Ontario Trillium Foundation

and

Canadian Policy Research Networks

Indicators of Healthy and Vibrant Communities Roundtable

A Primer

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A Primer

Building Healthy and Vibrant Communities

Capturing accurate and timely data that reflect the well-being of a community is becoming increasingly important as communities strive for continual improvement of their neighbourhoods. Community indicators are an important tool in recognizing successes and identifying areas where improvement is required. A number of community indicator models have been developed and are in use by communities, agencies, governments and researchers. These models, however, differ in focus and in scope.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is exploring the development of a set of community indicators to define healthy and vibrant communities to support decision-making both within the Foundation and by communities themselves. CPRN has experience in building a report card of indicators that captures what Canadians believe contributes to quality of life in Canada. CPRN is interested in further exploring whether and how Ontarians could be further involved in the selection and use of community indicators.

Purpose of the Roundtable

This Roundtable is an opportunity for all participants to explore the possibilities for a shared set of community indicators in Ontario. To inform the discussion, participants will hear from others who have already designed and used systems of socio-economic community level indicators. Both CPRN and OTF are clear that we must learn from the work that has already taken place and that existing work is not duplicated. The Roundtable is an opportunity to have a broad-based discussion on indicators in Ontario and the benefits these can provide to communities.

More specifically, at the Roundtable we will:

- learn from the experience of government and non-profit organizations in Canada that have developed and implemented projects to measure the extent to which communities are healthy and vibrant;

- understand how community level data are used to set agendas, develop policy, measure progress, and compare communities;

- understand the status of indicators within Ontario, i.e.

  o who is interested in indicators for healthy and vibrant communities

  o what has been done to date

  o what are the needs for the future; and

- assess the need for and interest in the development of relevant, valid, reliable and robust data that would be accessible and useful for various interested parties in Ontario – governments, foundations, non-profit organizations and communities.

The Primer

This Primer provides an overview of some of the current community indicator models in use across Canada and serves as background for the Roundtable discussion. Nine examples are presented as case studies. These have been chosen to illustrate the depth and breadth of existing community indicator models. The table on page 6 provides a summary and comparison of each model. Additional information on each case study follows.

A Glossary of Key Terms is included at the end of the document to provide brief explanations for the terminology used in the case studies. One of the most frequently used terms in the document is "community". Community can and has been interpreted in many ways. We use community as an inclusive term that includes any or all of the following:

- a neighbourhood – the smallest level at which data are available and can be conceived as a group of postal codes;

- a municipality – also referred to as a census metropolitan area when it is large and a census agglomeration when it is smaller; and

- a region – also referred to as a census division or economic zone.

"Indicator" is another important term which is used throughout this document and will be used in the roundtable discussions. Indicators are measurable variables or characteristics that provide an indication of a condition or direction. They can help to understand where we are, where we are going and how far we are from a goal. Examples of indicators include number of people employed in the arts and culture sector (as used by Vital Signs) or the percentage of population with very good or perfect functional health status (as used by Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts). Indicators can be further aggregated to form complex indices.

Data Gathering in Ontario

Community-level socio-economic data are routinely collected and analyzed across the province by provincial government ministries, divisions within ministries, municipal governments, community organizations and by federal government departments. Most of the data gathering systems have evolved to meet each organization's own specific needs. It can be argued that the lack of coordination and information sharing results in duplicated effort that consumes considerable resources and also results in data sources and analysis not being used to their full potential.

The Ontario government is receptive to new ideas to develop a comprehensive data system that consolidates socio-economic data in a mutually accessible location. It has begun to take steps to achieve this.

Comparing Community Indicator Models

In looking at the various community indicator models in use across the country there are some marked similarities and differences across models. The key characteristics of these community indicator models are outlined in the table below.

The majority of models use well-defined topics under which indicators are presented. For example, Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts has a number of indicators that fall under the topic of "social relationships" while Vital Signs groups another set of indicators under the topic "learning and leadership".

