

MEASURE FOR CHANGE

A newsletter of the Community Indicators Consortium
www.communityindicators.net
August, 2007



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President's Column: Allen Lomax, President

Your Involvement is the Key to CIC's Success

The key to success for any organization like CIC is the involvement of its members and their willingness to volunteer and to share information. There are numerous opportunities for you to get involved that would only require you to devote as much time as you can give to help your colleagues, your organization, and your community of practice. For example, have you looked at our Web site (www.communityindicators.net) recently? The site contains links to over 70 indicator efforts within the United States and internationally. This information is invaluable to people visiting the site to get a better understanding of the depth and breathe of indicator efforts. Please visit the Web site and if you know of other indicator efforts, please let us know.

Also, we are interested in building a repository of studies and research done about indicator efforts and related topics on the Web site. If you know of studies and research that should be included, please let us know.

Speaking of the Web site, a Web site committee is being created to advise the CIC Board about ways the site can be improved and be more valuable to visitors to the site. If you are interested in serving on the Committee, your help would be appreciated.

Additionally, the CIC newsletter wants to share your knowledge, your ideas, your needs, and your experiences with all its readers to expand the network and support and enhance the indicators community. I hope you will consider writing an article for the Newsletter, telling the indicators community of practice about your work, the work of others, as well as the results of an interesting conference you attended. Your knowledge can benefit others, expand the network, and strengthen the body of knowledge about indicators and their use.

These are just a few of the opportunities that you can become involved in and help strengthen your

Jim H. Walker
Central Texas Sustainability Project

Ben Warner
CIC Immediate Past President
Jacksonville Community Council, Inc.

organization and the indicators community of practice. In the near future, the Web site will also have page listing other opportunities that you can become involved in. Please contact me at aclomax@aol.com or www.ed@communityindicators.net to let me know how you would like to get involved.

OECD WORLD FORUM

What Happened in Istanbul at the OECD World Forum on Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies

By Alex C. Michalos

Reflecting on the Istanbul meeting from the perspective of about 35 years of work in the field, I think the most important thing to come out of the meeting was the Declaration endorsed by the European Commission, OECD, Organization of the Islamic Conference, the United Nations, the UN Development Programme, the World Bank, the International Society for Quality of Life Studies and the Community Indicators Consortium. I don't think I have seen anything like the 5 main bullets of the Declaration assembled and supported by so many organizations. It was agreed that we need to

- Encourage communities to consider for themselves what 'progress' means in the 21st century;
- Share best practices on the measurement of societal progress and increase the awareness of the need to do so using sound and reliable methodologies;
- Stimulate international debate, based on solid statistical data and indicators, on both global issues of societal progress and comparisons of such progress;
- Produce a broader, shared, public understanding of changing conditions, while highlighting areas of significant change or inadequate knowledge;

- Advocate appropriate investment in building statistical capacity, especially in developing countries, to improve the availability of data and indicators needed to guide development programs and report on progress toward international goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals.

Apart from the Declaration, it was agreed to have another meeting in 2 years, rather than 3 as originally planned, and Korea agreed to host it. This is further evidence of an extraordinary level of enthusiastic commitment to building capacity around the world for evidence-based public policy making, where the particular kind of evidence called for is statistical in nature and democratically nurtured if not entirely selected. If I understand the new movement or momentum building, it is a movement committed to the democratization of public policy making and/or to the empowerment of people to engage in determining their own future in a fairly enlightened, sophisticated way.

There are, of course, downsides to trying to get most people to sing from the same page in a world in which such great diversities exist as they do in our world. But the lure of a harmonious world instead of a discordant world remains almost as attractive today as it did in the seventh century BCE when Hesiod imagined some kind of Harmony and/or Justice as the divine creative forces of the cosmos. To me, the ideas of searching for harmony and celebrating diversity are not antithetical. If we tried it, we might like it.

Reflecting on the Istanbul meeting from the point of view of our 90 minute session on community indicators, it seemed to me to be a great success. I brought 50 copies of handouts of my talk and 200 leaflets about the Community Indicators Consortium. Over 100 people showed up for the session, and all the literature seemed to disappear. There were over 1200 people registered for the conference, representing as I recall about 140 countries. Our session had considerable variety, including several very keen young people, which is always a promising sign.

All things considered, except for being beaten by a cab driver, it was a very good experience.

A Call for Knowledge Sharing

The CIC newsletter wants to share your knowledge, your ideas, your needs, and your experiences with all its readers to expand the network and support and enhance the indicators community.

Will you write an article for the Newsletter, telling the CIC community about your work? Are you doing something new? Have you had some interesting results or fostered a significant change? How have you added value to your community? Your knowledge can benefit others, expand the network, and strengthen the body of knowledge about indicators and their use.

We want to publish one or two member articles per issue. Articles should be a maximum of 500 words. If you are interested in writing about a report or study, please include a URL for our readers to learn more.

Please email your articles to: lfairbanks-atkins@comcast.net or ed@communityindicators.net.

The deadlines for submission are Fridays, September 7, 2007, November 9, 2007, January 11, 2008, and March 7, 2008.

Thank you for your support of CIC, and we look forward to sharing the knowledge about your work.

CANADIAN COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS PARTNER ON INDICATORS

Toronto's Vital Signs Inspires National Effort

By Lisa Capoccia

This October eleven community foundations across Canada will release Vital Signs, new local report cards aimed at measuring the vitality of their communities. The national project is modeled after Toronto's Vital Signs, which began in 2001, and tracks the city's progress in ten quality of life categories. Some examples include *Gap Between Rich and Poor*, *Work, Health & Wellness*, and *Environment*. The number of participating community foundations is expected to double in 2008.

