



Approaches to Measuring
**More Community
Engagement**





Approaches to Measuring More Community Engagement

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Editor: **LIZ WEAVER**

*Tamarack exists to build vibrant and engaged communities in Canada.
Our work will result in more collaborative approaches and less poverty.*



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Published by:

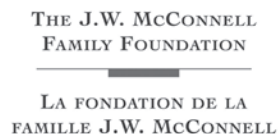
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This publication was made possible through the generous support of:





About Vibrant Communities

Vibrant Communities is a unique initiative that supports and links collaborations from over a dozen urban centres across Canada who are experimenting with comprehensive and collaborative approaches to reduce poverty.

Started in 2002 by The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy and Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement, the network includes community collaboration from Abbotsford, B.C.'s Capital Region, Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Saint John, St. John's, Surrey, the Saint Michel neighbourhood in Montreal, Trois Rivières, Waterloo, and Winnipeg.

The Vibrant Communities initiative is generously supported by contributions from The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Maytree, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada as well as a number of other private and community organizations.

About this Resource

Approaches to Measuring More Engagement in Communities is one of a series of papers that the sponsors of Vibrant Communities have developed with the financial assistance of The Ontario Trillium Foundation.

These papers review measurement tools and techniques used by a variety of organizations across Canada and internationally. This paper is a living document which Tamarack may upgrade periodically based on new learning and feedback from readers.

Please note that this paper can be downloaded free of charge from www.tamarackcommunity.ca.

About The Ontario Trillium Foundation

A leading grantmaker in Canada, The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) strengthens the capacity of the voluntary sector through investments in community-based initiatives. An agency of the Government of Ontario, OTF builds healthy and vibrant communities. Learn more about The Ontario Trillium Foundation at: www.trilliumfoundation.org

La Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario (FTO), l'une des plus importantes fondations subventionnaires au Canada, renforce les capacités du secteur bénévole en investissant dans des initiatives communautaires. Relevant du gouvernement de l'Ontario, la FTO favorise l'épanouissement de communautés saines et dynamiques dans toute la province.

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Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement

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Introduction

Engagement implies citizen involvement in decision-making processes. The questions about how much involvement and how meaningful this involvement is are important factors to consider when measuring more community engagement.

Community engagement is often defined as citizens working collaboratively, through inspired action and learning, to create and realize bold visions for their common future. However, there are many components in this broad definition that make it challenging to identify effective measurement tools.

For the purpose of this paper, engagement in communities is defined as citizens *participating in a meaningful way*. In some cases, it may not specifically indicate that the community member was engaged in decision-making, but that they were an active part of *doing and being* in the community. This more precise definition of engaged communities was useful when developing this paper and determining the tools to profile.

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to review and describe different approaches which organizations and governments have used to measure more community engagement. By compiling a variety of approaches in a single document, this paper offers an overview of different measures. The intended impact of this resource is twofold. First, the summaries and the accompanying annotated lists act as a starting point for exploring each approach. Secondly, these approaches can aid in developing further conversations about measuring more community engagement.

Background

This report is part of a funded project with The Ontario Trillium Foundation which seeks to research and build on current practices and knowledge about four aspects of healthy and vibrant communities and outline metrics that can be used to monitor and measure each aspect. The four aspects are:

- Approaches to Measuring Less Poverty in Communities
- Approaches to Measuring More Vibrant Communities
- Approaches to Measuring More Community Engagement
- Approaches to Measuring More Collaborative Communities

Ultimately, these reports are a starting point and further dialogue will be required to generate a consensus about measuring, monitoring and reporting on community progress and change.

As a first step to preparing this document, key informant interviews were held with individuals from Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement and Vibrant Communities Canada. The key informants identified approaches which they believed offered a compelling perspective on more vibrant communities or community wellbeing and/or a practical approach and research tools.

This paper represents a selection of useful approaches and is not an exhaustive list of all projects available. Instead, consider this paper as a selection of useful resources about community engagement and an aid in understanding the topic.

Details

Community engagement is measured and defined in many different ways. What we understand community engagement to mean may be different depending on what and who we are looking at within our community. This paper provides a simple overview of different approaches and, where available, outlines possible indicators which communities are using to monitor and track levels of community engagement.

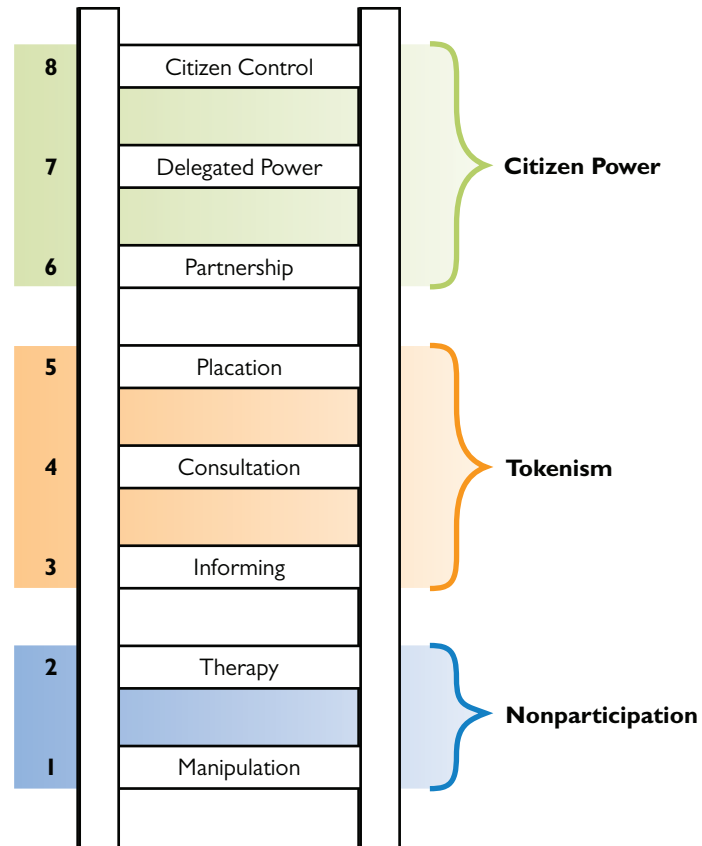
Some definitions of community engagement include individuals who spend time working in the community through a group, such as when coaching children's sports teams or volunteering time with seniors. Others definitions consider voter turnout as a measure of engagement. Still others look at the level in which members of the community work together in collaborative processes or through formal groups (citizen's advisory groups, and other committees or boards) to create policy change, build connections and/or realise a common vision for their community.

In many cases, the examples in this paper focus on creating positive change in communities, including community-led programs to reduce poverty, restore an ecosystem or develop the urban landscape. In these examples, community engagement leads to improvement within a community. This deeper level of community engagement strives for community change outcomes which are more challenging to measure and report.

Sherry Arnstein's work, *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*¹ (1969), is an influential approach to the contemporary understanding of citizen engagement and participation. The following diagram is Arnstein's ladder, a visual approach using the rungs of the ladder to climb from ineffectual processes to full citizen control. Many other adaptations of this model have been developed which build or expand the original ladder concept to specific situations or new thinking.



Ladder of Citizen Participation



(Arnstein 1969)

Emerging Evaluation Practice

Many of the evaluation strategies presented in these papers are based on similar theories and ways of thinking about measurement and evaluation. Two such examples stand out for further explanation, *Theory of Change*² and *Developmental Evaluation*³.

