economic Vitality

Monarch Town has stabilized its population decline and has competitive income relative to peer communities throughout the multi-state region. Entrepreneurship and new businesses are flourishing in a supportive (financial and social) environment, and our resource development and sustainability processes generate multiple streams of financial and technical support for community and economic growth and progress. That means philanthropy is strong and, in most cases, we are willing to tax ourselves for priority projects that our community members have a voice in deciding. Our unemployment rate has been low (3.2-4.4%) over the last decade. Because of our location just far enough away from a metropolitan’s amenities to make the drive inconvenient and our position as an economic hub for the region, Monarch Town has been a longtime beneficiary of a robust circular economy. What gets spent here tends to stay here. The Internet is both hurting and helping this strength as more people are communicating and shopping online. Leaders are currently focused on strategies to help us retain and grow the flow of dollars through the community as we collectively participate in the global economy.

Built Environment

Our municipality facilities are in great shape compared to many small communities outside Monarch County and the nearby reservation. The historic courthouse’s bricks were recently tuck-pointed, roof replaced, and plumbing, HVAC, and electrical systems updated. Our tornado alarm system, streetlights, streets, and sidewalks are well-maintained, and many key rural roads have been paved – an investment that has taken us over two decades to accomplish. Reliable high-speed broadband is enjoyed by those within city limits while many of our rural residents and businesses are still lacking access to fiber as installation is a very slow and expensive process. Cellular service currently fills that gap in broadband. It should also be noted that our general aviation infrastructure is in excellent shape to support agriculture and attract affluent outdoor recreation enthusiasts. There is concern about our aging water treatment plant and over-burdened power plant that will force us to invest in an upgrade within the next decade.

Housing

There is a balance of low income, middle income, and higher income homes within city limits and surrounding acreages thanks to strategic zoning, forward-thinking elected officials, and real estate developers and other individuals investing in the long-term plans for our community. The next challenge to address will be more high-quality middle-income homes that are right sized to accommodate offices for remote workers, social entertainment space for people without children at home, and accessibility features for those who are aging and moving out of their larger homes on acreages and farms. A concerted effort has been made by our city to acquire abandoned and dilapidated properties within city limits, demolish any structures, and prepare the land for new building projects.

Education

Monarch Town residents have adequate early childhood education access, a respected K-12 school district that is performing up to academic standards and beginning to incorporate innovative learning experiences for students to match workforce needs, and a nearby community college with business and resident focused training and education offerings. Further, we enjoy a university medical school relationship that provides professional development and career opportunities for local doctors, nurses and health technologists. With the millennials and older Gen Z residents now raising technology dependent families, there is a renewed interest in gathering places in addition to schools and church to connect and learn. A new public library will soon serve as an intergenerational center of access to traditional and digital media for lifelong learning and workforce development through activities with programs for youth and adults.

Social Connections

We still have many long-standing organizations for people of all ages to belong and need to work on engaging younger members. The faith community includes several Christian denominations (Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Disciples of Christ, and Mormon) and two non-denominational churches. We have a variety of civic and social associations/clubs, an arts coalition, a golf club, a chamber of commerce, a Main Street downtown revitalization group, and organizations focused on history, politics, and several hobbies. Our youth can get involved in 4-H, scouting, and our Monarch Town Guiding Coalition outside of

school-sponsored extracurricular activities. The Ministerial Alliance also hosts an ecumenical youth group during the school year and a week of summer camp.

P.1.a (3) Residents and Other Stakeholders

- What are our community's key resident groups?
- What are the key segments of these groups, as appropriate?
- What are the key requirements and expectations of these segments?
- What are our community's key stakeholder groups?
- What are the key segments of these groups, as appropriate?
- What are the key requirements and expectations of these key segments?

