

Results from the Minnesota Report Card Summit

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Acknowledgments

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We also thank the regional leaders that attended the Summit.

Wilder Research/The Itasca Project Summit Working Team

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Introduction

In 2004 a delegation of community leaders from Minnesota visited Boston. They learned about the Boston Indicators Project – an initiative mobilizing residents to address challenges and build on strengths to ensure the economic and social vitality of Boston. As a result of this visit, they proposed that a similar project could benefit our region, suggested that a consortium of foundations should fund and govern the initiative, and that Wilder Research should lead the effort.

Wilder Research has partnered with the Itasca Project to develop an initiative that will result in a universal set of indicators, allowing us to identify the relative strengths of our region and best position ourselves for the future. Nine foundations have contributed through direct funding and support:

- Amherst H. Wilder Foundation
- B.C. Gamble, P.W. Skogmo Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation
- Bush Foundation
- Greater Twin Cities United Way
- The McKnight Foundation
- The Saint Paul Foundation
- St. Paul Travelers Foundation
- 3M Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation Minnesota

On September 27th The UBS Forum at Minnesota Public Radio hosted the Minnesota Report Card Summit. Throughout the morning, over 40 regional leaders were asked to provide input regarding the information necessary to determine the overall well-being of our region. This group was comprised of individuals from nonprofit/community organizations (36%), government/elected officials (30%), businesses (27%), and other entities (6%). This event served as the kickoff for the year-long effort led by Wilder Research.

Participants were charged with two tasks: to determine what information is most important for understanding how our region is doing in the present and how well we are positioned for the future; and to identify how to structure the project to ensure that it will be useful for policy makers, will motivate leaders to take action and promote change, and it will lead to efficient decision making.

Results from Task One

After breaking into working groups, participants were challenged to answer the following question: “What are the five questions you would need answered to know how our region is doing in the present, and how well we are positioned for the future?” They were presented with three example lists provided by panelists and then asked to form their own lists.

The five groups produced questions that were similar in nature. This may be due to the fact that they were challenged to limit their final questions to five. The final 25 questions can be categorized in three main groups: talent and human capital, society and culture, and economics.

When the large group was reconvened, they were asked to use voting technology to choose the question in each group that they felt was the most important to have answered in order to understand how well our region is doing. The following section provides the top questions from each main category. The figure in parentheses following each question displays the results of the large group vote. Though they did not garner enough attention to merit the top five lists for the working groups, the other questions they contemplated are listed as well.

Talent and Human Capital

- What percentage of students in each grade made a year’s worth of progress by year end? (18%)
- What is the change in college educated 20-somethings in Minnesota? (6%)
- **What is the percentage of 10th graders who are proficient based on college prep curricula? (24%)**
- Are kids ready to learn when they start kindergarten? (15%)
- Do all people have opportunities to thrive? (21%)
- Is the state tapping the skills and contribution potential of each citizen? (18%)

Other questions:

- Are young adults ready to join the workforce or productive post-secondary education options?
- Does our educational system match the needs of the job market?

- What are the literacy and English competency rates? How many people learn second languages?

Society and Culture

- Are different people and groups hopeful about their families and the state's future? (24%)
- What is the percentage of eligible voters who vote? (5%)
- **Is optimism/resilience/self confidence increasing in the community especially among children? (41%)**
- Is our community a safe place to live and work? (16%)
- Do people know their neighbors? Are they part of a community? (14%)

Other questions:

- Once our citizens have the basics, what more do we ask them to contribute (taxes, provide employment for others, being a role model or a good citizen, etc.)?
- What is our volunteerism rate?
- What is our level of civic participation including the number of people running for office or attending town meetings?
- Are diverse populations moving into leadership positions?
- What attitudes and values do we hold about different things, like diversity?
- Is Minnesota capable and willing to accommodate and embrace diversity?
- Are there systematic ways particular groups are excluded from connecting to the community?
- Are we developing a common sense of purpose? What can we all agree on?
- How is our quality of life measured by amenities?
- What is the rate of growth in the prison population?
- Are trends across geographic lines consistent?

- Do generations interact productively?

Economics – Personal and Regional

- Are income and wealth disparities among groups increasing or decreasing? (28%)
- **Are we creating new jobs and businesses in our region? (39%)**
- Is income growth proportionately distributed by class, race, and geography? (11%)
- What is the distribution of income in the metro region? (3%)
- Are we creating jobs that pay enough? Is productivity growing? (19%)

Other questions:

- Are we prepared for the coming job shortage/change?
- How is the wage level of jobs changing?
- What is the state of minority businesses?

Additional Questions

Within their top five lists, the working groups produced three additional questions that lie outside these three main categories.

- How do our citizens feel about the water quality of lakes and streams?
- Are we healthier today than we were ten years ago?
- Are residents able to access affordable health care?

Other questions:

- Is healthcare coverage getting better or worse?
- What is the increase in healthcare costs?
- Do our residents have a healthy lifestyle?
- What is the obesity rate in the community, especially among children?
- Do we have disaggregated information on economic and social outcomes?

- Are we preparing people for life?
- To what extent are results shared?
- Are we meeting global standards?

Results from Task Two

The second task assigned to the working groups was to consider how they felt the project needed to be designed in order to be useful and credible and to better assist them in efficient decision making. They were also asked how this initiative should be different from past indicator efforts in order to ensure its success. Their suggestions are grouped in four main categories: shaping the project; engaging stakeholders; final product; and promoting change.

