Social Indicators for New York Local Governments

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Abstract

As New York State localities face fiscal stress, they must be careful that efforts to cut budgets to ensure fiscal solvency do not cause a decline in services. Social indicators are quantitative and qualitative wellbeing measures that enable local governments to assess the economic and social impacts of budget and service decisions. This report explores how to best design social indicators to identify community needs and aid local government in effectively providing services. We provide the history, precedents, components, uses, and limitations of social indicators and argue for their use in New York State as localities attempt to balance fiscal austerity with social and economic wellbeing. We hope these examples will open a dialogue about the potential for collaborative indicator design among unions, municipalities, and citizens in New York State.

Introduction

In his report, "Moving the New NY Forward," published in October, 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo promises to continue to make the government more responsive, more efficient, and more effective. He states his perspective simply with the following phrase: "better service at a lower cost" (Cuomo, 2014, p. 178). Cuomo plans on accomplishing this goal using a strategy called "Lean" that he claims companies like General Electric have used to "streamline manufacturing operations" (2014, p. 178). The Governor's Lean program, which he started in 2013, now has 40 agencies with 100 projects completed. One of the successes from this program is the reduction in time to obtain various professional work permits by 50 percent or more. The Governor expects Lean projects to address complaint handling and investigations, inspections and oversight, and contracting and procurement.

Governor Cuomo claims to have led New York into a "renaissance," during which he boasts having passed four on-time, balanced budgets, "the first of which in 2011 closed a $10 billion deficit with no new taxes, fees, or gimmicks" (2014, p. x). In this report, we ask: What

does the citizen lose in this new lean government? We propose that diminishing state funding and therefore placing the bulk of responsibility for economic development and service provision on the local government is unsustainable. Local governments do not have the resources to independently meet the needs of their citizens. Prioritizing economic development may lead to a "race to the bottom," especially for poorer communities (Donahue, 1997). Social indicators are quantitative or qualitative measures of wellbeing for individuals or communities in economic, social, and environmental terms (see figure 1). Developing social indicators can help identify social issues and community needs that may not be apparent from an economic perspective.

By laying out the history, precedents, components, uses, and limitations of indicators, we provide a theoretical framework and guidelines for New York State local governments to refer to when building their own social indices. To illustrate how social indices have been used to aid and evaluate policymaking, we have compiled international and domestic case studies. We show how local governments have used indices to help determine sustainable policy measures. We have also designed a survey template for local governments in New York. This may help local governments evaluate the wellbeing and satisfaction of citizens with services and programs. We hope this can instigate a dialogue between local government leaders, unions, and citizen groups about designing social indicator surveys for their communities.

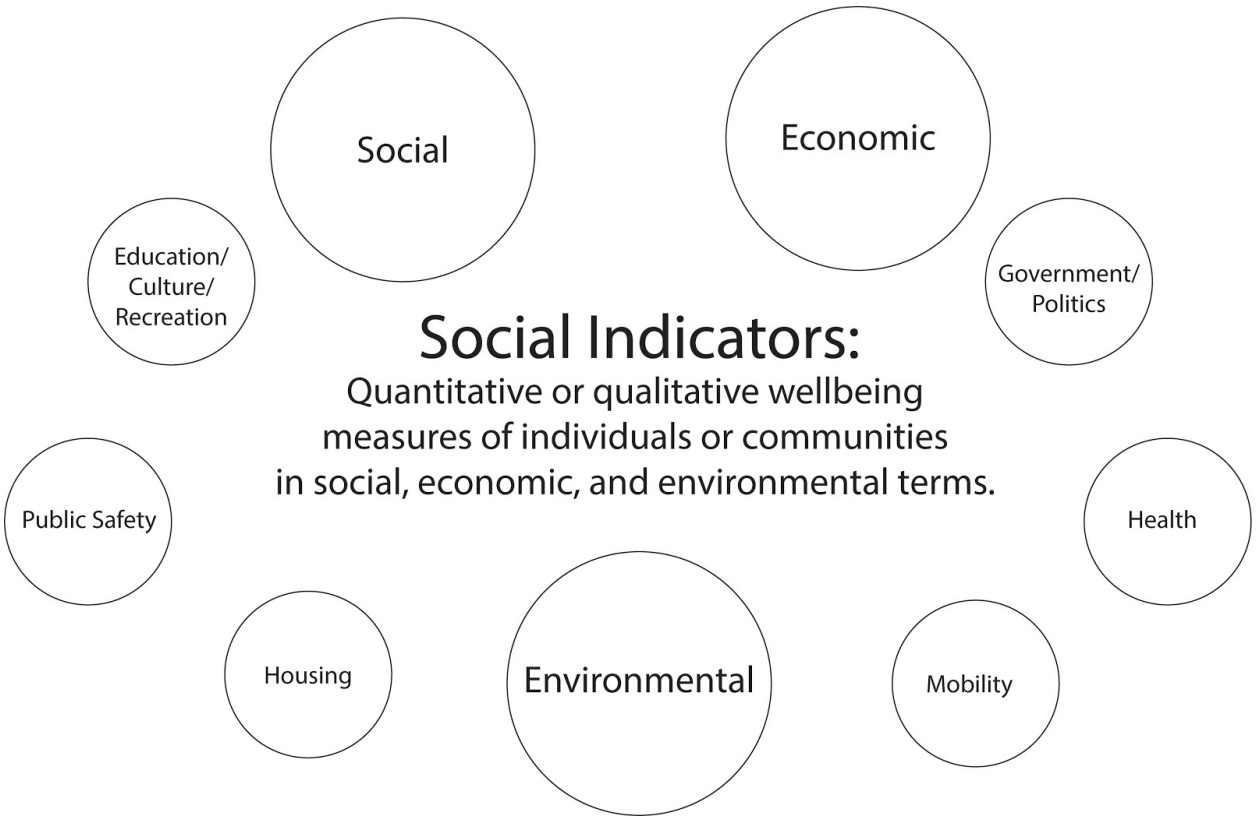

Figure 1. The definition and components of social indicators.

History of Social Indicators

In the United States, religious leaders and social reformers were the first to use statistics for a social purpose. The first documented use of social indicators was in Philadelphia prisons in 1810; social reformers counted the number of prisoners awaiting trial and displayed the statistics in tables to show the failings of the prison system (Cohen, 1982). In the next decades, the temperance movement used social indicators to show that drinking resulted in criminal behavior (Cobb and Rixford, 1998).

Figure 2. A timeline of the history of social indicators (Part 1 of 2).