In terms of geographic coverage, only Community Profiles from Statistics Canada and the Indicators of Well-being in Canada from Human Resources and Social Development Canada cover the country. BC Stats, Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts, and Alberta's Office of Statistics and Information cover their respective provinces. In Ontario, only The Composite Learning Index of the Canadian Council on Learning covers all communities across Ontario (as part of its pan-Canadian coverage). The other models are more limited in their geographic coverage.

All the models highlighted draw on data from Statistics Canada. The majority also use data from other federal, provincial and municipal sources. The number and level of sources vary amongst the different models.

Most models provide information at the local level (usually neighbourhood or municipality) and also in aggregate form.

All models provide various indicators. One model, the Composite Learning Index, also provides an overall measure that integrates the various indicators.

The majority of models provide information free to the public. The Quality of Life Reporting System, for example, provides reports that include 80 indicators grouped under 10 topics at the municipal level to the public for free. Vital Signs publishes its report cards covering 10 core topics to participating cities annually.

Most of the indicator models provide access to some data in addition to reports. This allows users to create their own analysis (for example, selecting specific indicator sets or combining specific neighbourhoods). There are variations on how easy it is to conduct these tailored analyses.

A Comparison of Community Indicator Models

System and organization	Topics	Geographic level	Geographic coverage	Accessibility	Data sources
BC Stats Government of British Columbia	*10 topics:* Aboriginal peoples; business and industry; economic statistics; environmental statistics; exports and imports; labour and income; mapping and geography; population and demographics; regional statistics; and social statistics	- Neighbourhood - Municipality - Region - Province	British Columbia	- Useful if focus is BC - Free access to data and reports - There is a cost associated with more complex analysis - *Main users are*: local and provincial governments, community organizations and researchers	- Statistics Canada - Health Canada - Canada Revenue Agency - HRSDC - BC Ministries
Community Accounts Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	*13 topics:* Well-being; demographics; health; income, consumption and leisure; education, literacy, skills and training; employment and working conditions; social relationships; production; natural resource capital; eco-system; society, culture, politics and justice; infrastructure and production capital; and knowledge capital	- Neighbourhood - Municipality - Economic zones - Rural Secretariat regions - Province Also by: - Health authorities - School districts - HRSDC regions	Newfoundland and Labrador Comparison with other provinces and nationally also available	- Useful if focus is Newfoundland and Labrador - Free access to data and reports - *Main users are*: local and provincial governments, community groups, researchers and general public	- Statistics Canada - Health Canada - Newfoundland and Labrador departments
Community Profiles Statistics Canada	*12 demographic and socio-economic topics:* Aboriginal peoples; education; families and households; immigration and citizenship; income and earnings; language; labour; language of work; migration and mobility; place of work; population; visible minority By December 2008, up to 100 health indicators covering health status, health care and behaviour	- Neighbourhood - Counties - Metropolitan areas - Province - Canada	Canada	- Useful for overview of an area and comparison with Canada as a whole - Free access to census and health data and related reports - Fee charged for more complex analysis or more recent data - *Main users are*: local, provincial and federal governments, and researchers	- Statistics Canada - Canadian Institute for Health Information (potentially added December 2008)

System and organization	Topics	Geographic level	Geographic coverage	Accessibility	Data sources
Office of Statistics and Information (in development) Government of Alberta	In development. Likely to be similar to BC Stats (covering a wide range of well-being related topics)	- Province - Potentially to lower levels	Alberta	- Brings together data from across Alberta - Restricted access to the public is likely, no details of whether there will be a fee - *Main users are*: local and provincial governments, educational institutions and libraries, regional health authorities and regional development authorities	- Statistics Canada - Alberta Official Statistics - Alberta Ministries
Composite Learning Index Canadian Council on Learning	*4 topics:* Learning to know (school-based learning); learning to do (work-related learning); learning to live together (community and inter-personal learning); learning to be (personal development)	- Neighbourhood - Municipality - Region - Province - Canada	4,700 cities and communities in Canada excluding the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, and First Nations living on reserves	- Useful for focus on life long learning - Allows comparison across 4,700 communities - Free access to reports - *Main users are*: local governments, community organizations, researchers, and general public	- Statistics Canada - Industry Canada - Canadian Council on Learning
Quality of Life Reporting System Federation of Canadian Municipalities	*10 topics:* Demographic and background information; affordable, appropriate housing; civic engagement; community and social infrastructure; education; employment and local economy; natural environment; personal and community health; personal financial security; and personal safety Specific focus on the areas where municipalities have jurisdiction	- Municipality	22 municipalities in Canada (11 in Ontario)	- Useful for municipalities - Reports give an overview on Canadian performance - Free access to reports - Restricted access to data - *Main users are*: local governments and researchers	- National and Provincial Governments - Community Organization sources - Municipal Administrative Data