Vital Signs is coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada and provides local and national perspectives by using a common set of indicators for all participating cities.* This combined approach allows users to understand issues unique to local communities as well as national trends.

Elizabeth Orton, Director of Member

Instead of acting on the wrong problem, Toronto Dialogues created greater understanding of the issue and an effective, long-term solution.

Vital Signs Balances National and Local Perspectives

Under the leadership of Community Foundations of Canada, community foundations across the country worked jointly to establish a common national framework for Vital Signs. The framework involves a core set of ten issue areas and indicators measured by all of the participating communities. Elizabeth Orton explains, "It was difficult to go through. You're never going to get it perfect, but members were motivated to make it work."

The first national report will be released October 2nd. The national report will track trends across Canada and draw public attention to the indicator work already taking place at the community level. Community-specific reports will include the core set of national indicators plus local measures defined by community members to track local issues. Orton emphasizes the give and take between national and local indicator efforts, "It's important to recognize and respect the autonomy of local communities."

Secondary Benefits

Vital Signs isn't just a tool to engage Canadians in dialogue regarding local and national trends. It also has short-term, practical benefits like centralized data collection and promoting community foundations as knowledge centers. In the former, Community Foundations of Canada adds value to member projects

Programs and Services at Community Foundations of Canada, cited Toronto's Vital Signs as a good example of how communities can turn indicators of action. When community members expressed concerns regarding youth violence, the Toronto Community Foundation (TCF) presented indicators in its 2005 Vital Signs Report showing that youth unemployment was up and the availability of youth recreation programs was down. TCF then convened one of its Toronto Dialogues, through which the foundation brings together people who share a concern for a particular problem to explore the issue with an eye to generating tangible actions. In response to the issue of limited opportunities for youth, community groups established the Toronto Sports Leadership Program, a successful intervention that provides young people living in vulnerable neighborhoods the opportunity to gain skills and connect with jobs and volunteer opportunities as coaches, lifeguards and instructors.

by collecting secondary research for roughly half of the indicators tracked. "It makes sense for economies of scale" says Orton. In the latter, Vital Signs reinforces the change in perception about the multiple roles community foundations play in a given community. No longer just grant making entities, community foundations are increasingly viewed as neutral conveners and a community resource.

Finally, Ms. Orton attributes the project's accomplishments to collaboration. The key to success, she says, is: "Members are keen to work together and to make it work."

For more information visit: www.vitalsignscanada.ca

To learn about Toronto's Vital Signs visit: www.tcf.ca

*Current participant communities are Calgary, Medicine Hat, Montreal, Ottawa, Red Deer, Saint John, Sudbury, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and the Waterloo region. Additional cities added in 2008 are Fredericton, Guelph, Lethbridge, and Saskatoon.

Upcoming Events

September

Public Performance Measures and Reporting Network Webinar
Friday, September 28, 2007
Please check CIC's Web site: www.communityindicators.net

November

Public Performance Measures and Reporting Network
Conference on Performance Measures
November 2-3, 2007
Location: Rutgers-Newark Campus, Newark, NJ
Please check CIC's Web site: www.communityindicators.net

December

8th Conference of the International Society of Quality-of-Life Studies
December 6-9, 2007
Location: The San Diego Marriott Mission Valley, San Diego, CA
For more information, please go to www.isqols.org

Inland Northwest Conference Focuses on Community Indicators

Last April over 250 people from Washington, Idaho, and Oregon gathered to hear indicator practitioners share experiences at a conference titled, "Measuring Community: A Regional Conference on Community Indicators," organized by the Spokane Community Indicators Initiative.

The one-day event featured local, regional and national speakers including two members of the CIC Board,

Charlotte Kahn, Director of the Boston Indicators Project, and Chantal Stevens, Executive Director of Sustainable Seattle. Panelists gave examples of their work using indicators to achieve goals and inform decision-making in a variety of sectors including government, the environment, business, and early learning.

In the “Community Case Studies” panel, participants learned firsthand how indicator efforts in Boston, Seattle and Spartanburg were established. Mary Thomas, Executive Vice President of the Spartanburg County Foundation, described what it takes to get all sectors of the community behind indicators.

Participants learned there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to measuring community. Evaluation feedback showed demand for future events, interest in tools and skills to use and implement indicators, and a desire to see goal setting on a community-wide basis. The biggest complaint – not enough time.

To see conference information and presentation materials visit:
www.communityindicators.ewu.edu/speakers.cfm

Check out the CIC Website...

www.communityindicators.net

- News and Events
- Directory of Indicator Projects
- Papers and Reports
- Membership Information

Important Paper About Indicators and Performance Measures

“Creating Stronger Linkages between Community Indicator Projects and Government Performance Measures” is a newly published white paper created by the Community Indicators Consortium with support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. It originally grew from discussions at our December 2005 conference and then was reviewed by a panel of experts in the field. We invite you to read the paper, make use of its information, and let us know what you think.

Visit www.communityindicators.net to link to the PDF.

CIC Mission

The Community Indicators Consortium will develop and sustain an active, open learning network and global community of practice among persons interested or engaged in the field of indicators development and application.

CIC Achieves its mission by means of:

- Encouraging the development of effective indicators;
- Advancing the art and science of indicators development and performance measurement at all geographic levels and across all sectors;
- Encouraging effective linkages of indicators and performance measures;
- Facilitating the exchange of knowledge through a variety of networks; and
- Linking people and informing civic and media discourse about local, regional, national, and global priorities.

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