In the late 1800s, the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics was created, closely followed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor. These departments were the first to gather social statistics systematically. The Massachusetts Bureau creators were sympathetic towards Labor Reform ideas and sought to contribute to contemporary debates over wages and working conditions through the use of subjective statistics. The leadership eventually shifted its methodology towards greater objectivity. This conflict between the purposes of normative and objective indicators would play a major role in the social indicator developments of the next century (Cobb and Rixford, 1998). The Russell Sage Foundation, formed in 1910, was the first to employ what is now a common process for gathering social indicators. Sage provided funding for surveys to be conducted in various cities on social topics including education, recreation, health, and crime. These surveys were administered through existing community groups – civic improvement associations, church groups, citizen committees, etc. – and the data would be presented to policy makers. In this model, a primary organization acted as the center from which community members received funding and instruction to conduct indicator collection (Cobb and Rixford, 1998; Smith, 1991).

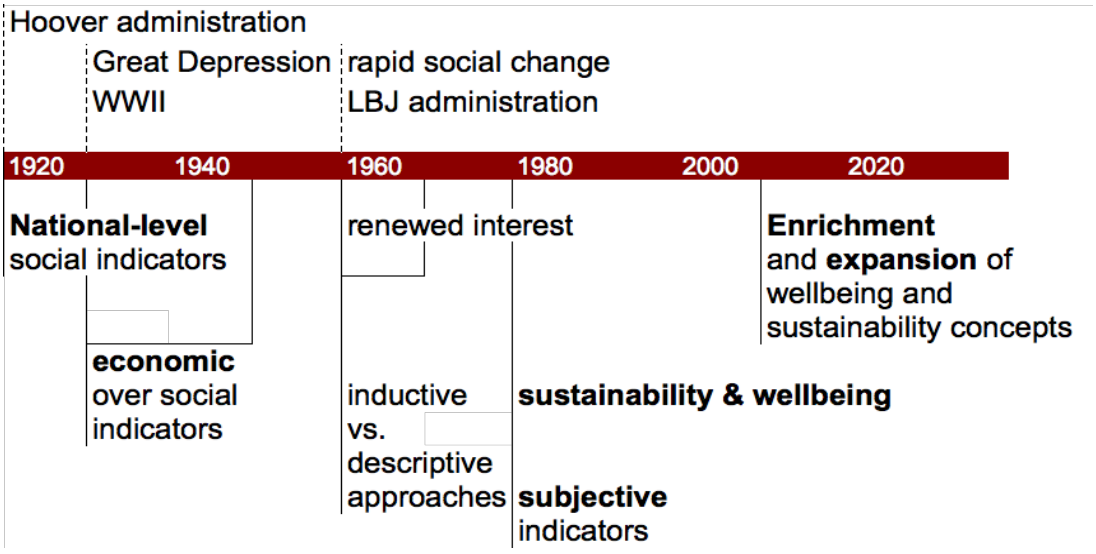

Figure 3. A timeline of the history of social indicators (Part 2 of 2).

In the 1920s and 1930s, Herbert Hoover, first as Secretary of Commerce, and later as president, was largely responsible for the development of national-scale social indicators. The Research Committee on Social Trends, founded during Hoover's time as president, published a report entitled "Recent Social Trends" in 1933. Although it represented many years of progress in indicator research, the report was viewed as somewhat irrelevant at the time it was published given the national focus on economic indicators at the time of the Great Depression. Measures such as GDP were most highly valued around the time of the Great Depression and World War II (Cobb and Rixford, 1998). It is this focus on economic indicators that spurred interest in social indicators in the mid 1900s. As the use of economic indicators became prominent in government and policy institutes through the 1960s, critics charged that these indicators could not adequately measure important social changes. In 1966, in what is now considered a landmark moment in the social indicator movement, a NASA sponsored publication entitled "Social Indicators" was released. Then in 1969, at the end of Lyndon Johnson's administration, the Department of Health and Welfare published a report entitled "Toward a Social Report," which argued for the

establishment of a social program evaluation method and policy relevant social indicators (Cobb and Rixford, 1998).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the movement was divided between those supporting an inductive approach and those arguing for a strictly descriptive approach. As the use of descriptive statistics in social indicators continued to mature, these decades also saw the beginning of subjective, or perceptive, indicator development. This research was supported by the Russell Sage Foundation and called for a focus on the connection between objective conditions and psychological state. Much of this work was published in the Journal Social Indicators Research, founded in 1974 (Cobb and Rixford, 1998).

Indicator development at the local, regional, and state scales lagged behind national-level advances. One of the first local government indicator efforts was in New York City in 1973. Its "Scorecard Project" evaluated education, health, and wellbeing indicators. At the state level, California's Office of Planning and Research published its own report in 1977 with the goal of encouraging policymakers to gather and use social indicators (Phillips, 1993).

By the 1980s, the social indicator movement had come to a halt. The U.S. Census Bureau and Office of Management and Budget had published three volumes of "Social Indicators," which were exhaustive but somewhat impractical as a result of the Nixon administration's efforts to publish these as simple fact books. The reasons for this halt may include the lack of consensus with regard to methodologies and goals among social indicator proponents, lack of interest from government entities, and limitations of indicators when applied to policymaking (Cobb and Rixford, 1998).

International agencies were also developing social indicators through the 1970s and 1980s. These included the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) social indicator program and publication of "Living Conditions in OECD Countries," the United Nations "Human Development Index," and the World Health Organization's "Healthy Cities" movement (Cobb and Rixford, 1998). The OECD was responsible for developing the pressure-state-response framework – a framework that analyzes the response of the environment to human activities in a given state or context (Linster, 2003).

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development, or the Brundtland Commission, was the first to adopt a definition of sustainable development; this definition introduced the concept of responding to needs of the present while understanding the limitations of the environment to meet these needs. At the root of the definition was the view that economic measures could not describe the full spectrum of social and environmental conditions (Phillips, 2003). Simultaneously, a Global Forum of citizen groups was created to promote grass-roots efforts to monitor own-governments in various countries. In both the U.S and Britain, comprehensive reports were produced in the mid 1990s that reviewed strategies for measuring community wellbeing (Sawicki, 2002). In 1992, Osborne and Gaebler's *Reinventing Government* laid out a method for measuring outcomes instead of inputs in order to evaluate government performance. Their indicators were prescribed for collaborative use between governments, businesses, and citizens (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Sawicki, 2002). These innovations in social indicator theory continue to influence the design of indicators today.