System and organization	Topics	Geographic level	Geographic coverage	Accessibility	Data sources
Community Social Data Strategy Canadian Council on Social Development	Dependent on what community groups need. Indicators related to well-being are included in the system	- Depends on the requirements of community organizations	Depends on the requirements of community organizations	- Free access to social indicator information - Data tables site available only to those participating in the CSDS - *Main users are*: municipalities, health and family service agencies, police, social planning councils, school boards, libraries and community organizations	- Statistics Canada
Vital Signs Community Foundations of Canada	*10 core topics for 2007:* Learning; work; belonging and leadership; getting started in our community; housing; safety; arts and culture; health and wellness; gap between rich and poor; and environment Locally determined additional topics included for each community	- Neighbourhood - Municipality - Exact level depends on the area covered by the Community Foundation or group of Community Foundations	15 municipalities (7 in Ontario)	- Findings are widely distributed to the public by participating community foundations and CFC - National report synthesizes data - Free access to reports - Restricted access to data - *Main users are*: municipal and provincial governments, community organizations, researchers and general public	- Statistics Canada - Canada Revenue Agency - HRSDC - Canadian Council on Learning - Insurance Bureau - Local data sources: school boards, transportation authorities etc.
Indicators of Well-being in Canada Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC)	*10 topics:* Work; learning; financial security; family life; housing; social participation; leisure; health; security; and environment	- Province - Canada	Canada	- Allows analysis of well-being across Canada - Option to customize data by year or geographic area for selected topics - Free access to data and reports - *Main users are*: local, provincial and federal governments, community organizations, researchers and general public	- Statistics Canada - HRSDC

Case Studies

Government of British Columbia - BC Stats

Description of the system

Located in Victoria, BC Stats is the central statistical agency in British Columbia and is also the provincial government's source for statistical products, services and expertise. BC Stats has a legislated mandate to coordinate the statistical activities of government.

In addition to statistics on the province as a whole, it also provides socio-economic profiles and indices on topics of education, labour, crime, health and economic hardship for a number of provincial administrative regions including local health areas, regional districts, college regions, school districts and others. Furthermore, census-based area profiles providing details on the socio-economic characteristics at the regional (census division) and municipal levels of the province are also available. The presentation of the information makes this particularly useful as it includes maps, charts, rankings, comparisons and distributions. Each profile is intended to tell a story about a particular area and the people that live there.

Purpose

- To produce and interpret statistical information relating to all facets of life in British Columbia, including the demographic, social and economic conditions of the province and its population.

- To serve the needs of a variety of clients in the public and private sectors, for timely and reliable statistical information and analytical services with respect to the Province of British Columbia.

- To coordinate statistical matters between the British Columbia Government and statistical agencies of other governments within Canada.

Who uses the system?

The system is used by local and provincial governments, community organizations and researchers. BC Stats operates a statistical enquiry service which is available to government employees and the public. One example of such a service is to analyze and present information for a geographic area from different sources into one report. There is a minimal charge for non-government requests requiring research and response via email, fax or postal service.