Theory of Change is a method or technique that can assist communities to think about, plan and evaluate their work. It involves ‘backwards mapping’ from the goals or desired outcomes of the program to identify what is needed in the program design to accomplish these goals. Theory of Change was more fully developed for community use by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change and is an integral part of the design of Vibrant Communities, Sustainable Livelihoods, National Indicators and many other approaches.

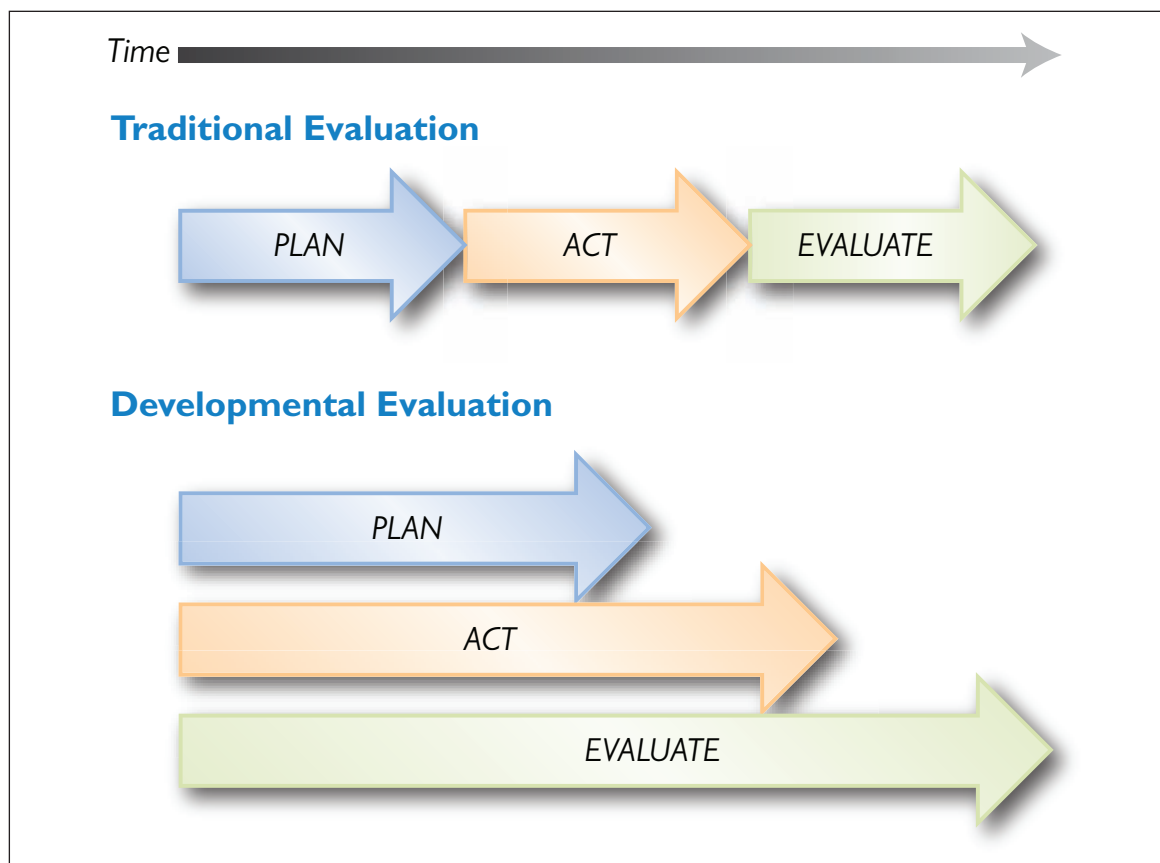
² For more information on Theory of Change, its origins and ideology please see the website: <http://www.theoryofchange.org>

³ For more information see J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, *Sustaining Social Innovation: Developmental Evaluation*. <http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/default.aspx?page=139>

Developmental evaluation is a complete approach to evaluation which is appropriate to situations and shifting contexts, innovation and complexity. Differing from *formative evaluation* that is focused on refining existing models, programs or strategies, and *summative evaluation* that is focused on judging the worth of those models, programs or strategies, *developmental evaluation* is intended to help people and organizations create and continually adapt interventions. Unlike traditional situations where the emphasis is on ‘think, plan, implement and monitor’, the process of thinking, planning, implementing and evaluation is continuous and simultaneous. This is vastly different from traditional evaluation as shown in the figure below.

Jamie Gamble explains the theory and approach to developmental evaluation in *A Developmental Evaluation Primer* published by The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and can be found on their website. It is worth reviewing these concepts in order to understand how evaluation and measurement are developed in these approaches. Developmental evaluation and theory of change are an emerging part of modern evaluative frameworks used by many of the approaches included in this paper.

Traditional versus Developmental Evaluation Approaches



(adapted from Gamble, A Developmental Evaluation Primer, p. 30)



The implications for measurement in developmental evaluation are significant. The process of identifying what measures are required, gathering and analyzing data on them, and making decisions, is highly adaptive. In developmental evaluation, the emphasis is often on rapid feedback, ‘good enough’ level of proof, and the refinement, addition, and dropping of measures. Developmental evaluation also emphasizes casting a wide net in search of outcomes; seeking unintended outcomes as well as intended ones.

For Further Reading

This paper provides twelve different approaches to measuring more community engagement. Each approach contains the following information.

- **Summary** – Provides the essence of the approach and explains why the approach is included in this document
- **Background** – Includes the history of the approach, its current application and information about the organization and partners if applicable
- **Details** – Explains further what and how the approach measures more community engagement
- **For Further Reading** – Provides a resource list of web links and print resources to find more details and examples about the approaches outlined

Summaries: Approaches to Measuring Community Engagement

Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council

(formerly Waterloo Region Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council)

Summary

Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council is a good example of community engagement in action. The approach uses performance targets that the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council connects to a community crime prevention strategy. It identifies community engagement as a key component of crime prevention. The importance of this work lies in the broad crime prevention strategy which includes: information-sharing and decision-making with the public and the building of community partnerships to develop social capital.

Background

The Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council is an advisory group to the Region of Waterloo and includes many partners around the region such as Waterloo Region Police, both the public and Catholic school boards, Region of Waterloo, Conestoga College and the cities of Cambridge, Waterloo and Kitchener.

Details

The Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council developed targets for community engagement and included these in the 2003-2007 business plan. This is a collaborative community planning council which brings members of the public together to enhance community vibrancy.

**“We believe we are stronger working together”
“We believe that the community is part of the solution.”**

(Preventing Crime in Your Community)