In *Measuring Wellbeing: Towards Sustainability*, Karen Scott described what has become an entangled indicator literature that has muddied the concept of wellbeing and conflated

it with that of sustainable development. She identified the discursive process of defining indicators at the local level as equally or more important than the measurements afforded by the indicators themselves. The process of defining wellbeing should be a democratic one that takes into account shifting relationships between local governments, citizens, and the state (Scott, 2012). A new social indicator called "The Community Loss Index" focuses on the role of place in shaping wellbeing and, in particular, determining exposure to specific losses – such as the loss of community members or employment – among residents of New York City. The authors found that neighborhood, above all other factors including race or ethnicity, determined the patterns of loss (Abramovitz and Albrecht, 2013). Kim, Kee, and Lee (2014) analyzed the relative importance of wellbeing index components among citizens, experts, and public officials in Seoul, South Korea, and found that rankings of these components – health, income, etc. – varied significantly between these three groups (Kim, Kee, & Lee, 2014). These recent innovations have enriched the definition of wellbeing with respect to indicator development.

Designing Social Indicators

A locality must design social indicators to meet local conditions. Social indicators can be designed in relation to specific governmental measures and thus provide useful information about past and current — positive and negative — trends in a community. Indicators can provide local governments information for moving forward with planning choices and can guide local officials in making decisions that address certain attributes that need improvement (Phillips, 2003). Indicators should be systematic and comparable to provide a common measuring system

that reflects past performance and current trends and suggests future steps to help in the policymaking process. Indicators can vary in their temporal scale and spatial scope. They can be one-shot or collected repeatedly, aggregated into one story or placed in separate stories.

The Social Performance Management Resource Center (SPMRE) identifies eight steps for the design of successful social indicators:

1. Be clear about what you want to measure and why. It is important to identify the outputs, outcomes, and objectives of the indicators.
2. Identify sources of information. Two possible sources of information for local government include administrative data and citizen survey data.
3. Draw up a selection of possible indicators. This includes choosing the right number and types of indicators to meet the project's needs.
4. Narrow down the list of possible indicators.[1]
5. Think about how and when you will ask questions if you are conducting a survey.
6. Pilot-test your indicators to ensure that data is not too difficult to collect or disadvantageous for analysis.
7. Validate the selected indicators. Ensure that findings can be correlated with other sources of information and across jurisdictions and that they are externally valid.
8. Make the most of your indicators for social performance management. Indicators can be most useful if they are not one-shot and are, rather, integrated into an ongoing assessment process (SPMRE, 2005).

[1] Refer to the criteria and types of indicators below for guidance on how to narrow.

While designing social indicators may seem like a daunting task, scholars have proposed criteria for creating good indices. Justin Hollander (2002, p. 3) identifies nine of the most common criteria for selecting indicators:

1. **Validity**: well-grounded in data and accurately depicting a real situation.
2. **Relevance**: appropriate for priority issues
3. **Consistency and reliability**: can be researched reliably over a period of time
4. **Measurability**: data can be obtained for a community
5. **Clarity**: unambiguous and understandable by a diverse audience
6. **Comprehensiveness**: represents many parts of an issue and reduces the need for excessive number of indicators.
7. **Cost-effectiveness**: data collection is not overly expensive
8. **Comparability**: sufficiently general that it can be compared with other communities
9. **Attractiveness to the media**: likely to be embraced by the press

Phillips (2003, p.20) adds that a successful indicator should also:

1. Be appropriate to its political, institutional, jurisdictional, or other context
2. Be meaningful and useful to stakeholders
3. Use affordable, relevant, and accessible data sources
4. Clearly state and accurately reflect its intent
5. Result from close collaboration with stakeholders during selection, application, and review processes
6. Connect and be consistent with well-articulated vision statements and goals
7. Cause the government to take action

One classification of indicators is between systems or descriptive indicators and performance indicators (Phillips, 2003). **Systems indicators** summarize individual measurements that describe multiple characteristics of the current state of a system. They communicate the most relevant information to decision makers. Environmental quality is an example of a systems indicator. **Performance indicators** are descriptive, but also prescriptive; they include a reference value or policy target that allows comparison with local, national, or international goals, targets, and objectives (Phillips, 2003).

The Social Performance Management Resource Center identifies three types of performance indicators: impact indicators, moderating indicators and segmenting indicators. **Impact indicators** mark the impact of a program on those who participate. **Moderating indicators** do not mark change, but identify factors that affect change processes. An example is the number of children being supported in a family. **Segmenting indicators** are not necessarily related to change, but provide useful insight into how impact may be affected by factors such as gender and region. They add that indicators can also be direct or indirect (proxy) and numerical or categorical (SPMRE, 2005). Performance indicators can measure financial or social performance. Using a logic model may help, particularly when designing performance indicators.

The logic model is a useful tool for facilitating a link between policy measures and economic, social, or environmental outcomes. The logic model formula is useful when dealing with complex interventions such as those in which several different actions are taking place at the same time and where links between actions and their anticipated outcomes are not straightforward. Logic models are useful for clarifying goals, achieving consensus, identifying gaps in logic or knowledge, and tracking progress. Additionally, many grant programs now

require community-based initiatives to include a logic model as part of the application process (Kaplan & Garrett, 2004). The model can aid the evaluator in extrapolating impacts when evidence is difficult to gather and context is important to consider (Hills, 2010).

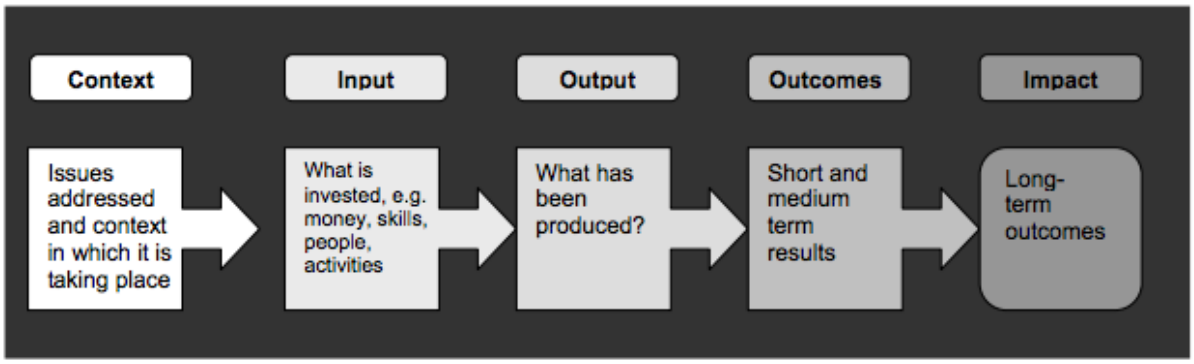

Figure 4. The framework of a logic model, which progresses from cause through subsequent steps and ends at an impact or effect (Hills, 2010, p. 5).