Indicators used by the system

BC Stats presents its information under 10 topics: Aboriginal peoples; business and industry; economic statistics; environmental statistics; exports and imports; labour and income; mapping and geography; population and demographics; regional statistics; and social statistic. Data come from a number of sources, for example Statistics Canada, Health Canada, BC Ministries, Canada Revenue Agency and Human Resources and Social Development Canada. At the community

level, the census is the main source of data and is supplemented with data derived from administrative sources such as Employment Insurance and Income Assistance.

Data are available down to the level of the neighbourhood, municipality and region and is presented in the Area Profiles section of BC Stats. Data are also available for the province as a whole.

Census information is freely available on the province through the BC Stats website and can be viewed at neighbourhood (census tract), municipal (regional district electoral area), regional (census division) and provincial levels. Area profiles can also be freely accessed using the website. These draw on data from different organizations that use different geographic boundaries such as local health areas, school districts and health service delivery areas. The profile is presented for the geographical areas as set by these organizations and presents data which they have collected (this may include population and income data, as well as education or health data).

For additional information, see: www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador - Community Accounts

Description of the system

Community Accounts is operated by the Economics and Statistics Branch within the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, part of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Finance. It is based on a model designed in collaboration with Dr. Doug May of Memorial University.

It is an easy-to-use system that displays information by province, rural secretariat region, economic zone, municipality and neighbourhood (see Glossary of Key Terms for definition of geographic areas). An overview of the area can be obtained followed by information on specific topics. The data sources are also clearly identified and accessible. A newsletter is produced by Community Accounts and is available electronically when new information in posted to the website.

The main data sources are Statistics Canada (Census data), Newfoundland and Labrador departments and Health Canada.

Purpose

Users are provided with a single comprehensive source of neighbourhood, municipal, regional, and provincial data that would normally not be readily available, too costly to obtain, or too time consuming to retrieve and compile. The system allows users to custom generate a large number of tables and illustrative graphics on key social and economic indicators organized by geography and topic.

Who uses the system?

The system is used at the local and provincial government levels, by community groups, researchers and the general public; and it is totally free of charge.

Indicators used by the system

There are 13 topics: well-being; demographics; health; income, consumption and leisure; education, literacy, skills and training; employment and working conditions; social relationships; production; natural resource capital; eco-system; society, culture, politics and justice; infrastructure and production capital; and knowledge capital. The well-being topic allows users to compile indicators to develop a better understanding of the factors that determine the status and progress of their communities and various regions.

Under this structure, information can be retrieved according to 400 neighbourhoods, 80 census consolidated subdivisions (municipalities), 20 economic development zones, 9 Rural Secretariat regions and by the province. Information can also be retrieved at the level of health authorities, school districts, and Human Resources and Social Development Canada regions.

For additional information, see: www.communityaccounts.ca.

Statistics Canada - Community Profiles

Description of the system

Community profiles have been available through Statistics Canada since the release of the 1996 census data. They present community-level information from the census which is collected either from 100% of the population or on a 20% sample basis (from a random sample of one in five households). By the end of December 2008, health data based on Canadian Community Health Survey and potentially Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) data will be added.

Purpose

Users are able to search for an area of interest by place name, province or territory and receive information from the most recent census on this area. The system allows users to access this information free of charge in an easy-to-use format.

Who uses the system?

The system is used by local, provincial and federal governments, researchers and the general public. The system is freely accessible through the Statistics Canada website. More recent information on certain topics, for example population figures for 2007, as well as more detailed analysis and reports can be purchased from Statistics Canada.

Indicators used by the system

Twelve topics are covered: Aboriginal peoples; education; families and households; immigration and citizenship; income and earnings; language; labour; language of work; migration and mobility; place of work; population; and visible minority. The data sources for community profiles all come from the census results.

The Community Profiles provide 2006 Census data for 5,418 neighbourhoods, 288 counties (or their equivalents), 111 smaller and 33 large municipalities.

For additional information, see:
http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E.