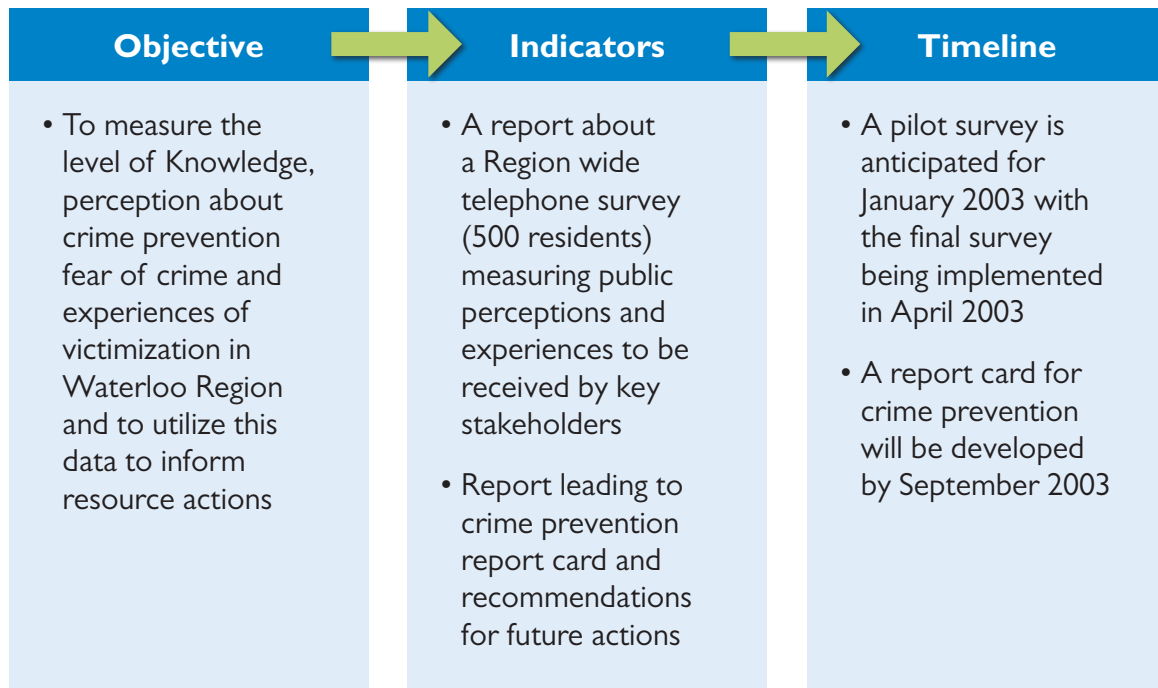
The Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council asserts that the public plays a key role in preventing crime. Their mandate is to increase the participation of the community through educational campaigns, data collection, information-sharing, and outreach. The Council’s business plan describes clear objectives for how community engagement will be accomplished.

The business plan highlights their public engagement goal, “To be a resource to the community through public education, knowledge building, responding to critical issues, and advocacy.”



The business plan identifies the need to overlap public engagement and the role of local government. The identified goal for local government is to make community safety and crime prevention a significant criterion in all community decision-making. In addition, rural communities are identified as an area for improved outreach. Strategies to involve rural community members through meetings and action plans are specifically outlined because rural communities do not have regular partnerships with the council. The following chart below provides a snapshot of the community engagement planning process of the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council.

Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council



(adapted from the Business Plan, 2003-2007)

Examples of other indicators include: availability of public information for crime prevention; actions taken from roundtable discussions; numbers and types of public meetings; and, support activities offered in complex community situations.

Missing from this business plan is a comprehensive framework for determining what these measures mean and the impact they have on community change. For example, a telephone survey is identified as an indicator of their objective, but there is no information about how the results will be interpreted and used.

For Further Reading

Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council, Business Plan. 2003-2007 (Now the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council)

http://www.preventingcrime.net/howeare/CS&CPC_Business_Plan.pdf

This resource explains the objectives and indicators used to measure progress for engaging the community in working towards crime prevention. This is an example of how an advisory group has put into action a number of preventative measures and how they plan to engage local government and community members to achieve their objectives.

Waterloo Region Neighbour to Neighbour Toolkit. 2004

<http://www.neighbourtoneighbour.ca/index.html>

The Neighbour to Neighbour Toolkit is a project created for Waterloo Region to help citizens gain the knowledge they require to help contribute to their community. This resource helps community members build relationships with one another which will help make a difference in their community through knowing, understanding and supporting one another.

Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council Website <http://www.preventingcrime.net/index.asp>

This website details the activities of the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council. There are many useful resources including information about the model they are using for community engagement, as well as useful tools such as Neighbourhood Action Kit, and Reach Out and Say Hi campaigns.

Preventing Crime in Your Community, Brochure. 2008

<http://www.preventingcrime.net/howeare/COMM0908.pdf>

This is a brochure that explains what the Crime Prevention Council is and does. It is useful as a quick overview about the partnerships and sectors which collaborate with the council, the council's view of causes of crime, and the actions citizens and communities can take to make a difference in prevention of crime.



Smart Growth BC

Summary

Smart Growth BC is part of the Smart Growth movement which aims to reduce the effects of urban development on the natural environment while also making development more user-friendly to citizens. One of the guiding principles of Smart Growth is effective community engagement where all stakeholders are included in decision-making processes to enable sustainable communities.

Background

Smart Growth BC was incorporated in 1999 and is part of the Smart Growth movement. This movement began during the 1970's in some Canadian cities, although all cities do not necessarily use the Smart Growth name (CMHC 2005). Smart Growth BC was created as a joint project of the University of Victoria Eco-Research Chair of Environmental Law and Policy, and the West Coast Environmental Law Association.

There is a vast Smart Growth network across the United States, but it has not developed as fully in Canada.

Details

“Citizens are not just periodic voters, they are stewards of their community and a political force for change. The role of the smart growth supporter is to represent the community interest during the community-planning and policy – development stages of urban development.”

(Smart Growth Toolkit, p. III-1)

Smart Growth BC is part of the Smart Growth movement which aims to reduce the effects of urban development on the natural environment while also making the development more user-friendly to citizens. The example in the following chart lists some of the actions encouraging public participation.

Smart Growth BC sets out a guide for how the community should be engaged including a policy for engagement and tools which can be used to develop measures to monitor progress.

Smart Growth Toolkit

Principles & Goals	Tools
Public Participation in Development Decisions	Regional Growth Strategies Official Community Plans Local and Neighbourhood Plans Urban Design Guidelines Development Approval Information Smart Growth Performance Indicators Monitor Development Processes (re-zoning & OCP) Lobbying

(Excerpted and adapted from Smart Growth Toolkit, p. III-40)

There is no standard measurement package for this approach and local groups need to establish their own performance indicators based on their community's official plan. Impact is assessed based on an evaluation feedback loop which focuses on the action taken by authorities regarding the official plan. The community's role in influencing planning and development processes in the office plan are indicators of success.

For Further Reading

Smart Growth Toolkit: Part III Citizen Involvement Tools. 2001

http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/Portals/0/Downloads/J1_ToolKitPart_III.pdf

This document is Part Three of the Smart Growth Toolkit. It provides tools – including a checklist for community meetings. In this document you will find a more detailed list of the tools referenced in the chart above. This set of tools is important in evaluating the effectiveness or impact of community engagement.

Smart Growth Network Online <http://www.smartgrowth.org>

This online network is accessible to many of the US-based projects. The website contains useful case studies and examples of American projects in action. Users may search a variety of topics, such as community engagement, and access many useful documents.

Community Engagement, Smart Growth BC website

<http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=109>

This web page on the Smart Growth BC website explains the principles of community engagement, and provides case study examples from three communities in BC. There are also links to the full Toolkit document and other links to navigate the Smart Growth website.



Community Indicators Victoria

Summary

Community Indicators Victoria measures the well-being of the communities and regions located in the State of Victoria, Australia. One of the domains of well-being measured is community engagement. Data is collected through identified indicators and aggregated to the community or regional level. The data is then compared for all Victoria area communities. The profiled indicator measures go beyond simple counts, such as numbers attending meetings, and include subjective data about how much people feel engaged in their community. This is a good example of an indicator driven measure.