The logic model below, from Erie County, New York, aims to provide a solution for the problem of providing adequate services for children and families experiencing serious emotional and/or behavioral challenges. For "context," it identifies the resources, stakeholders, weaknesses, and strengths of the problem. It identifies three goals and relates these to three domains of solutions: infrastructure, service delivery, and community strategies. It lists the outcomes for each of these strategies. As a peripheral component to this logic model, the Family Voices Network also identifies the roles of those involved, activities related to each strategy, and short-term (12 to 24 months) and long-term (three to five years) outcomes (Family Voices Network, 2007).

Figure 5. An example of a logic model from Family Voices Network of Erie County, New York. source: http://logicmodel.fmhi.usf.edu/LogicModels/ErieCountyLogicModelmar2007.pdf

Case Studies

In this section, we use domestic and international case studies to illustrate potential social indicator designs and consequent impacts. Figure 6 shows the key elements of the design process for four of the major cases we profile in this report. For each of the following cases, we describe the impetus, design process, and consequences of the project. [2]

[2] See Appendix 1 for a table with details about each domain of each index highlighted in this report.

	Durham, North Carolina	Rochester, New York	Baltimore, Maryland	Queensland, Australia
Purpose	Track quality of life and provision of services →	Improve communiy problem-solving and associated decision-making →	Strengthen neighborhoods by providing meaningful community-level data →	Address resilience for anticipated disasters and recovery efforts with consideration for community wellbeing →
Process	Local strategic planning, residential input, research, and best practices for neighborhood indicators →	Developed by the Center for Governmental Research and brainstormed with community focus groups →	Designed by BNIA at the Jacob France Institute of University of Baltimore through collaboration with Baltimore entities →	Community resilience survey with household and individual questions, data not available from census →
Data source	Local government, U.S. census, and other state and federal agencies →	U.S. Census, NYS administrative data, and community surveys →	Government agencies, neighborhood groups, non-profit organizations, Federal resources such as the U.S. Census, and commercial sources →	Queensland and Commonwealth governments, non-profit sector, and Queensland University researchers →
Format/ Accessibility	Interactive map online	Open source data and topic-reports	Interactive map, open source data, and annual report	Currently developing a framework: database, web interface, and information portal for creation of community indicators

Figure 6. This table shows the key elements of the social indicator design process and product in four cities and counties: Durham, Rochester, Baltimore, and Queensland.

Case Studies: International Examples

Many countries have started to adopt social indicators in their policymaking framework. Over the last several decades, numerous international wellbeing measurements and social indicators have been implemented or are in the process of development. Kim and Lee (2014) note that although the social approach to measuring development is becoming more popular among local authorities, many countries are still using conventional, objective economic indicators to assess development. Community indicators are most commonly tested and used in developed countries, such as Australia, Canada and the United States. Each of these countries has adopted its own set of indicators that reflect community wellbeing, and each indicator system has different uses for these indicators in the public policy context.

Australia (Community Indicators Victoria)

http://www.communityindicators.net.au

The Community Indicators Victoria (CIV) is one of the first community indicator projects implemented in Australia. It was founded in 2005 to measure the overall wellbeing of people in Victoria. A group of scholars, local and state governments, health partners, and communities designed this project and the framework for the statistical indicators. The CIV framework covers an extensive set of indicators. It encompasses a wide spectrum of local community life and offers an interactive data map on their website that enables residents to engage in the process. It focuses on improving citizen engagement, community planning, and

policymaking[3]. The main wellbeing factors include social, economic, environmental, democratic, and cultural domains.

The CIV has led the Port Philip City Council in moving engagement and community strengthening a step further by having a web-based citizen interactive forum. The web forum lists the indicators and allows residents to collect 'data' themselves. Local residents are invited to act as 'Smile Spies' and keep a tally of the number of smiles they encounter per fifteen minutes on the street and record their findings on the website in an attempt to get citizens involved in building a stronger community. The Ballarat City Council has also used CIV's health and wellbeing dimensions to aid in council decision making on budgets and future investments based on local evidence and community needs (Community Indicators Victoria, 2014).

Australia (Community Indicators Queensland)

http://www.communityindicatorsqld.org.au/content/welcome

CIV has not only been used by local governments in Victoria in improving community planning and policymaking, but has also contributed toward wider national policy research on community indicators in Australia. CIV has inspired the development of another community indicator project, Community Indicators (or Resilience) Queensland. Community Indicators Queensland (CIQ) is currently being piloted in three Queensland communities — Tablelands Regional Council area, Rockhampton Regional Council area, and the township of Chinchilla in the Western Downs Regional Council area.

[3] See Appendix 1 for a detailed description of each indicator project in this report

Queensland has suffered multiple natural disasters. One notable case was the series of floods that occurred from December 2010 to January 2011, which led to 33 dead and 3 missing (Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, 2012). Responding to these events, this indicator system adopts some attributes found in CIV, but also includes community resilience domains and data from the Resilience Profiles project, a project that aims to identify a relationship between disadvantaged communities and community resilience by testing the hypothesis that communities recover faster if they have a material advantage. The indicator system was created to incorporate creative ways to address resilience to anticipated disasters and recovery efforts with consideration to community wellbeing (Community Indicators Queensland, 2014).

The community resilience survey divides questions into the household and individual level in the data gathering process. Although CIQ is still early in its implementation process, it hopes to inspire other communities to integrate resilience elements in indicator systems. Innovations from this indicator design could be borrowed to promote resilience building and community development for towns in New York that have been affected by natural disasters such as Hurricane Irene, Superstorm Sandy, and seasonal floods.

Canada

https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing

Canada also has a sophisticated national-level social indicator system that includes a well-defined set of indicator domains, such as culture, democratic engagement, education, environment, health, community, living standards, and time use. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing aims to develop a set of indicators that is reflective of the Canadian society and

considerate of regional and cultural differences. The purpose of the index is to provide an understanding and promote awareness of certain trends occurring in the country, and to encourage policymakers to make decisions based on Canadian's needs and values. The Province of Ontario has developed a provincial-level community index based on these attributes to reflect community needs and thoughts for Ontario residents (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2014).