Government of Alberta - Office of Statistics and Information

Description of the system

Alberta's Office of Statistics and Information (OSI) is a new government resource that provides consistent and reliable information about Alberta and its people. Datalink is the OSI's online data and information gateway that will securely connect public servants and community users with statistical data and analysis to help make informed decisions about Alberta. The datalink system is currently being piloted through a few government ministries. Following a successful pilot it will expand to all government ministries as well as data owners and providers like municipalities and post secondary institutions.

As a key element in the OSI's efforts to enhance collaboration among providers of data and statistical information, datalink provides a forum for content owners to discuss and achieve consensus around issues such as data standards, processes, access and usability. A number of products are already available on datalink. These include items such as the annual wage and salary forecasts, and forecasts for occupational demands.

Data come from Statistics Canada, Alberta Official Statistics and other government ministries.

Purpose

The role of the OSI is to facilitate the creation, use and dissemination of Government Official Statistics and related information to inform policies and decisions. It works with stakeholders to identify and address gaps in statistical information, as well as areas of duplication and opportunities for efficiencies. It also acts as the single point of access to the Government of Alberta Official Statistics and other key data and analysis pertaining to Alberta.

Who uses the system?

The main users will be departments within the Government of Alberta, educational institutions and libraries, regional health authorities, regional development authorities and local government. The OSI aims to make statistics, methodology information and related formulas available for free

or at a modest fee to recover expenses. External access to download items on the website should be available to a limited extent in 2009.

<u>Indicators used by the system</u>

Topics and indicators are not currently available online.

For additional information, see: https://osi.alberta.ca/osi-content/Pages/default.aspx.

Canadian Council on Learning - Composite Learning Index

<u>Description of the system</u>

The Composite Learning Index (CLI) is an index that incorporates a wide range of learning indicators into a single measure. The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) system calculates the CLI and generates numeric scores for 4,700 cities and communities across Canada. A high CLI score means that a particular city or neighbourhood possesses learning conditions that support social and economic success.

Comprehensive results of CLI are released to the public each spring. The scores and trends reported are not intended to identify winners and losers, but to help Canadians understand where communities stand and what progress they are making in lifelong learning. The CLI is designed as an objective and reliable tool that can help communities make the best possible decisions about learning.

The tools that support the calculation and dissemination of the CLI results each year, and the underlying indicators and measures are the "data warehouse", "interactive map" and "CLI simulator" which are publicly available.

<u>Purpose</u>

Until the creation of the CLI in 2006 there was no means to measure how Canada and its communities perform across the full spectrum of learning. The CLI provides an annual measure of Canada's performance in a number of areas related to lifelong learning. The CLI draws attention to the multi-dimensional character of learning and its important contribution to Canada's economic and social well-being.

<u>Who uses the system?</u>

The CLI is aimed at local governments, community organizations, researchers and the general public. As the CLI is an annual measure of life-long learning from communities across Canada, it uses data that can be compared across the country. It is available at a regional/local level and collected on a regular basis. Data limitations mean that the CLI cannot be used by the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut or First Nations people on reserves.

Indicators used by the system

Examples of indicators used to make up the CLI include high-school dropout rates, participation in job-related training, learning from other cultures, volunteering and access to broadband internet. Each learning indicator has a different degree of importance to a community's overall social and economic well-being, and the CLI is designed to reflect this.

By using an objective, statistical method to weight the various learning indicators, the CLI effectively and reliably connects the dots between a community's learning conditions on the one side, and its social and economic well-being, or outcomes, on the other.

The 2008 information is grouped under four topics (known as the four pillars of learning in the context of the CLI): learning to know (school-based learning); learning to do (work-related learning); learning to live together (community and interpersonal learning); and learning to be (personal development).

For additional information, see: www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/CLI?Language=EN.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities - Quality of Life Reporting System

Description of the system

Starting with 16 municipalities in 1999, the Quality of life Reporting System (QOLRS) has grown to include 22 municipalities, comprising some of Canada's largest urban centres and many of the suburban municipalities surrounding them. Eleven of these are in Ontario: London, Sudbury, Waterloo, Niagara, Hamilton, Halton, Peel, York, Toronto, Durham and Ottawa. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has produced a series of thematic reports looking at different topics, for example in 2008 it produced *Trends & Issues in Affordable Housing & Homelessness*.