Background

Community Indicators Victoria bases their approach to measuring engagement of communities on the work of Adams and Hess in *Measuring Community Engagement* (2005). Community Indicators Victoria partners are The McCaughey Centre, The University of Melbourne, Vichealth, RMIT University, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, The City of Victoria, the Victorian Local Government Association and the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Details

Citizen engagement is one domain of Community Indicators that Victoria uses to measure well-being. Within each domain, indicator data is collected. Measures on the indicators are aggregated to the community or regional level and reported on a public website. The rationale for reporting on engagement moves from traditional governance practices to more inclusive community decision-making. “Community Indicators Victoria aims to establish a sustainable Victorian approach to the development and use of local community well-being indicators, with the purpose of improving citizen engagement, community planning and policy making.” (*CIV Website “About US”*)

What is measured	How data collected and measured
Percentage of people who think they have a real say on issues important to them	Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) Telephone Survey
Percentage of people who in the last 12 months had “Participation in Citizen Engagement” which includes having: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Attended a town meeting, public hearing or public affairs discussion group b. Met with, called or sent a letter to any local politician c. Joined a protest or demonstration d. Signed a petition 	Community Indicators Victoria Survey
Percentage of women elected as councillors	Municipal Association of Victoria Election results analysis

What is measured	How data collected and measured
Percentage of people who feel they have an opportunity to vote for a political candidate who they trust	Community Indicators Victoria Survey
Percentage of people who are members of a local community organisation or decision-making body	Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) Telephone Survey

While CIV has created a fairly comprehensive and detailed report on the measures used, they have not reached the stage of measuring the impact of increasing engagement on communities. The current emphasis is on information-gathering and reporting with the intent of increasing engagement in communities.

For Further Reading

Measuring Wellbeing, Engaging Communities: Developing a Community Indicators Framework for Victoria, Final Report. Victorian Community Indicators Project (VCIP). July 2006

http://www.communityindicators.net.au/system/files/20060817_VCIP_Final_Report_0.pdf

This report explains the development of the framework for measuring community indicators and the development of the Community Indicators Victoria. It describes the methodology used to choose indicators and recommendations for future use and development. Indicators are described as well as their relevance and rationale for inclusion.

D. Adams and M. Hess, *Measuring Community Engagement*

<http://www.engagingcommunities2005.org/abstracts/Hess-Michael-final.pdf>

This document is a summary on the progress for developing the Victorian Indicators and explains their possible influence in establishing a national framework of measurement indicators. The usefulness of this document is to understand the theory behind many of the concepts of why community engagement is important and what effective engagement means.

Jeanette Pope, *Indicators of Community Strength: a framework and evidence*. Department for Victorian Communities. June 2006

[http://www.dvc.vic.gov.au/Web14/dvc/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/Indicators_of_Community_Strength_framework_and_evidence.pdf/\\$file/Indicators+of+Community+Strength_framework+and+evidence.pdf](http://www.dvc.vic.gov.au/Web14/dvc/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/Indicators_of_Community_Strength_framework_and_evidence.pdf/$file/Indicators+of+Community+Strength_framework+and+evidence.pdf)

This resource details the evidence behind the value of community engagement. In this document the indicators of community strength are examined and explained with particular emphasis on detailing the social networks that are crucial to effective engagement within communities.



Communities Scotland

Summary

Communities Scotland uses a well-developed model for community engagement and a standardized framework for measuring engagement and its impact. The model emphasizes early and inclusive citizen engagement in community planning activities. Impacts are measured after indicators and metrics have been designed in collaboration with community members. This approach was included because of the way impact is measured. As well, the evaluation process itself was developed in collaboration with the community members and government.

Background

Communities Scotland worked to engage citizens in the processes of community revitalization, planning, and community development. Communities Scotland was a branch of the Scottish Government which was dissolved in 2008. This work continues as part of the Scottish Government's Housing and Regeneration Directorate.

Details

Although Communities Scotland was dissolved, their website contains many valuable resources. Updated information about community engagement activities in Scotland may be found at the Scottish Community Development Centre website: <http://www.scdc.org.uk/> and the Scottish Government website: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk>.

Some of the key elements of the model used by Community Scotland include the development of national standards for effective community engagement and indicators for evaluating these national standards.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. **INVOLVEMENT:** we will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement
2. **SUPPORT:** we will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement
3. **PLANNING:** we will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken
4. **METHODS:** we will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose
5. **WORKING TOGETHER:** We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently
6. **SHARING INFORMATION:** we will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants

7. **WORKING WITH OTHERS:** we will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement
8. **IMPROVEMENT:** we will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants
9. **FEEDBACK:** we will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community agencies affected
10. **MONITORING AND EVALUATION:** we will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement

(National Standards, p. 6)

Evaluation of engagement processes is a key part of this model and includes identifying the results of engagement and their impacts.

“...the key question is: how can community planning engage with community issues and community change, rather than how can we engage communities in the community planning process.”

(Models of Community Engagement, p. 3)

Communities Scotland designed a way of measuring results and impact in community engagement. The list below outlines the indicators Communities Scotland has identified for evaluating community engagement.

INDICATORS FOR THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION STANDARD

1. The engagement process and its effects are continually evaluated to measure progress, develop skills and refine practices
2. Progress is evaluated against the intended results and other changes identified by the participants *(see Planning standard indicator 7)*
3. Appropriate participants collect and record this information
4. The information is presented accurately and in a way that is easy to use
5. The participants agree on the lessons to be drawn from the evidence of the results and the changes that occurred
6. The participants act on the lessons learned
7. Progress is celebrated
8. The results of the evaluation are fed back to the participants and the wider community
9. Evidence of good practice is recorded and shared with other agencies and communities

(National Standards, p. 18)



The Communities Scotland approach tries to identify what matters to evaluation. It works to measure only what can be reasonably measured and what is deemed necessary to measure. There are no standard measures for every project. Indicators are tailored to the specific project. An indicator is a proxy measure used when the outcomes cannot be directly measured – for example, parents' attendance at school meetings could be used as an indicator of parental involvement with a school.

Communities Scotland recommends the use of two tools for evaluations which assist in developing metrics for specific projects: the LEAP framework (Learning, Evaluation and Planning) and VOICE (Visioning Outcomes In Community Engagement). More information on both LEAP and VOICE is included in the annotated list below.

For Further Reading

Evaluation of the Effective Engagement of Community in Regeneration: Final Baseline Report.
ODS Consulting. December 2006

This report is an evaluation by independent consultants about the effectiveness of community engagement in influencing revitalisation projects in Scotland. It serves as a useful critique of the approach and evaluates what has worked and where improvements are needed. There are several case studies from community projects and a set of measurement and evaluation tools that accompany the report.

National Standards for Community Engagement. Communities Scotland. 2005
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Life-Long-Learning/LearningConnections/samedifference/sd4s5>

This publication provides a detailed overview of the expectations for how community engagement will be encouraged, practiced and evaluated. It describes the principles that guide engagement processes and the indicators used to evaluate them. A key part of the document is the emphasis on ensuring that community members who wish to be a part of the process do not experience any barriers to participation. This document outlines how the barriers are to be removed so all citizens are able to participate.

Stuart Hashagen, Models of Community Engagement. Scottish Community Development Centre, May 2002. <http://leap.scdc.org.uk/uploads/modelsofcommunityengagement.pdf>

Various models for community engagement are described as well as a definition of engagement which may be helpful to those looking for another definition to aid in their own understanding of engagement. The document looks at a type of ladder system of engagement similar to Arnstein's Ladder of Participation and describes what types of actions might be involved for each step of the ladder. This may be useful to anyone looking at depths of engagement and activities and processes which might accompany them. An example they provide is that *Reactive 'community consultation'* might involve surveys, questionnaires or focus groups.

