



February 2009

MEASURE FOR CHANGE

Community Indicators Consortium Newsletter

www.communityindicators.net

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President's Column

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

We are into CIC's fourth year. Last year, 2008, will be remembered as a period of stabilizing finances, building key partnerships and starting innovative new projects. This year, 2009, will be remembered as a year of outreach, connections, and communications as we add more ways for our members to communicate with each other and with CIC Board and Staff, including webinars, online surveys, and social networking tools. This is your organization and we want your input on how to make it work best for you!

As our first foray into online surveys, we are looking for your feedback to improve the plans already underway for CIC's Fall 2009 Annual Conference. Given concerns that many organizations' travel budgets may be impacted by the current economic environment, we would like to get a sense of how many people are planning to attend, and what topics are of greatest interest. [Click here](#) to take our three minute survey so that the 2009 CIC conference is the best one yet. We will also use responses on topics of interest in planning webinars to be held throughout the year.

In December, CIC was officially welcomed as an Associate of OECD's Global Project. This new partnership links us to indicator practitioners from around the world and commits CIC to promoting and assisting OECD in its "measure of progress." You may have read of this in the last newsletter. (A copy of that newsletter is posted on the CIC website). At CIC we are also exploring a variety of partnership arrangements with PPRMN, AGA and ICLEI among others, since these align with our goal to advance the integration of indicators with government performance measurement. Recently, the Sloan Foundation gave CIC the funds to further these goals through research of best practices and the development of an educational tool for government officials. If the initial workshop that was held in October is any indication of the types of conversations that a project of this nature can generate, then we have a very exciting year ahead of us. Many thanks are owed to the Project Steering Committee (**Allen Lomax, Cheryle Broom, Karen Hruby**

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VEGA**

and **Susan Brutschy**) and our Executive Director, **Maureen Hart** for assembling the proposal for Phase II of the Sloan Grant. We will continue to keep you updated about that project.

At CIC, we hope to continue to network with *other* foundations and tirelessly advance the importance of reliable data and indicators to help inform their agendas for community change. A potential funding source for local indicator projects is the American Data Centers across the country. These centers have their hands full as they gear up to release the 2010 Census Update. Nevertheless, some of these centers occasionally will provide grants to those who will help advance the use of reliable data. Find your regional data center and offer your help!

In addition to these exciting partnerships, we were also thrilled to learn that three new institutional members have joined CIC. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to the **Alliance for Building Community** (Quincy, Illinois), **Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Monitoring Committee** (Austin, Texas) and the **Long Island Index** (Garden City, New York) to the CIC network. At the same time the numbers of individual memberships continue to grow. With the recent exposure afforded by our relationship with OECD, we are now entertaining more international members. The breadth and depth of backgrounds, interests and the many capabilities of the members in our network is an asset that we want to leverage. Last month we purchased and are now using a central portal for Board information exchange, communication, strategizing, conference planning and so on. We are now in the process of developing a little more advanced portal for our members. If you would like to help us refine the architecture or otherwise develop our new website, please contact board member **Joe Baldwin** at jbaldwin@hhscc-pinellas.org. We are always eager to meet and work more closely with our members.

Our call for Board members last month yielded four very able candidates. We will announce the final recommendation of the Nominating Committee in the next newsletter. We owe a big thanks to those who expressed interest or otherwise nominated someone else.

We are all fortunate since we are witness to a new chapter in American history; a chapter where a new President takes on a flagging economy that has dragged down the rest of the world with it. We watch with awe as businesses, cities, counties and states prepare for a slow yet definite turnaround. We want the decisions that will inform these actions and policies to be based on sound data and meaningful indicators. Yet those of us in the indicator world know how numbers have been twisted to justify perhaps the more detrimental policies in the recent past, and could again. This is not lost on President Obama, who in his inauguration speech noted that, "Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet. These are the

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indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land -- a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights." Let us hope that this promise of blending both hard facts with soft science is not lost over the next four years (or perhaps more) of his Presidency. Indeed all of us at CIC hope that the new Federal agenda will include more scientific data gathering and analysis of the state of the country as well as increased support for indicator projects such as the "State of the USA," so that the largest economy in the world can be run yet again with an eye to the "common good" -- a story determined by indicators that measure not only the efficiency but also the compassion with which our country is being governed.