The key resident groups include those of working age, seniors / retirees, and students. While the population is not very racially diverse with 91% being Caucasian and only 9% being Black or African American, American Indian, Asian, or Hispanic or Latino, Monarch Town is the home of nearly a dozen different Christian and non-denominational denominations. Our youth (up to age 28 / Generation Z) are 30% of the population and 20% are over the age of 65 (late GI Generation, Traditionalists, and Baby Boomers). The median household income is \$45,000, unemployment is 3.5%, and about 8% of people live below the national poverty level while the same percentage earn incomes in the top tax bracket. (US Census Bureau)

Customers of many types support the agriculture, manufacturing and outdoor recreation economy. Some travel from neighboring communities for retail, dining, healthcare, and other service amenities while others from nearby and around the world travel to Monarch Town's region for outdoor recreation and conservation hunting. The Monarch Town has become a spotlight of attention and pride for the State.

The residents have come to expect a trustworthy and efficient city government that protects our way of life. With technology on the rise and the nature of business and job opportunities changing, many residents strongly desire a fresh look at zoning regulations to ensure a balance of being open to new ideas and holding onto the community's key rural characteristics. To keep more of our younger people in the area as they begin raising families, new job opportunities are needed. The agriculture environment supports the people directly in that field as well as a number of implement dealers, farm supply stores and related small manufacturers. However, there is also room

for innovation in other professions as well. Healthcare is a key area of growth.

Everyone living in the area expects a safe community and values education and access to culture, arts, and entertainment for social gatherings. Central to Monarch Town's ethos and purpose is the inclusion of many voices from all perspectives of the community (Figure 7). This includes the public and private sectors of health, education, economy, and quality of life. It also includes residents of all ages and generations, gender, race, class, income levels, and abilities. It includes the people who are willing to dream big, converse and debate the issues and goals that can create alignment, and integrate resources and assets, to achieve their vision, mission, and strategic action objectives.

Figure 7
COMMUNITY INTERCONNECTION & INCLUSION

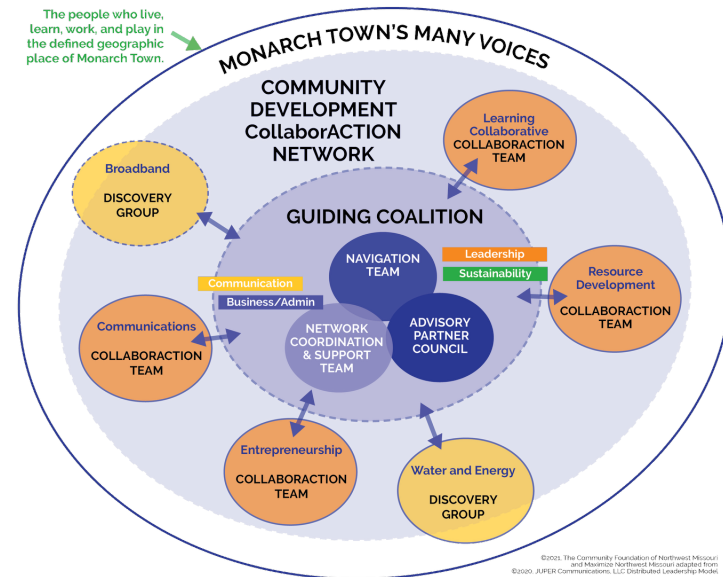


Figure 8
Our Guiding Coalition and Four Community Pillars

Monarch Town's Guiding Coalition*	Education	Health	Economy	Other Quality of Life Aspects
Neighborhoods	X			X
Resident Council				X
Nonprofits		X		X
City		X	X	X
County			X	X
Chamber			X	
College	X			X
School District	X			
Hospital		X		X
Community Development			X	X
Community Foundation			X	X

*Represents core team. Other stakeholders participate as needed.

Figure 9
Our Community-Centered Development Structure
A distributed leadership approach that is an empowered and interdependent systems-structure with information, agreements, and ideas communicated in both directions. The four boxes in the center – Communication, Business/Admin, Leadership, and Sustainability – indicate the key processes of Monarch Town.



P.1.a (4) People Resources

- What key individuals, organizations, groups, and segments are involved in delivering your community's key offerings?

To address our vision, meet our mission, and achieve our strategic objectives, *we recognize that* a majority—if not all—*our stakeholders must come together to align and invest social, financial, human and other capitals to design and implement effective processes that can keep the promises made to the community.* Our collaborACTION work (going from dreaming, visioning, and strategic planning to acting, doing, and assessing progress) is a form of advanced citizenship. Figures 7, 8, and 9 demonstrate the community interconnection and inclusion of the many perspectives in Monarch Town.