Scottish Community Development Centre: Supporting Best Practice in Community Development, VOICE <http://www.scdc.org.uk/voice/>

This website provides access to a tool for evaluating engagement called VOICE (Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement). The VOICE tool may be downloaded and used to plan, implement and evaluate processes of community engagement and is designed to support the National Standards for Community Engagement in Scotland. From this website you may also access many other resources including information about LEAP.



Living in Niagara 2008

Summary

Living in Niagara 2008 describes indicators in different areas of life in the Region of Niagara, Ontario. Six measures of engagement are tracked and reported. This work offers an example using the determinants of health as indicator-driven measures of wellbeing which place an emphasis on community engagement.

Background

The Living in Niagara report was financially supported by a collaboration including the Niagara Community Foundation, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the United Way of St. Catharines and District, Opportunities Niagara, Bridges Community Health Center and the Region of Niagara.

Details

“Through consultations with the Steering Committee of the Niagara Social and Community Planning Project and its Research Working Group made up of community leaders and stakeholders, 11 key areas were identified that are affecting the quality of community life in Niagara.”

(Living in Niagara website)

Of these areas, one domain called *Belonging and Leadership* specifically details community engagement. The following list contains what is measured in this domain:

- Volunteering
- Charitable giving
- Political involvement
- Sense of community belonging
- Participation in social networks and social activities in Niagara
- Religious affiliation

Measures are compared to other cities in Ontario (and Canada) and a score from 1-5 is assigned for each measure (1 representing a very poor grade and 5 representing an excellent grade, or being a leader in this area).

Data sources include telephone surveys and Statistics Canada data. There are no measures for the impact of engagement and little information about the scores assigned.

Living in Niagara 2008 and Vital Signs

The domains used for the Living in Niagara report and Vital Signs are very similar – specifically *Belonging and Leadership*. The difference lies in how individual Vital Signs communities identify indicators and how these indicators are measured. Vital Signs communities usually use voter turnout as a key measure for engagement. Vital Signs has a well-developed set of measures in other areas for community well-being, but the Living in Niagara report included additional community engagement indicators.

For Further Reading

Dr. Heather Lee Kilty, *Living in Niagara, 2008: Critical indicators for reflecting on life in Niagara*. Niagara Community Research and Action Council.

<http://www.livinginniagarareport.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/niagar-report-final-16.pdf>

This lengthy report explains in detail the indicators and measures used, the research methodology applied and the sources for data gathering. This real life example is useful as a case study for community indicators. The report also summarizes how Niagara is doing and what needs improved.

Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating. 2007

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=71-542-XIE&lang=eng#formatdisp>

This is a critical resource used for accessing data in the Living in Niagara Report. This resource is also useful as a source of information about citizen engagement in Canada. This data has been aggregated to the national level.

Guelph and Wellington's Vital Signs. 2008

http://www.guelphwellingtonvitalsigns.ca/pdf/Guelph_CommunitysVitalSigns_2008.pdf

Guelph's Vital Signs project includes Voter Turnout, Community Organization memberships, and charitable donations as indicators of community engagement. This report provides a comparison to the Living in Niagara report. See also the main website for Vital Signs at: <http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca/index-e.html>



Auditing Community Participation

Summary

This resource called *Auditing Community Participation: An Assessment Handbook* was selected because it is one of the most comprehensive and complete evaluation packages for assessing community engagement. Included in this resource are a set of community mapping tools, indicators and an impact assessment tool to evaluate the effectiveness of the engagement process.

Background

Danny Burns and Marilyn Taylor wrote this paper for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the United Kingdom. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an independent charity founded in 1904 which focuses efforts on poverty, empowerment and place.

“Our aim is to contribute to the creation and development of strong, sustainable and inclusive communities.”⁴

Details

Burns and Taylor have designed a comprehensive framework and templates for evaluating community engagement. Although they used the term participation, both participation and engagement are interchangeable in this case because the definition of participation uses a deeper understanding of the level of activity of the community members, or rungs in Arnstein’s Ladder of the process.

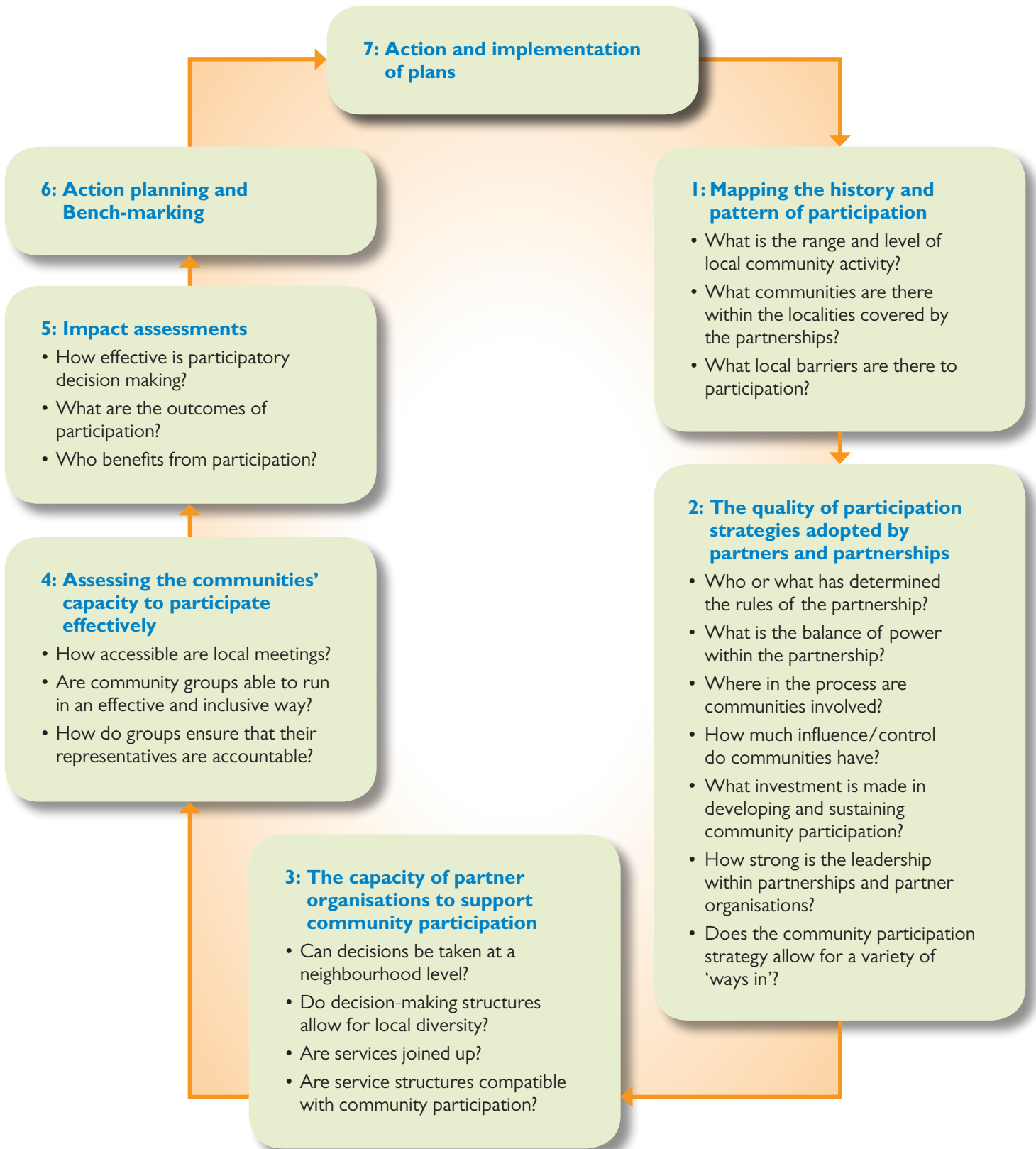
The audit tools provided can be used for self-assessment but the use of an independent facilitator is recommended, especially if credibility is an issue for the audit.