United Kingdom (ONS Measuring National Wellbeing Programme)

http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/well-being/index.html

In the UK, the UK Local Government Act promotes economic, social, and environmental wellbeing among communities by increasing the local government's responsibility to meet these societal goals. This has led to enthusiasm in developing a wellbeing index for the country in recent years (Kim and Lee, 2014; Scott, 2012). The Office for National Statistics has created a national social indicator program with the aim of producing a trusted measurement of wellbeing in the nation. This initiative emphasizes "looking at GDP and beyond" and includes some subjective measurements such as relationships, skills, and personal wellbeing, in addition to objective measurements in economics, finance, and governance (Office for National Statistics, 2014). The UK local government also developed a more micro-scale indicator system, the Local Index of Child Well-Being, that strives to accurately measure how children are doing in various subjective wellbeing domains, such as relations with family at the community level (Communities and Local Government, 2009).

Case Studies: Domestic Examples

The following cases of indices and umbrella organizations provide examples of social indicator projects in the United States that differ in scale, organizational structure, and design process. These differences reflect the contexts and sets of values that are unique to each index. We provide these cases to illustrate effective approaches to indicator design and development.

The National Citizen Survey

http://icma.org

The National Citizen Survey is a private firm that has a customizable set of questions that government leaders can cater to their communities. The survey claims that resident opinion is critical to understanding the quality of service delivery and has become a widely-used performance-measure tool. However, it adds that administrative records and independent observations about actual service efficiencies and quality measures are also important. The survey measures public opinion in eight areas of community livability, which include: community engagement, education and enrichment, recreation and wellness, economy, built environment, natural environment, safety, and mobility.

Respondents report perceptions of the quality of community and related services and their own engagement within the community. The survey may have open-ended questions, phone data collection, Spanish translation, customized norms, geographic crosstabs, and a breakdown of results by respondent characteristics. The data may be collected by mail or phone and there is an option to complete the survey online. The survey has helped communities improve service delivery and strengthen communications with community stakeholders. It has also helped leaders

identify clear priorities for use in strategic planning and budget setting. The report can compare the results from one jurisdiction with those from others anywhere in the United States. The drawback of the survey is its cost, which is a few thousand dollars depending on the services requested. However, the survey claims to be cheaper, more reputed, and more cost effective than other options ("ICMA," 2014).

Community Indicators Consortium

http://www.communityindicators.net/

The Community Indicators Consortium (CIC) is an umbrella organization that gathers indicators from around the country to participate in information sharing, collaboration, and open dialogue. The organization's mission is to "advance and support the development, availability, and effective use of community indicators for making measurable sustainable improvements in quality of community life." It was founded on the belief that these activities are key to the advancement of people, the quality of community life, and the sustainability of our shared environment. It also seeks to bridge the gap between community indicators and performance measurements ("Community Indicators Consortium," 2014).

Durham, NC: Durham Neighborhood Compass

http://compass.durhamnc.gov

The Durham Neighborhood Compass is a partner of the Community Indicators Consortium. Together, two block groups in the eastern part of the City of Durham have the second highest poverty rate in the county where little investment is occurring. In 2014, as part of

an initiative to alleviate poverty, the City of Durham launched its Neighborhood Compass. The Durham Neighborhood Compass is a public web GIS application that tracks quality of life and provision of services. It is designed to synthesize policy and community efforts to identify where public services may have the greatest impact. Its over forty measures fall under the following categories: demographic, infrastructure and amenities, economy, housing, environment, and safety. These measures were identified through local strategic planning, resident input, research, and best practices for neighborhood indicators. Data will be updated annually (Killeen, 2014).

When a user selects any variable, such as "unmaintained property violations" under "housing", the map's gradient changes to shows the variation in amount of violations between neighborhoods. Below the map are three sections that supplement the visual: "About the Data," "Additional Resources," and "Why is this important?" The "About the Data" box explains how the data was obtained, details about what it includes, and what it reflects. The "Additional Resources" box links to city and county websites that explain the service and regulations. "Why is this important" explains the impact of the variable on communities and, if present, city regulations and enforcement strategies. Users can download a custom report based on select data or simply use the map's visual to inform their actions and perceptions.

Open access to the data has the potential to facilitate the process of making changes to policy and programs. Government officials can use the data to provide services where needed and enforce codes. For example, the Neighborhood Improvement Services Department can use the data to enforce housing codes in neighborhoods with a high concentration of rentals that lie outside priority areas. Additionally, the public can use data to lobby for underserved communities ("Durham Neighborhood Compass," 2014). In 2014, the Durham Neighborhood

Compass won Honorable Mention for the annual Technology Service Award from the Public Technology Institute under the category of Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) ("Technology Solutions Awards," 2014).

AARP livability index

http://www.aarp.org/research/ppi/liv-com2/resources/the-livability-index.html

The AARP livability index is a web-based tool that evaluates the wellbeing of communities from the perspective of the elderly via mapping technology, preference survey results, quantitative measures, and public policies. Its purpose is to engage stakeholders in thinking about the wants and needs of the elderly. More specifically, it seeks to inform policy development, new initiatives, and community stakeholder participation. The indicators can benefit stakeholders such as: county executives, directors of nonprofits, and community advocates (AARP, 2014).

Jacksonville, FL

http://www.jcci.org/

Founded in 1985, Jacksonville's Community Indicators project is considered the original community indicator project model (Besleme, 1999). The Jacksonville Community Council, composed of 650 members, started the project through Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce funding and is the leading organization that conducts the indicator process today. Ongoing partnerships with the City of Jacksonville, Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, and United Way of Northeast Florida are responsible for the success of the project. The Community Indicators

project is unique not only in its successful integration with local government, but also in its emphasis on community consensus and reliance on volunteer forces. Jacksonville's initial goals were to measure quality of life as defined by "a feeling of wellbeing, fulfillment, or satisfaction resulting from factors in the external environment." The indicator project's success in influencing policy is evident in the regular use of the indicators among JCCI's partners. The City of Jacksonville refers to the indicators in its budgeting process, the United Way uses the indicators in strategic planning, and the Chamber of Commerce has acted on indicators in its work to improve water quality in the St. Johns River and reform public school education (Besleme, 1999). The following indicator project, ACT Rochester, modeled its framework after that of Jacksonville.