Over the last two decades we have built a Guiding Coalition with representation from all the key areas and perspectives of our community. Each member has committed to contributing the resources of their time and talent, treasure (financial support), and the empowerment of people in the groups they lead to participate in Monarch Town's CollaborACTION Network. Leadership orientation, transitions, and succession are key values and considerations. We have addressed these challenges/opportunities by implementing simple work processes and the expectation that as individuals leave their job or the community, that person recruits a new and qualified person to take their place. Much of our work is co-led and group driven to ensure no one individual is tasked with too much responsibility.

This distributed leadership and implementation model maintains the balance of power and upholds our values of respect, engagement, transparent communication, and inclusion in the process of accomplishing the work that keeps our community thriving. To avoid knowledge loss over time we diligently document and update our discoveries, progress, and work through this CollaborACTION Story and other process documents that our Guiding Coalition has established using the common language of The Maximize [My Community] Journey. Doing so ensures understanding regardless of the perspective or expertise of our people resources.

P.1.a (5) **Regulatory Environment**

- What are the key aspects of the regulatory environment impacting our community and how it operates?

Regulatory issues are addressed as needed and in accordance with sound agile and design-thinking in decision making discussions. Each group in our initiative's Action Network (*Figure 1 explained further in Chapter 1*), identify the unique regulatory issues their idea, opportunity, or area of focus requires. For example, Monarch Town's ethanol fuel economic cluster has several EPA, USDA, and state regulations. Our broadband expansion initiative has federal, state, and local county regulations and coordinates with private Internet service providers. Other parts of our system such as internal and external communications processes, our website, and how we decide to report our Guiding Coalition's plans, progress, and results within the CollaborACTION Network and community at-large are self-imposed

instead of being regulated by governmental bodies beyond our nonprofit bylaws and guidelines. Relationships with our legislators are strong.

P.1.b **OUR GUIDING COALITION**

P.1.b (1) **Mission, Vision, Values, and Culture**

- What are our Guiding Coalition's stated mission, vision, and values?
- What are the defining characteristics of the group's culture?

Vision

Monarch Town is a vibrant community embracing a culture of CollaborACTION, growth, and opportunity where families enjoy an exceptional health, opportunities for lifelong learning, economic prosperity, and overall quality of life.

Mission

To mindfully build upon longtime progress making Monarch Town the best and safest place in rural America to live, learn, work, and play now and for generations to come.

Values (*Figure 10*)

- Respect for, and engagement of, all community members.
- Integrity, honesty, and transparent communication.
- Encouragement of big picture/systems thinking and leadership.
- Innovation and progressive thinking balanced with preserving core values and traditions.
- CollaborACTION – Prioritizing, planning, acting, and assessing performance together.

Culture

Monarch Town's culture is one of progressive "can do" attitudes with a love for nostalgia balanced with innovation and entrepreneurial mindsets.

Figure 10



P.1.b (2) **Composition**

- What key individuals, organizations, and groups are involved in our Guiding Coalition?
- What are the key drivers that engage them in achieving our vision and mission?
- What are the group's core competencies, and what is their relationship to our vision and mission?
- Who serves as the backbone organizations, if your group includes one?

Our Core Group is a three-part coalition comprised of a:

- *Navigation Team,*
- *Network Support and Coordination Team, and*
- *Regional Partner Council of Supporting Advisors*

We started with simple gatherings of the “caring and concerned” and initially organized ourselves in a traditional hierarchy of power relationships and responsibilities. However, we quickly realized that Monarch Town is definitely not a monarchy. We have no one all-powerful chief executive officer. Instead, we have autonomous senior leaders in many different areas of our community [Figure 8 in P.1.a.(3)]. We decided our community development initiative should be a model of how communities actually get things done. We have structured ourselves with appropriate varied levels of decision-making responsibility and accountability. It is also a method that respects how much each individual person, organization, and entity are willing and able to contribute. Working together has proven to be better.