The reporting system relies on several methods and a range of national, provincial, municipal and community organization data sources in order to measure and monitor quality of life in Canadian communities. Some of the more common data sources include Statistics Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and municipal administrative data using a Municipal Data Collection Tool.

Purpose

The QOLRS measures, monitors and reports on the quality of life in Canadian urban municipalities using data from a variety of national, municipal and private sources.

Who uses the system?

The system is primarily used by municipal councils and staff, and FCM, although reports and indicator data tables are posted on the FCM website and are available free to the public. Raw data are not publicly available. The ability to monitor quality of life through QOLRS indicators

allows FCM and municipal government to be a strong partner in formulating public policy in Canada.

Indicators used by the system

Developed by FCM and the QOLRS technical team, the reports draw from a large set of indicators measuring changes in social, economic and environmental factors. Hundreds of variables are structured into approximately 80 indicators grouped into 10 topics: demographic and background information; affordable, appropriate housing; civic engagement; community and social infrastructure; education; employment and local economy; natural environment; personal and community health; personal financial security; and personal safety.

The indicators are for municipal boundaries – Census Subdivisions and Census Divisions – (the 22 municipalities included in the QOLRS) as well as for the rest of Canada and Canada as a whole where data are available.

For additional information, see: www.fcm.ca/english/view.asp?x=477.

Canadian Council on Social Development - Community Social Data Strategy

Description of the system

Increasingly, community-based organizations require social and economic data to make vital decisions. Data provide a strategic tool enabling community analysts to identify issues, target expenditures and track change.

The Community Social Data Strategy (CSDS) is a national consortium of 16 regional consortia or data user networks. The CSDS functions as a gateway for municipalities, local health and social service agencies and community-based organizations to collectively purchase over $1 million worth of data through Statistics Canada at a reduced cost. The data are procured at community-specific levels and used by CSDS members to understand and track social welfare and to design and assess social policies, programs and services.

CSDS members convene around common social data needs and lever their collective buying power to access a variety of data that were previously unaffordable and/or simply not available to them. Partners also collaborate on initiatives and share their research results. Regular correspondence and meetings, mostly by teleconference, ensure that network members remain in touch with each other. Sub-committees advise the wider group on governance and on technical matters, such as the development of the new CSDS website.

The data are collected at the level required by organizations where this is available within Statistics Canada.

Purpose

The CSDS allows municipalities and community-based organizations to access and analyze detailed research findings from Statistics Canada cost effectively. The Strategy also helps

organizations share both the costs and the benefits of this vital information. To this end, the three core purposes of the CSDS are to:

- Purchase and facilitate access to social data

- Build capacity of organizations to analyze and process social data

- Facilitate communication, capacity building, knowledge transfer and innovation.

Who uses the system?

CSDS members include municipalities, health and family service agencies, police, social planning councils, school boards, libraries, United Ways and community-based NGOs. Only accredited Consortium members (those named in the Statistics Canada license) have access to the actual data tables. However, the new CSDS website (currently under development) will provide public access to a wide variety of information, including a national and 16 regional atlases that map the percentage distribution of a number of social indicators across selected geographies. The site is aimed at a broad cross-section of community users.

Indicators used by the system

The system is not structured like the other case studies in this document as the CSDS does not have a set of indicators which it routinely uses. Rather, the CSDS provides access to the data needed to support locally-generated indicator initiatives. That being said, CSDS atlases map 300 different social indicators, at selected geographies. Moreover, those indicators are mapped using both 2001 and 2006 Census data. The CSDS will also have information on a variety of other indicators, including: population changes; programs to reduce poverty; issues affecting children, Aboriginal people or ethno-cultural communities; the labour market; seniors; health; and crime.

For additional information, see: www.ccsd.ca/subsites/socialdata/home.html.