The following figure shows how the audit process is mapped out. Comprehensive indicators to accompany each set of questions are provided but users are encouraged to develop their own indicators and measures which are specifically relevant to their projects.

A key part of this resource is the *impact assessment framework* because it determines the value of and the impact of the engagement. Measuring value and impact provides a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of the community engagement process.

⁴ See *Strategic Plan 2009-2011* at: <http://www.jrft.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/99F149F5-C52E-4F61-A216-E122E3EFB689/0/JRFStrategicPlan20082011.pdf>

The Audit Process



(adapted from Burns and Taylor, 2000)



For Further Reading

Danny Burns and Marilyn Taylor, *Auditing community participation: An assessment handbook*.

Joseph Rowntree. 2000 <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/auditing-community-participation>

This resource describes all the tools required to complete community mapping, assessing community capacity and the final impact assessment. Included are checklists, key questions and sample indicators which correspond to the seven steps outlined in the previous figure.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/community-engagement-decision-making>

This section of the Joseph Rowntree website details their approach to community engagement and includes links to recent publications which may aid in understanding the research and practice of community engagement through case studies.

Vibrant Communities Canada

Summary

Vibrant Communities are comprehensive, place-based community initiatives focused on poverty reduction employing a framework for change planning approach. Each framework for change details economic, social and systems change initiatives meant to reduce poverty in the specific community or neighbourhood. The Vibrant Communities model focuses on: poverty reduction; cross-sectoral community engagement; an action and learning process; and, evaluation.

For Vibrant Communities, “the community” includes people living in poverty, the business community, the voluntary sector and government. Targets are set for numbers of people in the community engaged and networks formed within a set period of time. The work of Vibrant Communities offers a unique and practical approach to engagement because the targets are set, measured and evaluated.

Background

Vibrant Communities began in 2002 as a community-driven initiative for reducing poverty in Canada. Its national sponsors are The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy and Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement. Vibrant Communities includes twelve communities across Canada called Trail Builders. Vibrant Communities Trail Builders are collaborative, place-based initiatives that are implementing multi-year programs and strategies designed to reduce poverty.

Details

An important element of the Vibrant Communities framework is community engagement. The Vibrant Communities model encourages the engagement of individuals representing all sectors of the community including business, government, voluntary and individuals living with low income.

Vibrant Communities measures community engagement through specific targets identified for the number of people and organizations to be engaged over a period of time within a specific community and nationally.

Example: Quality of Life Challenge BC Capital Region

The Quality of Life Challenge (QOLC) is a Vibrant Communities Trail Builder based in Victoria, British Columbia. The Quality of Life Challenge measures community engagement by the number of “community connections” built.

“The CHALLENGE included people living on low incomes in decision making and in other meaningful ways. Through their participation, hundreds of individuals and organizations learned about the realities of living on a low income in this region – attitudes and policies changed”

(Report of Phase One, 2003 to 2006, p. 5)



Measures of Community Connections were:

- 2,255 individuals were engaged in Phase One of the CHALLENGE
- \$1.8 million in cash and in-kind was invested in the CHALLENGE since the beginning:
 - 43% from the private sector
 - 31% from community organizations
 - 25% from governments, and the rest from individuals
- 2087 individuals and organizations from every part of this region received CHALLENGE decals for making changes to improve the quality of life

(Report of Phase One, 2003 to 2006, p. 5)

QOLC set a target of 1,000 stories shared about local people and groups who have enhanced the quality of life in this region. At the completion of phase one in 2006, 900 stories were collected and disseminated.

For Further Reading

Vibrant Communities Canada <http://www.vibrantcommunities.ca>

Vibrant Communities is a community-driven effort to reduce poverty in Canada by creating partnerships that make use of our most valuable assets – people, organizations, businesses and governments. Visit the Vibrant Communities website to learn more.

Learning Centre, Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement

<http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g3s1.html>

The Learning Centre website provides resources about community engagement including many models of engagement, case studies and information about involving different sectors in engagement processes.

Our Growing Understanding of Community Engagement. Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/home/ce_report.pdf

This article proposes a definition and understanding of engagement and a literature review of models and work of community engagement. Also included are many definitions for key terms used by various agencies and groups. Reviewing these different versions of terminology is useful to aid in understanding of how other groups may use definitions to guide their work in this area.

Mark Cabaj, *Engaging & Animating Your Community: The Potential of Municipally Supported, Collaborative and Comprehensive Community Initiatives.* Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement. http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/clife/mcabaj/mc_creativecity.pdf

This presentation details the value of community engagement and how the current trend of declining engagement is affecting communities. It proposes the model of Comprehensive Community Initiatives as a way to reverse the trends.

A Bold New Way for People in BC's Capital Region to Work Together: Report of Phase One, 2003 to 2006.
Quality of Life Challenge. http://www.qolchallenge.ca/pdf/QoLC_Phase_1_%20complete_book.pdf

This is a report of the Quality of Life Challenge, a part of the Vibrant Communities movement in Canada. This resource gives a practical example of a place-based poverty reduction strategy which uses community engagement as a way to build networks and give low income people a leadership role in community.



Robert D. Putnam and the Saguaro Seminar

Summary

The Saguaro Seminar measures social capital in the United States using telephone surveys. The data is collected and measured against benchmarks. Some of the questions identified in the telephone survey relate directly to community engagement, while others relate to social capital in general. This data is available through their website.

Background

Robert D. Putnam has done extensive work around the issue of social capital in the United States. He has written books and articles about the decline of social capital and its implications to the wellbeing of Americans.

The Saguaro Seminar was developed in partnership with Robert D. Putnam, Dr. Thomas H. Sander, Louise Kennedy Converse and The John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard. This approach was included because of Putnam's contribution to current thinking about social capital and community engagement, as well as the comprehensiveness of the Saguaro framework.

Details

“What I claim to have shown so far is that by a variety of different measures there has been a massive transformation of social bonds in America over our lifetime.”

(Social Capital: Measurements and Consequences, p. 9)

The term social capital is often used interchangeably with civic engagement, although social capital, by definition, includes both formal and informal relational bonds between neighbours, schools and the community in general. Social capital also describes the amount of trust and acceptance one has of others in the community. Community engagement can be considered a part of social capital because those individuals who: give time and effort; do unpaid activities to enhance their community; or, give back to the community; are considered as contributing to social capital.

The Saguaro seminar measures social capital through surveys. This began with a 25 minute survey, the *2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey*, and was updated for the *2006 Social Capital Community Survey* (also 25 minutes). Later the survey was refined to a 5-10 minute Social Capital Short-Form Survey. A few of the relevant community engagement questions included on the survey are listed below:

- Currently registered to vote
- Voted in last election
- Signed a petition in the past 12 months
- Attended a political meeting or rally in the past 12 months
- Participate in religious organization

- Participate in sports club, league or outdoor activity
- Participate in youth organization
- Participate in parent association or other school support group
- Participate in neighbourhood association
- Participate in a seniors group
- Worked with others to get people to fix or improve something in neighbourhood

Putnam has used the results of the survey to outline the implications or impact of the decline of social capital over the past forty or fifty years. Through Putnam's published work, the impact has been brought to the attention of the nation and beyond. Through the survey results and other tools from the Saguaro website, citizens are able to develop their own programs to work towards enhancing engagement in their communities.