Core Competencies of Our Guiding Coalition (Figure 11)

Through experience and lessons learned, we realized that we have two core competencies (Monarch Town Guiding Coalition’s greatest areas of strength and expertise) that are most important to fulfill our mission’s objectives. They are 1) leadership development, and 2) resource development leading to sustainability. Several external coaches and strategic thinkers like the Kaufman Foundation, the community foundation that serves our community, the Democracy Collaborative, our university partners, Communities of Excellence 2026, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Andrew McCrea (“American Countryside” national broadcast and *Total Town Makeover*), Don Macke (National thought leader in community centered economic development) and others have reached the same conclusion about the core competencies needed within thriving communities. Building generational community leadership and financially investing in ourselves

creates the momentum necessary for fostering a “can do” culture that is resilient and capable of meeting the mission, vision and goals of our community’s complex systems.

Figure 11

Our Core Competencies*, Key Processes, Sub-Processes, and Skillsets

Business/ Administration	Sustainability *	Communication	Leadership*
• Basic daily administrative tasks • Documentation of processes, data, decisions, involvement, strategy, and progress • Accounting • Financial • Reporting • Systematic relationship-building • CRM • Community and (FTE) Economic Development	• Public/Private • Philanthropy • Sales Tax • Community Foundation Fund and Endowment • Tax Incentives • Grants (State, Federal, and Private) • Resource coordination	• Community Development Learning Center (Monarch Learning Collaborative) • Strategic Integrated Communications Plan • Creative Messaging and Content Development • Newspaper • Radio • Website • Social Media	• Maximize Community Coaching • Resource Development • Leadership Orientation and Succession Plan • Governance • Strategic Plan and Strategic Action Maps
Primarily the work of the • Guiding Coalition's • Network Coordination & Support Team (NCST)	Primarily the work of the • Guiding Coalition's • Navigation Team with • Advisory Partner Council, • NCST, and the • Resource Development CollaborACTION Team	Primarily the work of the • Guiding Coalition's • NCST with assistance from the • Communications CollaborACTION Team	Primarily the work of the • Guiding Coalition's • Navigation Team, • Advisory Partner Council, and the • Learning Collaborative CollaborACTION Team

P.1.b (3) **Leadership System**

- What leadership system does our Guiding Coalition use to lead our community resilience and excellence efforts?

A key component of our leadership and operating system is organizing people and conversations to ensure as many voices and perspectives are included in decision-making as people desire. This inclusive approach is a distributed leadership model, or a “team of teams” (Figure 9). It is the structure that matches what naturally exists in communities recognizing that everyone plays a role with varying levels and types of power versus the traditional hierarchy model where very few have power at the top of the

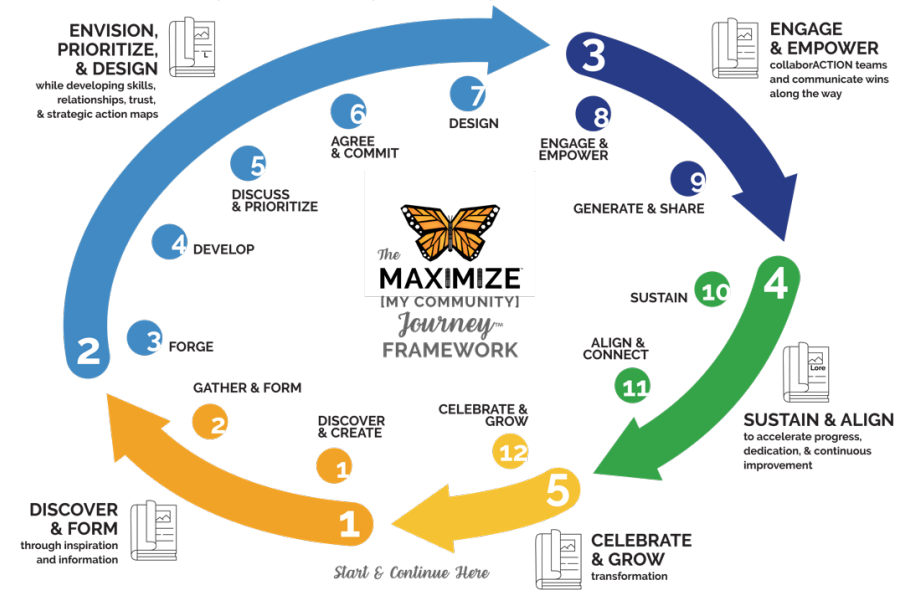
pyramid. In fact, over the last 20 years our leadership teams have organically evolved to embrace and strengthen this model. It has only been within the last few years that we learned there is strong academic and demonstrated community development research that support our proven leadership structure. (See Chapter 1 for more details on our Leadership System.)