Shaping the project

The working groups identified the following components as necessary to form a solid base upon which to build the project:

- Clearly define the vision or goal for the region. The selected indicators will have little meaning without a vision.
- Consider setting targets for each indicator so that we can measure our progress from year to year.
- The final metrics should be leading indicators, those that give us insight into the future of our region.
- Comparative data is important, and we should identify a reference point from which to compare our indicators. However, our goal should not be to “beat” the comparative group.
- Build on the existing data and reports that already track existing indicators. There is no need to reconstruct data that has already been gathered.
- Credible information is not sufficient. The initiative should allow us to measure the impact of policies and programs so we can learn from our successes and failures.

Engaging stakeholders

The working groups were asked how this project could ensure support from the community and acceptance by policymakers. Every group offered a suggestion related to engaging stakeholders. Specific suggestions on this topic are:

- The governance for this initiative should be made up of a balanced, bi-partisan group.
- Develop the project as a public-private partnership.
- Effectively engage a diverse set of community leaders. The process should be inclusive of all groups.
- Convene working groups around specific topics to agree upon the metrics that will be included. Also, consider forming a consortium so the process is inclusive when issues are framed and measures are determined.
- All stakeholders must agree upon the metrics that will be included in order to avoid the potential for individuals to present the data with their own “spin.”
- Encourage participation by all researchers.
- Create an atmosphere that makes stakeholders feel they belong and have a safe place to express their views.

Final product

Several groups said that the presentation of the final product was critical to the success of the initiative. They felt that the manner in which the data was delivered would determine how useful it would be to policymakers and whether it would serve as the definitive data source for the region. Suggestions are:

- The product must be of high quality, accurate and dependable in order to ensure its continued use.
- The final report must be written clearly and understandably. The data should be accessible to the community and policymakers alike.
- Do not provide too much information. Focus on the critical issues so that the final product is not too overwhelming.

- Create an interactive format that allows users to access information using several different variables.
- Create a research community in which researchers can share information, collaborate on projects, and see what others are working on.

Promoting change

The final set of suggestions provided by the working groups centers around structuring the initiative in a way that promotes action. Suggestions are:

- Commit to a long-term focus for the project. The initiative should provide data trends and continue for at least five years.
- The initiative must be non-partisan and the results must be accepted by decision makers on both sides of the political aisle.
- The content should be relevant to current events and issues.
- Focus on regional issues that are of importance to the entire community. Then focus on developing regional solutions and policies.
- Get a commitment from local government to accept this universal set of indicators. When new administrations take office, this data set must still be accepted.
- The broader leadership of business, nonprofit and community leaders should focus on the issues and decide which are most important. Then the legislature will follow suit.
- Create a high profile for the project to ensure political accountability. Politicians will be judged on these agreed upon criteria, rather than producing data sets that support their views.

Conclusion

Most research on community indicator projects designed to stimulate action encourages stakeholder involvement from the start. Wilder Research and The Itasca Project used the Summit to bring together a wide range of community leaders to kickoff the development phase of this initiative. We were pleased to have the initiative welcomed by such a knowledgeable group of community leaders. Throughout this project, we hope to receive continuing support from these individuals and their organizations so that the final set of indicators is credible and useful.

In the coming months, we will provide several more opportunities for individuals to help shape this project through focus groups, advisory committees, and task forces. In doing so, we will make every effort to accommodate the suggestions offered at the Summit.

Appendix

List of Summit Attendees

Name	Organization
Grant Abbott	Saint Paul Area Council of Churches
Mary Ajax	Community Action Council
Dan Bartholomay	McKnight Foundation
William Blazar	Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
Mary Brainerd	HealthPartners
Yvonne Cheung Ho	Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA)
Lester Collins	Council on Black Minnesotans
Gary Cunningham	NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center
David Fey	Minneapolis Department of Community Planning & Economic Development
Tom Fulton	Minneapolis-St. Paul Family Housing Fund
David Gaither	Governor's Office, State of Minnesota
Tom Gillaspay	Minnesota State Demographic Center
Michael Gorman	Split Rock Partners
Karen Gray	GrayHall
Rob Grunewald	Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis
Nora Hall	GrayHall
Louis Jambois	Association of Metropolitan Municipalities
Sean Kershaw	Citizens League
Todd Klingel	Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce
Ron Krietemeyer	Catholic Charities
Paul Mattessich	Wilder Research
Patrick McCormack	House Research, Minnesota House of Representatives
Jeff Mortenson	Community Action Council
Mee Moua	Minnesota Senate
Rogelio Munoz, Jr.	Chicano/Latino Affairs Council
Sirad Osman	New Americans Community Services
Greg Owen	Wilder Research
Dennis Ozment	Minnesota House of Representatives
Douglas Petty	Great North Alliance
Mary Pickard	St. Paul Travelers Foundation
Jennifer Reedy	Itasca Project
Carleen Rhodes	Saint Paul Foundation
Carolyn Roby	Wells Fargo Foundation Minnesota
Jim Schug	Washington County
Lauren Segal	Greater Twin Cities United Way
Bruce Steuernagel	Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Jay Stroebel	City of Minneapolis
Lucy Swift	Twin Cities Public Television
Mike Temali	Neighborhood Development Center
Kathy Tunheim	Tunheim Partners
Rachel Walker	League of Minnesota Cities
Irv Weiser	RBC Dain Rauscher