For Further Reading

The Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America. Social capital measurement overview:
<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/measurement.htm>

This section of the Saguaro website outlines the surveys and methods used to measure social capital. From this resource, readers can also access tools and resources to use for developing programs for enhancing social capital in communities. There are also links to similar work in other countries.

Social Capital Community Survey. 2006 <http://webapps.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/collectioninterest/webroot/registration.cfm?subject=SCC06>

This is the full version of the Social Capital Community Survey. This survey includes a 25 minute questionnaire. In order to access this resource, you will need to complete a free registration. There are many questions which relate specifically to engagement, but most others relate to social capital in general.

Robert D. Putnam. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2000

This book follows up and builds on work from a journal article from 1995 *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital* from the *Journal of Democracy*. Putnam and a team of researchers have produced a wealth of information detailing declining social capital and the implications for communities.

Robert D. Putnam, *Social Capital: Measurements and Consequences*
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/25/6/1825848.pdf>

This conference paper looks at the different measures Putnam has used for tracking social capital in the US. It includes charts which map out the measures. This resource offers useful insight into the decline of engagement in the US.



Youth Engagement – Laidlaw Foundation

Summary

The Laidlaw Foundation provides an example of a youth engagement initiative which involves a detailed and well-developed evaluation process to measure the progress and impact of projects. Program and evaluation examples are youth-led. Outcomes are identified and tracked over different periods. The Laidlaw Foundation is a good example of project-based youth leadership and engagement.

Background

The Laidlaw Foundation was established with an endowment by Mr. Robert A. Laidlaw in 1949 to benefit charitable, educational and cultural organizations in Ontario.

In 1999 the Laidlaw Foundation initiated the Youth Engagement Programme (YEP) to support activities that build knowledge and understanding of positive youth development and effective youth engagement practices. The Foundation funds youth-led engagement initiatives in the Greater Toronto Area.

Details

The Laidlaw Foundation provides grants for youth-led programs. The main focus of the Foundation since 2000 has been funding youth engagement initiatives. The following is their definition of youth engagement.

Definition of Youth Engagement

Youth Engagement is a process of meaningful, voluntary participation of people 12 to 24 years in the decision making and governance of organizations and programs which results in:

- an impact or contribution towards change
- an increase in youth's understanding of what impacts them
- shared power between youth and adults
- youth opinions, perspectives valued
- youth building their vocabulary of experiences

(Laidlaw Foundation website)

YEP takes a continuous learning approach to their evaluation. The Laidlaw Foundation encourages grantees to document what works and what doesn't work when engaging youth and looks to build on existing knowledge. YEP hopes to avoid grantees "feeling that evaluation results are interpreted in a pass/fail dichotomy and foster honest assessments for the purpose of learning."

The Laidlaw Foundation YEP objectives are identified for years 1 and 3.

Year One Objectives:

- Increase the percent of qualifying Youth-led applications by 25%
- Increase the quality of youth-led applications

Year Three Objectives:

- Increase funding to youth-developed and youth-run programmes to 70% of total annual funding
- Increase the number of funded programmes that evaluate whether they are successful or not and why not

For evaluation of these objectives, measures are tracked through standardized tracking forms. Questions on the forms are quantitative, such as the number of youth involved in programs or the number of groups which added youth programs. There are also qualitative questions asking whether youth felt empowered to create change and how they were affected by the programs. Impact of the youth-led programs is a major part of the evaluation.

For Further Reading

Laidlaw Foundation Website, <http://www.laidlawfdn.org/cms/index.cfm>

The Laidlaw Foundation website explains the history and mandate of the foundation and provides information about projects funded. There are also many documents about the theory and concepts of youth engagement and resources for evaluating youth engagement.

Evaluation Tools, Laidlaw Foundation: <http://laidlawfdn.org/cms/file/children/youth-eval-tools.pdf>

The Laidlaw Foundation website provides several evaluation tools and resources. These resources detail youth engagement strategies, expected outcomes, and examples for designing evaluation forms.



Community Scales

Summary

Community Scales use “dimensions of change” to measure the community and systems change that is expected to result in permanent reduction of poverty at the community level. Dimensions of change include: public policy, equity; civic capital; service and support systems; and, economic opportunity. This approach was selected because of the comprehensive approach to measuring progress of programs and community-level change.

Background

The source of Community Scales is a document entitled *Community Scales: a Ladder for the Twenty-First Century* produced in 1997. “The framework described in this paper was developed through a collaborative effort of the members of the National Community Services Block Grant Monitoring and Assessment Task Force Committee on Scales and Ladders.” (*Community Scales*, p.3) Scales have been adapted for use at the individual or family level and are currently being used by Missouri Community Action Family Self-Sufficiency Scale and Massachusetts Family Self-Sufficiency Scales and Ladders, among others. (*See For Further Readings for details and links.*)

Details

Community scales are a continuum for measuring community change; “the dimensions for change include public policy, equity, civic capital, service of support systems and economic opportunity” (*Community Scales*, p. 17). The scale thresholds are described simply as: thriving; safe; stable; vulnerable or in crisis. Using an assessment tool, indicators are evaluated based on these thresholds and tracked over time. The following table provides an example of a tool developed from the source document which includes the assessment and later reassessment of the community on five “dimensions of change.”

After assessing a specific community context, such as available affordable housing, the agency identifies targets to work towards outcome indicators to measure progress. After the project is initiated, the agency can use the scaling tool to track changes by comparing the results of the initial assessment through a series of re-assessments. Careful development of the scaling tool is crucial because it becomes the framework to assess community change, plan program interventions, measure incremental progress, and reassess intervention strategies. A useful example of application is shown on page 11 of the document *Community Scales: a Ladder for the Twenty-First Century*.

Community Scaling Tool

THRESHOLDS		DIMENSIONS				
		PUBLIC POLICY	EQUITY	CIVIC CAPITAL	SERVICE & SUPPORT SYSTEMS	ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
5.	Thriving	Innovative	Achieves Equity and Values Differences	Investing	Comprehensive and Integrated	Vibrant
4.	Safe	Supportive	Affirming	Contributory	Preventive	Emerging
3.	Stable	Selective or Reactive	Toleration and Awareness	Participating	Comprehensive but Reactive	Stagnant
2.	Vulnerable	None or Unenforced	Complacent and Uninformed	Awareness and Education	Responsive but not Comprehensive	Contracting
1.	In Crisis	Hostile	Conflict and Fear	Isolation	Non-responsive	Collapsed

(Community Scales, p. 7)

For Further Reading:

Community Scales: A Ladder to the Twenty First Century. A Proposal to the Community Services Block Grant Monitoring and Assessment Task Force for Measuring Change at the Community Level. 1997
<http://www.roma1.org/files/rtr/communityScale.pdf>

This main source document explains the Community Scales approach, the methods, indicators and measures. This document and the following one, offer the main body of knowledge about scales and how they work.

Scales, From A to Y: Almost Everything You Ever Wanted to Know but Where Afraid to Ask.
 CSBG Monitoring and Assessment Task Force Scales and Ladders Committee. September 1999
<http://www.roma1.org/files/rtr/scalesA-Ybw.pdf>

This document expands on the first document from 1997. It further explains the use of scales from the individual, community and agency levels.



Family Self-Sufficiency Scale. Missouri Community Action. March 1999

http://www.roma1.org/files/rtr/MO_familyscalenewest.doc

This resource is an example that shows how scales can develop into tailored indicators and programs. The Missouri Family Self-Sufficiency Scale has developed measures at the individual/family level.