Monarch Town's Guiding Coalition key activities are:

- 1) Dream Big Community Forums featuring relevant research, key questions, story sharing, and progress celebration;
- 2) Facilitation of all the CollaborACTION Network's teams and activities;
- 3) The Monarch Town Learning Collaborative (MLC) providing leadership development opportunities and orientation to The Maximize [My Community] Journey Framework;
- 4) Communications that better connect and promote Monarch Town including a website that serves as a public participation platform and a Zoom link for open meetings; and,
- 5) Igniting, inspiring, and facilitating collaborACTION.

The above activities exemplify what our leadership system and overall playbook, The Maximize [My Community] Journey™ Framework (Figure 12) is all about. It is the foundation of our leadership development key process and community-centered development (leadership and operating system). There are five milestones in this repeating cycle and 12 steps within the journey. (See Chapter 2 for more details on our strategy.) The framework is the basis of how we work, and how we develop generational leadership. Mastery of these methods, tools and skills helps Monarch Town residents, business owners, and leaders think innovatively like entrepreneurs and act with long-term strategy and results in mind. They learn how to engage, assess, and evaluate an idea or opportunity, develop a strategy, identify needed resources (human, financial, data, etc.) and bring their social, health, business, or educational idea to life. Moreover, by practicing these methods and habits, community leaders build a more vibrant Monarch Town and Monarch County ecosystem that contributes to our strategic action objectives.

Figure 12
The Maximize [My Community] Journey™ Framework



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MILESTONE 1 DISCOVER & FORM through inspiration and information	MILESTONE 2 ENVISION, PRIORITIZE, & DESIGN while developing skills, relationships, trust, & strategic action maps	MILESTONE 3 ENGAGE & EMPOWER collaborACTION teams & communicate wins	MILESTONE 4 SUSTAIN & ALIGN to accelerate progress, dedication, & continuous improvement	MILESTONE 5 CELEBRATE & GROW transformation
Step 1: Discover and create a sense of urgency. Step 2: Gather and form a guiding coalition of as many sectors and resident perspectives as possible.	Step 3: Forge a consensus & a community vision. Step 4: Develop a Communities of Excellence 2026 Community Profile & learn about systems-thinking. Step 5: Discuss & prioritize with all sectors & groups. Step 6: Agree & commit to shared vision, values & opportunity priorities. Step 7: Design strategic action maps based on in-depth quality data and stakeholder experience & learn about design-thinking.	Step 8: Engage & empower collaborACTION teams to work through the action maps for each priority. Step 9: Generate & share wins along the way.	Step 10: Sustain accelerated progress & dedication through support & networking. Step 11: Align & connect to continuously improve performance and short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes.	Step 12: Celebrate & grow transformation through pausing to recognize success and assess for areas of improvement.

P.1.b (4) Partners and Collaborators

- What key partners and collaborators support our Guiding Coalition?

Most communities do not acknowledge work systems or processes, yet they exist in the form of “how things get done around here.” Early in Monarch Town’s journey we identified a few processes (Figure 13) and continually refined them as we learned, adapted and improved. Our work system is “Community Centered Development” (See Chapter 2 for further details), and our work system has four key processes. Our suppliers, partners and collaborators engage and invest in these key processes with their time, talent and treasure. They also participate in our distributed leadership CollaborACTION Network and the Guiding Coalition that is the core leadership triad within the network supporting community collaboration efforts. It is important to note that we also acknowledge a variety of roles in decision-making whether individuals, organizations, and groups hold formal or informal positions of authority in Monarch Town and Monarch County (Figure 14).