ACT Rochester

http://www.actrochester.org

ACT Rochester, in New York State, is an active project that maintains a "one-stop shop" for data and analysis of Rochester area community indicators. The data is organized and published online by ACT Rochester, and the research is conducted by the Center for Governmental Research, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) that provides research and analyses for government, nonprofits, and business entities. The indicators were developed by CGR through extensive research and brainstorming with community focus groups. ACT Rochester has worked with hundreds of local organizations to collect data and understand the social issues that are most important to the Rochester area. Its recent report on poverty found that Rochester is the 5th poorest city in the country, has the 3rd highest concentration of extremely poor neighborhoods in

major US cities, and is the poorest school district in upstate NY. Although the report is cautious in making policy recommendations, it highlights two strategies that may reduce the concentration of poor communities: investing in the urban core and dispersing the poor by expanding low-income housing in the suburbs ("ACT Rochester").

Sustainable Seattle

http://sustainableseattle.org/

Sustainable Seattle is an organization that seeks to promote sustainable practices in Seattle and King County through the development of community-based indicators. Sustainability is defined as "long-term health and vitality of a region, including the cultural, economic, environmental and social aspects as one whole" ("Sustainable Seattle"). Since its formation in 1990, Sustainable Seattle has reinvented its set of indicators four times and has been cited by over ninety projects around the country as a model for their own sustainability initiatives ("Sustainable Seattle"). The organization underwent a series of structural changes and an eventual decrease in activity in the late 2000s, in part due to its lack of structural cohesion and widely democratized decision-making structure. Despite the prominence of Seattle's indicators, the fourth indicator phase has not been adopted by the city. Beyond its status as the prototype sustainability indicator project, Sustainability Seattle is an example of an organization that, in its heyday, owed its success to a base of dedicated volunteers. Sustainable Seattle was innovative in its collaborative process and its understanding of causal relationships because it developed its indicators based on clearly defined core values and the organization of community members into coalitions (Holden 2006). However, its tumultuous history cautions those designing new

indicator projects against adopting an organizational structure in which decision-making power is overly decentralized.

National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership

http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/

The National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) is a collaboration between the Urban Institute, a nonpartisan research organization, and local partners around the United States. It consists of a network of indicator projects, and thus, should be viewed as a tool for local governments. Its mission is to develop community-level information tools to aid in strengthening communities and informing policymaking. In short, the NNIP's goal is to democratize information. NNIP partners share administrative data and make current information available to community members and business leaders. On its website, NNIP organizes its partners' findings by issue areas — affordable housing, health, etc. These partners include nonprofits, university and research centers, community foundations, and local and regional government agencies. Revenue sources vary across partners and include state and local government, local and national foundations, universities, and private business ("National Neighborhood Indicators Alliance").

Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance

http://bniajfi.org/

The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance, organized by the Jacob France Institute of the University of Baltimore, is a partner of the NNIP. BNIA conducts quality of life indicator research for Baltimore neighborhoods. The organization's "Vital Signs" indicators "take the

pulse" of neighborhoods. Among other contributions, the most recent report, "Vital Signs '12," provides a unique picture of the vulnerable and quickly-evolving housing market in Baltimore neighborhoods. At the center of the report was a connection between economic development and community health. Communities with high unemployment rates were also those with extreme figures in quality of life indicators including violent crime rates, commute times, and 311 calls complaining about dirty streets and alleys ("Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance").

BNIA's findings showed that while one-third of Baltimore neighborhoods grew between 2000 and 2010, neighborhoods with 4% or greater vacancy rates experienced population declines (Iyer and Gondol, 2012). Recognizing this tipping point, the City has focused its code enforcement on these neighborhoods and now has a 10-year plan to demolish approximately 4,000 distressed structures. The findings caused the city to push for increased code enforcement and receivership efforts in which an outside entity is appointed to rehabilitate vacant properties (Gallagher, 2013).

NYS Office of the State Comptroller Environmental Indicators

http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/fiscalmonitoring/index.htm

The New York State Office of the Comptroller measures environmental and financial indicators to compile a "Fiscal Stress Monitoring System." This system, intended to identify "early warning signs" of fiscal stress in communities, consists of an open data website and regularly published reports that outline general economic and wellbeing conditions and highlight important trends in cities, towns, and counties. Additionally, the OSC website maintains a

“Search Tool”, through which any locality’s individual data can be accessed ("Fiscal Stress Monitoring System Search Tool"). The OSC’s Environmental Indicators measure demographics (population and age), child poverty, property value, unemployment, total number of jobs, reliance on and changes in receipt of State and Federal aid, tax limit exhaustion, and sales tax receipts ("Office of the New York State Comptroller - Local Government and School Accountability: Fiscal Stress Monitoring System").

Key Elements of Social Indicators

The international and national examples above demonstrate a shift away from measuring citizen wellbeing based solely on economic growth and GDP. In these cases, economic measurements alone were considered an inappropriate and inaccurate representation of social conditions. Social indicator systems emphasize social reform and prioritize citizen participation in solving community problems (Phillips, 2003). As shown in these case studies, citizen input is integral in establishing community goals and aims, and these agreed-upon values are used to identify what indicators are needed. Phillips (2003) argues that citizen participation can be an indicator in itself, as low participation often reflects low quality of life. Therefore, successful social indicator projects often value a bottom-up, qualitative research approach that not only includes citizen participation, but also local observation and analysis.

While determining wellbeing from only objective economic measurement is insufficient, Diener and Suh (1997) argue that both objective and subjective measures are necessary to create a well-developed social indicator system. The strength of objective indicators is that they are easily defined and quantifiable, a technically convenient tool in making comparisons across

different regions. However, subjective measures, such as citizen perception of social environment and self-reported life satisfaction, identify societal qualities and facets of wellbeing that are important complements to economic measurements (Veenhoven, 2002).

The case studies above include three common categories of the "triple bottom line": social, economic and environmental factors that affect people's wellbeing (Global Reporting Initiative, 2003; Philips, 2003). These categories are almost always found in social indicator systems. Sawicki (2002) further identifies core attributes that reflect the triple bottom line as quality of life, quality of place, livability, sustainability, and performance. These attributes focus on the wellbeing of individuals, the qualities of a geographical area, characteristics of that area that make it an attractive place to live, environmental considerations, and resident satisfaction with government programs and service delivery. Kim and Lee (2014) suggest a concept of community that is composed of three aspects: the residents, political presence, and a geographical area. A community index can consider resident needs, government needs and environmental needs. These elements are combined to paint an overall picture that reflects the wellbeing of a particular community.

Innes and Booher (2000) remind us that there is not a simple, linear formula for developing social indicators. Because each community has different needs, each social index should be unique to its place and people and should include attributes that reflect community values. Indicators will vary based on what the community wants to measure. By incorporating these factors and elements, social indicators can become useful tools in providing information that can be used to make policy decisions.