Community Foundations of Canada – Vital Signs

Description of the system

Vital Signs is an annual community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada. It measures the vitality of our cities, identifies significant trends, and assigns grades in at least ten areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs is based on a project of the Toronto Community Foundation and is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada (CFC).

Community foundations in Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Sudbury, the Waterloo region, London, Guelph-Wellington, Ottawa, Montréal, Toronto, Oakville, Fredericton and Saint John are currently participating in the program.

In order to respond to significant interest, CFC is actively exploring options to make the program more accessible for smaller communities through regional collaboration and a scaled-down version of the report. Each foundation produces a report presenting a compilation of information from numerous sources, both nationally and locally sourced, along with an opening message

from the foundation that helps communities identify and make connections between issues and trends. An in-depth report is made available in paper format and on each community foundation's website, complete with links to original data. Data from national sources pertaining to all communities across the country are also part of a national report issued annually by CFC.

By consolidating new and existing data, Vital Signs makes information from a wide range of sources easy-to-access and paints a picture of a community. Individuals and organizations interested in detailed analysis of particular areas can consult the report footnotes to find the in-depth reports they need.

Purpose

- Collate a broad range of data: using relevant national data and identifying local research on a wide range of topics.

- Engage the community: the community is involved at every level, from determining the indicators to be researched and published, to assigning grades.

- Create a national report: because community foundations across Canada are participating in this project they are able to explore in-depth critical issues raised in Vital Signs reports, thereby focusing attention on it, sharing success stories and encouraging deeper discussion and debate. It also enables them to track trends across the country or from various communities.

- Publish readable information that appeals to a wide range of readers looking for a snapshot of quality of life and community vitality.

Who uses the system?

Vital Signs is widely disseminated by community foundations, their partners and the media. It is used by a wide range of groups, including local and provincial governments, the non-profit community, foundations, grant applicants, donors, researchers and the general public. Expanded, in-depth reports are also made available on each community foundation's website, complete with links to original community research.

Indicators used by the system

Vital Signs is based around a shared set of 10 common topics that all foundations include in their reports and upon which Community Foundations of Canada will base its national report. The ten topics are: learning; work; belonging and leadership; getting started in our community; housing; safety; arts and culture; health and wellness; gap between rich and poor; and environment. Community foundations then add to this common set indicators that capture their community's unique concerns and features.

For additional information, see: www.vitalsignscanada.ca/index-e.html.

Human Resources and Social Development Canada - Indicators of Well-being in Canada

Description of the system

The website allows access to the underlying data for any indicator or for topics which make up overall well-being. This system presents one approach to measuring individual and societal well-being.

Purpose

Indicators of Well-being in Canada gathers data from different sources and presents a comprehensive, up-to-date picture of the well-being of Canadians and Canadian society. It also shows how this picture may be changing over time.

Who uses the system?

The information is aimed at all levels of governments, community organizations, researchers, and the general public. It is available free of charge on its website.

Indicators used by the system

This system sees well-being as being made up of 10 topics: work; learning; financial security; family life; housing; social participation; leisure; health; security; and environment. Beneath these are indicators and data. These components can be accessed from the website together with the indicators they cover and special reports on the various topics.

Indicators of Well-being in Canada includes a wide range of indicators that profile Canadian socio-economic trends. For example, there are data on the number of hours Canadians work each week, education levels compared with those in other countries, and the affordability of housing.

Included in this are "status" indicators and "key influences" indicators. Key influences indicators reflect individual and societal resources (e.g. access to computers at school, daily exercise, and the availability of public transit). Status indicators show condition or progress (e.g. educational attainment, number of Canadians employed and life expectancy).

Some topics include data which can be accessed according to province as well as for Canada as a whole over different years. The data cannot be accessed at the local level but rather they present a picture of the nation overall. Comparisons between provinces on particular aspects of well-being are also provided.

For additional information, see: http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/home.jsp?lang=en.