Figure 14
Decision-Making Roles Regardless of Titles and Positional Authority

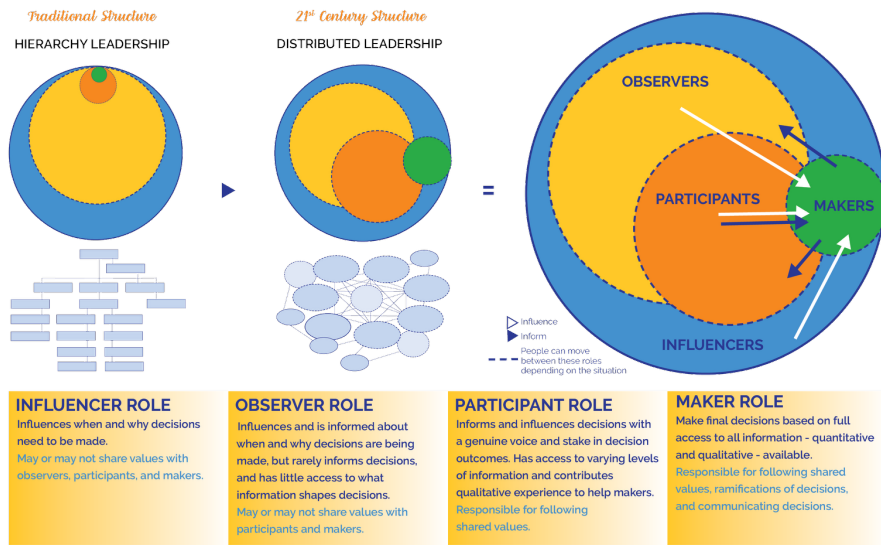


Figure 13

Monarch Town Guiding Coalition and the Key Processes They Impact

Monarch Town Guiding Coalition*	Business/ Admin Process	Sustainability Process	Communication Process	Leadership Process
Neighborhoods		X		X
Resident Council			X	X
Nonprofits				X
City	X	X		X
County		X	X	X
Chamber	X			X Y
College		X		X
School District	X		X	X
Hospital		X		X
Community Development	X Y	X		X
Community Foundation	X	X Y	X Y	X

*Represents core team. Other stakeholders participate as needed.
Y = Process Leader (People in the organization who have stepped up to ensure the work is carried out.)

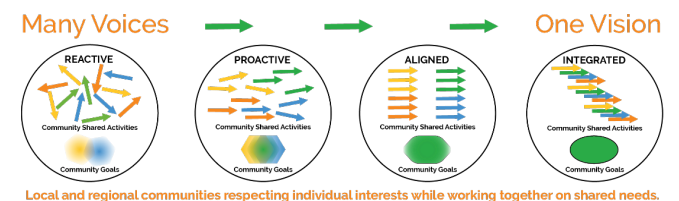
P.1.b (5) Performance Improvement System

- What key tools and methods are used as part of our Guiding Coalition’s performance improvement system?

The Many Voices, One Vision graphic (Figure 15) depicts our intentional work to move from being reactive or random in our activities as we were more prone to a couple of decades ago to being more proactive, aligned, and integrated as a community as we actively listen to many perspectives and make decisions together.

Embedded in our Maximize [My Community] Journey playbook are the Communities of Resilience and Excellence principles adapted from Baldrige, which is recognized by U.S. Congress as America’s proven quality performance improvement and integrated management system. The model challenges leaders to think with a systems approach and continuous improvement mindset.

Figure 15



P.2 COMMUNITY SITUATION

What is Monarch Town's strategic situation?

P.2a COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

P.2.a (1) Competitive Position

- With regard to Monarch Town's key offerings [See P.1a(2)], what is our community's competitive position relative to similar or nearby communities?
- What other communities provide similar offerings?
- What differentiates our community's key offerings from theirs?