Anindita Mitra, AICP
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Noteworthy News

THE DATAWEB: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATING AND ANALYZING DATA

The United States Census Bureau is developing an exciting new project that allows for seamless access and integration of a host of Federal statistical data sets in real time. The project, known as The DataWeb, compiles the information in an easy-to-read, online "HotReport." The HotReport functionality allows public policy decision-makers in need of relevant information about a myriad of community and economic development issues to select geography, currently as low as county level, and quickly identify patterns and trends, thereby allowing for more effective and efficient decision-making.

The project is headed by an interdisciplinary team within the Census Bureau consisting of the Office on Strategic Planning and Innovation and the Demographics Directorate, with additional support from expert consultants, including statistical professionals who provide input on appropriate statistical rules, as well as subject-area experts who provide guidance on appropriate analytical presentations of the data.

The DataWeb is the engine behind the creation of the HotReports, and is an open source application that allows the user to manipulate different kinds of data in the same framework. This engine accesses data via a network of online data libraries using an application known as DataFerrett. DataFerrett is designed for more sophisticated data users. It brings together multiple data sets, is updated dynamically, and adds context to the data. It can speed analysis for data manipulation, provides advanced tabulation and descriptive statistics, and can add regressions and other advanced statistical rules. For the public policy decision-maker who may not have this kind of statistical expertise, the DataWeb does it for them. The

DataWeb integrates demographic, economic, environment, health, housing, and other Federal statistical data sets that are often dispersed across geography or agency under one umbrella. Selected variables are tabulated in spreadsheets that are controlled by imbedded statistical rules, in addition to mapping and graphics capabilities. Yet to the user, this work is done behind the scenes - no need for advanced statistical methodologies or acute statistical training.

By providing real-time access to Federal statistical data, the DataWeb HotReports will ensure that the most recent data are displayed. Each time a HotReport is accessed, the algorithms that pull and manipulate the data run on the most current version of the data. The HotReport itself is topically oriented, updated dynamically, properly guides the use of statistical data, and can be designed to support critical decision-making capacity in a holistic way. In essence, the DataWeb, and resulting HotReport, turn data, i.e., a number or numbers, into useful information for the policy decision-maker in an easy-to-understand format. Public officials will be able to address critical issues facing their communities to inform better policy making; for example, developing performance measurement and indicator systems, addressing adverse environmental impacts, and identifying solutions for the economic challenges and industry retention and retooling hurdles facing so many states, regions, and cities today.

Because the DataWeb framework is being developed within an open source platform, it has tremendous potential to link to other efforts, both internationally and locally. Once the first phase of Federal statistical data integration is complete, the next steps include working with local data providers, whereby community organizations can draw Federal statistics from the DataWeb and integrate their own data and expert knowledge into the HotReports. Indeed, with the recent signing of President Obama's Executive Order calling for an open and transparent government, the DataWeb and HotReport framework is an excellent demonstration of how, through the use of innovative technology and collaboration, Federal and local information can be more easily and efficiently integrated resulting in more effective public policy impacts.

Click here for more information on the [DataWeb](#).

Click here for more information on the U.S. Census Bureau's current Community and Economic Development [HotReport](#).

CIC LEADS NATIONWIDE EFFORT TO ADVANCE THE INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY INDICATORS AND GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

CIC recently received a two-year grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to promote, advocate for, and develop a community of practice for integrating community indicators and government performance measures, and for engaging citizens and other key community stakeholders in the

process. This grant expands CIC's prior work that identified the benefits and barriers to integrating indicators and performance measures. To achieve the goals of the grant, CIC has formed a Working Group comprised of individuals representing 23 community indicator and performance measurement organizations, professional associations of community leaders, organizations working with communities, indicators and data, and organizations representing associations of communities. More information about this effort will be on CIC's web site in the near future. In the meantime, if you would like to know more about this effort, please contact either [Allen Lomax](#) or [Cheryle Broom](#) who are CIC's co-directors for this exciting effort.