Limitations of Social Indicators

Although social indicators are useful tools in policymaking, one must consider their limitations and caveats. Unclear definitions of the different attributes can lead to flawed methodology and measurement in indicator design. (Sawicki, 2002). For example, some wellbeing dimensions, such as life satisfaction or happiness, are difficult to measure, often resulting in technical uncertainties and constraints. Wellbeing and quality of life are multi-dimensional, influenced by multiple real-world complexities, and sensitive to individual experiences and cultural interpretations. Additionally, social indicators include classifications that reflect social, economic, and environmental factors, but these categories are often interdependent and difficult to differentiate. Even with numerical results, it is challenging to understand the specific condition an indicator reflects. This can hinder future research and debates on community issues.

While indicators can be used to identify goals for enhancing quality of life, there is a danger of generalizing results. These indicators are often based on results from a narrow range of factors and circumstances. As wellbeing has a fluid definition, numerical representation of wellbeing alone raises the concern of whether social indicators actually reflect the realities of communities. Social indicators can fail to represent the reality of a community and its wellbeing (Phillips, 2003; Diener and Suh, 1997).

The adoption of social indicators by local governments can be difficult. During the design process, policymakers are faced with the challenge of deciding how to best measure variables in different domains. There will likely be conflicting opinions about what to include or exclude in an indicator system. As was previously stated, the meanings of quality of life and wellbeing are

different for different people and places. Social indicators should reflect these differences. It is necessary for local officials to use informed judgment to choose what values to represent (Diener and Suh, 1997). Thus, there is a danger that only a few selected values will dominate an indicator system. If misused, indicators can become a political marketing tool; they may force a certain value, rather than aiding in improving the actual quality of life in a place, thus undermining the true needs and desires of communities (Sawicki, 2002). This element of subjectivity limits the ability of indicators to fully represent everyone in a community (Scott, 2012).

Furthermore, the complexities of social indicator systems and their large datasets make it difficult to determine a clear causal relationship. There is usually a need for further interpretation and research to establish a causal model. Therefore, it is difficult to decide on policy recommendations (Phillips, 2003). The complexity in the design process calls into question the comprehensiveness of social indicators and the extent to which social indicators can inform effective public policy choices. Sawicki (2002) argues that most community indicators have not led to significant political change. The use of logic models may help illustrate causal relationships between the wellbeing of a community and specific government actions or programs (See "Designing Social Indicators").

Social indicators can also become a burden to residents in a community. For example, Scott (2012) discusses the pressures that school league tables in the UK have created among parents. The school indicators were adopted to promote equal standards of education across the UK by applying a standardized measurement of attainment. However, this has perpetuated inequality in communities. By using academic performance as a proxy for the level of quality in education, school league tables pressure parents to place their children into 'better schools.'

These indicators make students feel that success in school is defined by academic achievement alone. This has caused many children and young students with non-academic skills to feel devalued among their peers. The negative implications of education indicators are also seen in the United States with initiatives such as No Child Left Behind. This program has not only burdened parents and students with the pressure of meeting a specific academic target, it has also created pressure among schoolteachers, leading some teachers to game the system to produce a desirable result (Ryan, 2004).

As seen with school related indicators, interpretations of wellbeing can differ dramatically. The idea of wellbeing from a politician's point of view is often different from the broader, more social sense of wellbeing that indicators can reflect and promote in a community. This must be recognized when deciding which measures should be incorporated in indicator systems. Policy makers must also consider the wider implications and consequences that the adoption of social indicators can create. Something that may be 'good' in theory does not always have a 'good' outcome in reality.

Conclusion

Social indicators are quantitative or qualitative wellbeing measures of individuals or communities in social, economic, and environmental terms. They have the power to identify community needs and quality of life. Additionally, they can illustrate the often obscure social effects of fiscal austerity measures. In October 2014, New York's Governor Andrew Cuomo vowed to continue to make the local government more responsive, efficient, and effective. Our paper argues that shifting responsibility of service provision from the state to local governments

is unsustainable and that an emphasis on social issues is needed in policymaking to achieve both economic and social solvency. To frame how social indicators can be used by local governments, we have laid out the process, key elements, and caveats of social indicator design and provided examples of innovative indices.

We highlighted cases that demonstrate the potential for indicators to help target the issues most relevant and critical to their communities. In Baltimore, Maryland, indicators were used to identify actions that may reverse the trend of population decline in specific Baltimore communities, thus fostering Baltimore's growth as a whole. In Queensland, Australia, indicators were developed to promote resilience against natural disasters. These indicators help local governments efficiently allocate financial resources. They incorporate a sustainable and equitable development framework to promote social wellbeing in the present and future. As a final deliverable, we drafted a sample survey that can be used as a resource for local governments and unions in New York when designing social indicators for their own communities (Appendix 2). The Governor, local officials, and communities ultimately share the same goal: to achieve both economic solvency and social wellbeing. As the Governor begins his second term, and as the state braces for the potential impacts from fiscal measures such as the property tax cap, local governments must adopt tools such as social indicators to build a foundation that may improve and protect the wellbeing of New York citizens and communities.

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Table of Case Study Indices and Sample Indicators

"Social Indicators for New York Local Governments"

Ana Huckfeldt, Irene Hung, and Roya Sabri
Cornell University
December 9, 2014
http://www.mildredwarner.org/restructuring/fiscal-stress

Appendix 1

Domestic Indices				
Index	Quality of Life in Jacksonville, FL	Sustainable Seattle	ACT Rochester	Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (NNIP Partner)
Website	*http://www.jcci.org*	*http://sustainableseattle.org*	*http://www.actrochester.org*	*http://bniajfi.org*
Location	Jacksonville and Northeast Florida	Seattle and King County	Greater Rochester region	Baltimore, Maryland
Scale	Region	City and County	Region	City
Mission	Monitor and improve elements affecting quality of life	Promote environmental and community sustainability	Affect decision-making through use of timely and independent data	Strengthen neighborhoods by providing open, community-level data
Indicator Focus Areas	Sample of Indicators			
Education	Graduation rates, college enrollment	Graduation rates, arts instruction, adult literacy	Pre-k enrollment, test performances, emotional development	Educational attainment, diversity of students
Economy	Educational attainment, employment by sector, unemployment	Unemployment, employment by sector	Unemployment, job sector growth, per-capita government spending	Earnings, poverty, unemployment, businesses, educational attainment
Demographics	Perceived race relations by survey, male/female earnings and leadership attainment	Population characteristics	Population characteristics	Population characteristics
Public Safety	Crime rates	Juvenile crime	Crime rates, juvenile delinquency, 911 calls and fires	Crime rates, juvenile arrests, drug-related offenses