Drawing It All Together

We hope that this Primer has provided you with an overview of a number of community indicator models and has piqued your interest in discussing how we can measure health and vitality in Ontario communities in more depth. Some of the questions that will be explored together at the roundtable are:

- How does the community data situation in Ontario compare with what is available in BC, Newfoundland and Labrador and from Statistics Canada?

- When we look at the situation in Ontario, what are the strengths and the gaps?

- What did we learn about the systems in BC or NL that would be beneficial for Ontario?

- How do we see the role of communities in setting indicators and collecting data? How should they be involved?

We look forward to meeting you in person on Monday, June 23rd at Hart House!

Glossary of Key Terms

Census Agglomeration (CA): A CA is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a large urban area (known as the urban core). The Census population count of the urban core is at least 10,000. To be included in the CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from Census place of work data. If the population of the urban core of a CA declines below 10,000, the CA is retired. When a CA has an urban core of at least 50,000 based on Census counts, it is subdivided into Census tracts. Census Tracts are maintained for the CA even if the population of the urban core subsequently falls below 50,000.[1]

Census Division: This is a generic term used by Statistics Canada for regional geographic areas larger than municipalities.[1]

Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA): A CMA is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a large urban area (known as the urban core). The Census population count of the urban core must be at least 100,000 to form a Census metropolitan area. To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from Census place of work data. Once an area becomes a CMA, it is retained as a CMA even if the population of its urban core declines below 100,000. All CMAs are broken into Census Tracts.[1]

Census Subdivision (CSD) = Municipality = Local Area: The CSD is the general term for municipalities (as determined by provincial legislation) or areas treated as municipal equivalents for statistical purposes (for example, Indian reserves, Indian settlements and unorganized territories). With the 2001 Census, Regional District Electoral Areas (unorganized areas) became CSDs. Local Areas allow for an intermediate level between communities and Economic Zones in the case of Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts.[1]

Census Tracts = Neighbourhood: These are small, relatively stable geographic areas that usually have a population of 2,500 to 8,000. They are located in Census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and in Census agglomerations with an urban core population of 50,000 or more in the previous Census. These are also referred to as neighbourhoods.[1]

Community: This is a loosely defined term that can be associated with a geographic area.[1] Communities can also be classified by interest rather than a geographical area. For the purposes of this document it is defined as a generic term referring to any different level of physical and geographical organization of people.

Economic Zones: Newfoundland and Labrador is divided into 20 Regional Economic Development Boards which develop strategic economic plans for the zones. They work with local business representative groups to boost the economic vitality of the zone; as well they make links with provincial and federal levels to support the strategic economic plan.[2]

Electoral Area: This is a relatively small geographic region used for electing representatives to Regional District Boards. For the first time with the 2001 Census, Electoral Areas were used as Census Subdivisions.[1]

Index: This is a measurement tool that combines a variety of indicators to produce an overall score. A well-known example is the Consumer Price Index.

Indicator: This is a measurable variable or characteristic that provides an indication of a condition or direction and that can be compiled using one or more data sources. Examples include "educational attainment" or "number of people employed in the arts and culture sector". Indicators can be further aggregated to form complex indices.

Municipality: The term municipality is used to refer to a legal entity, usually a city, town, village or district municipality.[1]

Regional District: This is a region created by the British Columbia provincial government in the late 1960's for the delivery of certain services; regional districts cover the entire province with the exception of the northwest area called Stikine Region. Regional districts including Stikine are used by Statistics Canada as Census Divisions.[1]

Rural Secretariat Regions: Newfoundland and Labrador is divided into nine Rural Secretariat Regions. The mandate of the Rural Secretariat is to promote the well-being of Rural Newfoundland and Labrador through a comprehensive and coordinated approach aimed at integrating economic, social and cultural aspects of rural and regional development.[2]

Sources of definitions

[1] "Statistical Glossary" BC Stats at http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/glossary.asp
[2] "Geography Types Overview" Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts at http://www.communityaccounts.ca/communityaccounts/onlinedata/geogpage.asp?geogtype=overview&showbar=1