Members In The News

The Detroit News recently published an editorial by **Dr. Eric Scorsone**, co-chair of the State and Local Government Program at Michigan State University. The January 21 commentary called for data-driven government decision-making. The commentary, "Reform Government Culture to Cut Costs," advises policy makers to base their decisions about service consolidation and restructuring-options discussed with more frequency as budgets dry up on data, rather than on anecdotal evidence. Dr. Scorsone urges local governments to adopt a culture shift toward transparency, performance-based budgeting, and benchmarking. The full text of the article may be found [here](#).

The Prince George Citizen recently reported that while **Dr. Alex Michalos**, a University of Northern British Columbia professor, is moving to the University of Brandon, a quality-of-life survey he pioneered will continue to be mailed out to Prince George households. Dr. Michalos began sending the survey to city residents in 1994 as a tool for leaders, in hopes they would use the results in their policy-making. The Prince George City Council uses the survey results for strategic planning and to establish budgeting priorities. The complete text of the article may be found [here](#).

CIC is now LinkedIN!

For those of you who use LinkedIN to connect with colleagues, there is now a [LinkedIN](#) group for the Community Indicators Consortium. It's a great way to share information about projects, ask questions of other indicator practitioners, or just keep in touch. It already came in handy for several members who were all going to the PPMRN conference to arrange to get together for dinner one night.

Upcoming Events

March 2-4, 2009

Austin, Texas

The National Association of Planning Councils (NAPC) is holding its annual conference March 2-4 in Austin, Texas. Titled "Community Planning in Turbulent Times ... Staying

on Top When the Bottom Falls Out," the conference features Thomas L. Mesenbourg, from the U.S. Census Bureau; Jerry Friedman, American Public Human Services Association; Larry Mishel, Economic Policy Institute; and Taylor Willingham, Founder of Texas Forums; among other presenters. The conference will also feature the 2009 Judith Rothbaum Award recognizing an individual for excellence in using social indicators for community action. For more information, [click here](#).

March 20, 2009

Miami, Florida

The Center for Accountability and Performance (CAP) and the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) are holding a symposium on Developing Relevant and Sustainable Performance Management Systems by Government and Nonprofit Organizations. In this one-day symposium, Nationally-renowned experts, including CIC Board Members **Cheryle Broom** and **Allen Lomax**, will conduct workshops and panels on how to build and sustain a relevant performance management system, including cutting-edge strategies developed in various organizations nationwide to stimulate collaborative learning and dissemination of best practices to public sector managers and practitioners. The symposium is being held in conjunction with the ASPA Annual Conference. The symposium cost of \$150 also covers registration for the 1st day of the conference. See the [ASPA](#) website for more information.

March 25, 2009, 2:00 - 3:30pm ET

Webinar

Are you having trouble affecting community change?

Results Based Accountability (RBA) might be for you. Join Susan Brutschy, President /Co-founder of [Applied Survey Research](#)

and a member of CIC's Board of Directors, on March 25 for a webinar on Results Accountability and Community Indicator Projects. Learn how to implement RBA in your community projects and make a meaningful impact on community indicators. Registration is \$25. To sign up, [click here](#).

April 23-24, 2009

Prague, Czech Republic

The [Environmental and Sustainability Management Accounting Network \(EMAN\)](#) is holding its 2009 Conference EMAN 2009: Environmental Accounting and Sustainable Development Indicators from April 23-24, 2009 in Prague, the Czech Republic. The theme of this year's conference is *Environmental Accounting and Sustainable Development Indicators* at both micro and macro levels. Around 250 experts, academics, statisticians and officials are expected to gather to discuss promoting awareness of sustainable development concepts and tools by using indicators and environmental accounting framework. For more information, see the conference [website](#).

September in Seattle

The CIC Program Committee Co-Chairs-- Chantal Stevens, Megan Holden and Terrie Mount--have been busy planning

the 2009 CIC Conference. We are in the process of finalizing the date and venue, although we are leaning toward Seattle in September or early October. If you haven't already, please take the short [survey](#) to tell us if these dates and this venue are feasible for you this year. Soon, we will be sending out an announcement and a call for topics and papers for the conference. If you are interested in getting involved, write to us at: newsletter@communityindicators.net.