Massachusetts Family Self-Sufficiency Scales and Ladders Assessment Form

http://www.roma1.org/files/rtr/MA_Scale.doc

This assessment form provides an example of a simple-to-use, checklist evaluation form. The practitioner may use the form to assess a family's situation and to track poverty reduction progress.

Neighbourhood Vitality Index

Summary

Neighbourhood Vitality Index measures the overall health and well-being of a community and includes indicators of community engagement. The index consists of a number assigned to each indicator identified during project development. The index can be used to track changes over the long term. This approach is a good example of neighbourhood level measures.

Background

The Neighbourhood Vitality Index was developed in a report by Sean Meagher called *A Neighbourhood Vitality Index: an Approach to Measuring Neighbourhood Well-Being*. It was prepared for the United Way of Greater Toronto for use in Toronto neighbourhoods. The Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force, a project of the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto with support of the provincial and federal governments, also measures neighbourhood vitality.

Details

Neighbourhood Vitality bases their framework on the ideas from National Neighbourhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) and the document, *Building and Operating Neighborhood Indicator Systems: A Guidebook*.

Examples of measures relevant to engagement:

- Neighbourhood Conditions
- Connection to Community Services
- Business Connection
- Participation in Community Structures
- Access to Community Facilities
- Collective Efficacy
- Demographic Cohesion

For Further Reading

Sean Meagher, *A Neighbourhood Vitality Index: An Approach to Measuring Neighbourhood Well-Being, An Action for Neighbourhood Change Report for the United Way of Greater Toronto*. 2006
<http://www.publicinterest.ca/sites/default/files/T&R%20Vitality%20Index.pdf>

This foundational document explains the Neighbourhood Vitality Index approach and details the full list of indicators. Included is a sample survey for gathering data at the institutional level.



Geoffrey Dobilas and Fraser Battye, *Measuring Neighbourhood Vitality: Final Report*.

GHK International (Canada) Ltd. January 2005

http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/curp/SNTF_Neigh-Vitality_RP3.pdf

This report was developed for the “Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force: to develop a Neighbourhood Vitality Tool for Toronto neighbourhoods.” In the document is the framework for using Neighbourhood Vitality measures and Neighbourhood Vitality indicators which have been developed for 140 Toronto Neighbourhoods. It explores what other jurisdictions have done around neighbourhood indicators. It also reports on the measurement results of Toronto neighbourhoods.

G. Thomas Kingsley (ed.), *Building and Operating Neighborhood Indicator Systems: A Guidebook*.

National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership. March 1999

<http://www2.urban.org/nnip/pdf/guidebk.pdf>

This source document provides the framework for developing neighbourhood indicators used in the index. It is useful to understand the theory behind indicators and how to developing indicators which are relevant to neighbourhoods.

Canadian Index of Wellbeing

Community Vitality and Civic Engagement

Summary

The Institute of Well-being has identified several indicators for measuring well-being in Canada. The Canadian Index of wellbeing is currently a reporting strategy but future plans include influencing community change efforts. This approach is included because it uses a new set of indicators and domains of focus.

Background

The Canadian Index of Well-being was launched in June 2009 and was developed by the Institute of Wellbeing. The Institute describes itself as independent and non-partisan. The Atkinson Charitable Foundation began preliminary work on developing an index in 1999 and continues to support the project. The Canadian Research Advisory Group was established in 2004 to assist in the development of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing.

Details

The Institute of Wellbeing tracks wellbeing indicators, documents trends over time and reports its findings to the public:

“The CIW will track Canada’s progress and provide a set of indicators in eight interconnected categories that will enable us to see whether we are better or worse off than we used to be, whether we will leave the world a better or worse place for the generations that follow, and what we need to change to achieve a better outcome.”

(The Institute of Wellbeing website, About the Institute)

The Canadian Index of Well-being is intended to be a source of information to Canadians about wellbeing in general. Although much data is collected from community level indicators, this data is aggregated to the National level. Categories that are being tracked include:

- Arts, Culture and Recreation
- Civic Engagement
- Community vitality
- Education
- Environment
- Healthy Populations
- Living Standards
- Time Use



On their website CIW explains that civic engagement:

“...measures the participation of citizens in public life and in governance; the functioning of Canadian governments with respect to openness, transparency, effectiveness, fairness, equity and accessibility; and the role Canadians and their institutions play as global citizens.”

These categories are considered to be interconnecting and are still in development. Engagement in communities will fall under both civic engagement and community vitality. Currently, civic engagement reports and indicators are not available. The community vitality domain has several indicators of engagement including:

- participation in group activities
- volunteering
- belonging to community
- Charitable giving
- Number of close neighbours
- Help received, close friends
- Bridging ties – scale of importance about maintaining ties with those of other ethnic background

The Institute of Well-being explains the domain of community vitality as, measuring, “the strength, activity and inclusiveness of relationships among residents, private sector, public sector and voluntary organizations.” (*The data used is from Statistics Canada.*)

For Further Reading:

Katherine Scott, *Community Vitality: a Report of the Institute of Wellbeing*. June 2009

http://ciw.ca/Libraries/Documents/CommunityVitality_DomainReport.sflb.ashx

This is a report of the Community Vitality Domain of the Index of Wellbeing. It explains the framework for evaluation and how the indicators are measured.

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing website: <http://www.ciw.ca/en/TheCanadianIndexOfWellbeing.aspx>

This is the Institute of Wellbeing website which includes the history of the Institute and reports on community vitality. When it becomes available, the civic engagement report will be posted on this site.

Conclusions

Measuring community engagement is of significant interest to organizations, networks and communities. There is limited consensus about the measures for engaged communities. In fact, no single indicator was used by all approaches.

Each approach described in this paper used different indicators but the following list outlines the recurring indicators:

- the number of people at meetings or groups
- the number of people who were members of a community group, such as clubs, sporting group, senior's organization or others
- the number people participating in civic events and activities, including town meetings, petitions, protests

Few of the community engagement indicators probed the meaningful involvement of citizens in decision making processes.

Other common themes discovered:

- nearly all groups used their own data
- some indicators included national statistical data
- an overwhelming majority used “standard indicators” such as voter turnout which can be applied across communities
- only four used community-specific/community chosen indicators
- about half used subjective indicators – feelings, thoughts, opinions such as sense of belonging, community, satisfaction of the process – either by those surveyed or by evaluators (as in the case of Community Scales)

This was surprising because of the previous point about “standard” indicators. It appears that groups have established that some subjective indicators are also standard, such as feelings of belonging.

- half of the approaches used engagement in community activities (meetings, events, group memberships, voter turnout) as main measure of engagement
- half used measures representing a number of dimensions
- few linked engagement across sectors (various government, public, businesses)
- less than half considered community change or considered impact
- less than half of the approaches were developed by the community



Final Thoughts and Questions

There are a number of questions which have emerged from this research. These include:

1. Why are the indicators for measuring community engagement so diverse, and why is there no real consensus about the measures?
2. How can we begin to identify the important, universal indicators that must be present when measuring engaged communities?
3. Why meaningful decision-making is not considered a measure in most of these approaches?
4. How do we determine effective citizen engagement? Is there a recipe?

Many of the approaches looked at simple participation, how many people spent time doing things in their community with others. Engagement in political activities (voting, petitions, rallies, and talking to representatives) may be an indicator of increased participation in decision-making but additional indicators would be required to determine the validity of this notion. Measuring community engagement continues to be both intriguing and challenging.