While our work supports cooperation, our primary focus is on empowering Community-Centered Development CollaborACTION such as shared interest priorities, and projects that are actively pursued, measured and improved over the short, mid- and long-term. One of the barriers to rural community vitality is the desire to “win against their neighbor” rather than join forces to compete with other U.S. and global cities and rural regions. National research and survey feedback from Monarch Town residents tell us that a sense of belonging and appreciation for this “place” is critical to stabilizing population decline by keeping and attracting entrepreneurial and skilled talent. Monarch Town has been able to stabilize population decline, and grow employment and wealth compared to our peer group comparisons from surrounding states. We believe our community culture of progressive “can do” and welcoming attitude is a competitive edge over many nearby major metropolitans (Kansas City, Omaha, Lincoln, Sioux Falls, Chicago, Des Moines, and Minneapolis/St. Paul).

P.2.a (2) Community Changes

- What key changes, if any, are affecting our community's competitive situation, including changes that create opportunities for collaboration and innovation for our Guiding Coalition, as appropriate?

Monarch Town weathered the last recession, and improved in several sectors, and community metrics (*See results in Chapter 7*). Then COVID hit. Our most recent data and feedback indicates that our resiliency was strong enough to be optimistic post-COVID. Our community centered development work system and key processes such as the sustainability process produced adequate financial capital (philanthropy, sales tax, loans, bonds), and

leadership development training reached 20% of our Monarch Town citizens over the last seven years. Monarch Town now has the leadership and resource resiliency to adapt and compete, whatever comes next.

Competitive wild cards of the future are climate change (impacts agriculture, land use, safety, etc.), broadband competitiveness (impacts all sectors: economics/work, education, health and quality of life), and global politics (food, energy, immigration). Monarch Town's leaders believe that communities who are able to learn, adapt, change and “think like an entrepreneur” will remain competitive.

P.2.a (3) Comparative Data

- What key sources of comparative and competitive data about our community and our Guiding Coalition are available?
- What limitations, if any, affect our ability to obtain or use these sources to guide our work and make decisions?

Monarch Town has several sources of comparative information. Our university relationship includes a HUB site hosted by the university that features 800 USA public data sources for analysis and comparisons, we also use ESRI, Headwaters, and regularly updated development opportunity profiles by the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. Our www.monarchtown.org community engagement site also hosts many of these data sets for citizen leaders to easily access. Like many small towns with populations under 5,000, there are limitations in some data sets (i.e., U.S. Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics). We have learned to be thoughtful and supplement data sets with local validation checks through listening to residents. (*See results in Chapter 7*)

Figure 16

Challenges and Advantages of Monarch Town

CHALLENGES & THREATS	ADVANTAGES & OPPORTUNITIES
External forces in technology, education, energy, and politics continue to pressure Monarch Town to innovate in order to remain relevant in all 4 core areas of the community	Momentum and progress that keeps leadership "practices" and performance improvement principles alive and active (even when no one is watching)
Lack of understanding and availability of support needed for second-stage and traded economy eSHIP.	Positive 20 years of cooperation and collaborACTION, sharing, planning, and implementation.
Supply and demand of water and energy resources is out of balance. Residents are divided over the pros and cons of wind energy and water system options.	Willingness of many stakeholders to participate in KEY Processes, Maximize Monarch Town, and Community Centered Development.
Significant gaps in next-gen, high-speed broadband coverage and impacts all four core sectors.	Strong and competitive in our four core sectors i.e., health, economics, education and QOL
The traded/business sector has an over reliance on manufacturing and agriculture.	Active ecosystem support for start-up entrepreneurs, small businesses, and innovative ideas.
Nearby communities are often prone to focus on negative aspects, not assets and performance improvement.	Strong group of partners collaborating in all sectors and levels of leadership through Maximize Monarch Town.
Rural isolation and impact on timely health access, opioids, mental health,	Good track record of sustainable funding and leadership uncommon in rural areas

P.2b **STRATEGIC CONTEXT**P.2.b (1) **Challenges, Threats, Advantages, and Opportunities**

- What are Monarch Town's key strategic challenges, threats, advantages, and opportunities?
- How do they relate to our Guiding Coalition's vision and mission?

Water and energy are anticipated to be big topics in the near future with shortages of both due to climate change and a desire for using more renewable resources. Residents are divided over the pros and cons of wind energy and water system options. A few of our Guiding Coalition members are thinking ahead by starting a Discovery Group on the topics.