October 27-30, 2009

Busan, Korea

The OECD is holding its [3rd World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy](#) in Busan, Korea from October 27-30, 2009. The theme of the conference is *Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life*. It is expected to attract some 1500 high level participants with a mixture of politicians and policy makers, opinion leaders, Nobel laureates, statisticians, academics, journalists and representatives of civil society, from over 130 countries.

Indicator Projects of Note

Quality of Life, Race Relation Indicators in Jacksonville

The Jacksonville Community Council Inc. (JCCI) has just released its 24th annual Quality of Life Progress Report and its fourth annual Race Relations Progress Report, both available at www.jcci.org. The later report features indicators of racial disparities across six dimensions of the quality of life, including education, employment and income, health, neighborhoods and housing, justice and the legal system, and politics and civic engagement. This year, the survey for the Race Report was conducted the day after the November 2008 elections. It included a 50-question survey of significant samplings of white, black, and Hispanic respondents. The complete surveys, including cross-tabulations, are available online in four PDF documents, each (at least) 250 pages. As always, the Quality of Life survey instrument, along with its cross-tabulated data set, is also available online for free. For researchers who would like more extensive data sets to work with, JCCI has over 20 years of survey data available. Contact JCCI for more information.

Smokey the Bear Wants Your Comments on Indicators

Using seven environmental, social and economic sustainability criteria and 64 indicators, the USDA Forest Service has issued its second report on conditions and trends in the publicly and privately-owned forests across the United States. The report, "[Draft National Report on Sustainable Forests - 2010](#)", is available for public comment through April 10, 2009. Three public meetings are scheduled in February and March in Denver, CO, Athens, GA, and Washington DC. The Roundtable on Sustainable Forests is scheduling webinars through this period to introduce people to the findings and conclusions and encourage participation in the workshops. Visit the

[Roundtable](#) website for details, meeting and webinar dates. The first National report was published in 2003. These reports are produced as part of a continuing commitment to the Montreal Process, a group of 12 countries that came together in 1994 to develop and implement internationally-agreed upon criteria and indicators for the conservation and sustainable management of temperate and boreal forests. The goal is to provide information that will improve public dialogue and decision-making on what outcomes are desired and what actions are needed to move the United States toward sustainable forest management. The reports also establish a baseline for future measurement of progress. While the 2010 report presents data primarily at a national or regional scale, it also provides a context for related efforts to use the indicators to measure progress at other geographic scales such as ecoregions, states, watersheds, and communities.

Publications of Interest

[Child Trends](#), a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at every stage of development, recently published a guide that provides brief descriptions of data and information resources available to measure child and youth well-being. Called [A Guide to Resources on Child and Youth Indicator Data](#), the report is available free of charge in pdf format on their website and includes information about books, journals, and other publications related to the identification, measurement, development, and use of child indicators; professional newsletters focused on child indicator issues and products; web sites offering data at the National, state, and local levels; research centers focusing on child and youth well-being; and technical resources for those who would like to develop their own indicators websites. Childtrends also publishes a [free newsletter](#). The latest edition focuses on multiple sources of local child indicator data.

While not strictly a publication, the blog [communityindicators.blogspot.com](#) is now in its third year and still going strong. Guest bloggers and announcements are always welcome. Thank you to everyone who has helped build this community on the web - your feedback and support has been extraordinarily helpful.

We want to hear from you! If you have information or ideas for this newsletter please email them to newsletter@communityindicators.net.

A NETWORK OF NETWORKS

A THOUGHT LEADER

A CROSS-COMMUNITY EXCHANGE



These are just a few of the phrases that describe the Community Indicators Consortium.

CIC offers you a diversity and depth of connections, and information you will not find elsewhere. CIC's broader focus connects groups and bridges gaps: geographic gaps, community gaps, and that all-important gap between indicators and performance measures.

Being a CIC member expands your scope, your contacts, and your knowledge. Shouldn't you be a member of this exciting and expanding organization? Please go to www.communityindicators.net to learn more and to become a CIC member.

CIC PURPOSE

To promote communication among and help integrate the efforts of various networks, organizations and individuals involved in community indicators work in the U.S. and around the world. The ultimate goal of the consortium is to enhance the effectiveness of these networks, organizations and individuals in advancing the art, science, and impact of indicators for improving the health, quality of life and sustainability of communities.

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