Appendix 1

Domestic Indices				
Index	Quality of Life in Jacksonville, FL	Sustainable Seattle	ACT Rochester	Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (NNIP Partner)
Natural Environment	Water use, energy use	Ecological health, air quality, open spaces, water and energy use, renewable energy use		Energy consumption, commuter miles, open spaces
Health	Health insurance, cigarette smoking	Health care expenditures, ER use, birth weight	Blood lead, teen pregnancy, Medicaid enrollment, self-reported health status	Fast food & liquor density, mortality, blood lead, TANF, teen birth rates
Social Environment	Perceived safety, child poverty, suicide rate	Child poverty, perceived QOL	Homeless persons	
Government/Politics	Performance evaluation surveys	Voter participation	Voter registration and participation	Voting in general election
Culture/Recreation	Attendance of arts and cultural institutions, sport events	Arts participation	Attendance of arts and cultural institutions, sport events, recreation spending, arts education	Arts related businesses
Mobility	Transportation by bike, car	Bike and walk paths, vehicle miles traveled		Commute mode, walkability
Housing	Downtown office and residential occupancy	Housing affordability	Housing affordability for renters/buyers or by race,	Affordability of housing, owners/renters, foreclosures, vacancies

Appendix 1

Domestic Indices (continued)				
Index	National Citizen Survey	Durham Neighborhood Compass	AARP Livability Index	Office of the NYS Comptroller Environmental Indicators
Website	*http://icma.org/en/results/management_strategies/leading_practices/data_driven_communities/national_citizen_survey*	*http://compass.durhamnc.gov/*	*http://www.aarp.org/research/ppi/liv-com2/resources/the-livability-index.html*	*http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/fiscalmonitoring/index.htm*
Location	National-wide	Durham, NC	Nation-wide	New York State
Scale	City, County, Community	Neighborhood	City, county	City, county, village
Mission	Improve service delivery, strengthen communications with community stakeholders, and help leaders identify clear priorities for use in strategic planning and budget setting	Provide data that allows all local stakeholders to track quality of life and provision of services throughout Durham	Help inform policy development, new initiatives, and community stakeholder participation with the primary goal of improving the quality of life for community residents	Provide early warning system for communities and school districts with fiscal problems
Indicator Focus Areas	Sample of Indicators			
Education	Education and enrichment		Education attainment distribution, Great Decisions participation/other educational opportunities for adults	

Domestic Indices (continued)				
Index	National Citizen Survey	Durham Neighborhood Compass	AARP Livability Index	Office of the NYS Comptroller Environmental Indicators
Economy	Employment, shopping and retail, city as a place to work	Land use diversity, median household income, per capita income	Income/wealth distribution	Unemployment, change in total jobs, locality reliance on State and Federal Aid, change in State and Federal aid, change in local sales tax receipts, constitutional tax limit exhaustion
Demographics	Population characteristics	Population characteristics	Population characteristics	Change in population, Median age
Public Safety	Safety in neighborhood and downtown; crime victimization; police, fire, EMS services; emergency preparedness	Crimes with a violent component, crimes involving property, drug-related crimes	Community safety, crime rates	
Natural Environment	Cleanliness, air quality, preservation of natural areas, garbage and recycling services	Tree coverage, impervious area, commuting 30 minutes or more, commuting by driving alone, automotive code violations	Air quality and Presence of/distance from polluting facilities	

Domestic Indices (continued)				
Index	National Citizen Survey	Durham Neighborhood Compass	AARP Livability Index	Office of the NYS Comptroller Environmental Indicators
Health	Availability of food, health services, social services		Quality and availability of healthcare, home and community-based supports and services, fall rates	
Social Environment	Quality of life, quality of neighborhood; place to live, neighborliness, social and religious events		Preference for community cohesiveness, volunteer engagement levels by age, places for social interaction	Child poverty rate, change in child poverty rate
Government/Politics	Volunteerism, civic attentiveness, voting behavior, public information, publications, cooperation in community, value of services, direction of community, citizen involvement		Preference for ability to participate in local government, civic infrastructure/opportunities to engage in government decisions (council/board meetings streamed online/on cable TV, etc.), trust in local government	

Domestic Indices (continued)				
Index	National Citizen Survey	Durham Neighborhood Compass	AARP Livability Index	Office of the NYS Comptroller Environmental Indicators
Culture/Recreation	Recreation opportunities, use of parks and facilities, programs and classes, cultural and educational opportunities, libraries, schools		Preference for community amenities close to home, cultural institutions per capita	
Mobility	Ease of travel, transit services, street maintenance	Households within walking distance to bus stops, total daily bus arrivals, total nightly bus arrivals, commuting to work by bicycle, commuting to work by foot, sidewalk-to-roadway ratio	Pedestrian friendliness, convenient transportation options (frequency of local transit service, walk trips, congestion), accessible system design, transportation costs, safe streets (crash rates, average posted speed limits)	
Housing	Housing options, cost, affordability, new development, growth, code enforcement	Renter-occupied housing, gross rent over 30% income, housing ownership costs 30% or more, average year of residential construction	Housing affordability, housing accessibility (universal design/visitability), housing choices/options	Property value per capita, change in property value

Appendix 1

International Indices					
Index	Community Indicators Victoria	Community Indicators Queensland	Canadian Index of Wellbeing	ONS Measuring National Wellbeing Programme	Child Wellbeing Index
Website	*http://www.communityindicators.net.au*	*http://www.communityindicatorsqld.org.au/content/welcome*	*https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/*	*http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/well-being/index.html*	*http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10522/1/1126232.pdf*
Location	Victoria, Australia	Queensland, Australia	Canada and Province of Ontario	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
Scale	Local Government	Local Government	National and Provincial	National	Local government
Mission	To encourage and support evidence-based policy and planning through the provision of publicly available data that celebrates achievements and drives community engagement and change	Community Resilience in Queensland is a database and information portal providing community resilience indicators and data at a local level for three pilot communities in Queensland: Tablelands, Regional Council, Rockhampton Regional Council, township of Chinchilla	To conduct rigorous research related to, and regularly and publicly report on the quality of life of Canadians, encourage policy shapers and government leaders to make decisions based on solid evidence, and empower Canadians to advocate for change that responds to their needs and values	To provide a fuller picture of how society is doing by supplementing existing economic, social and environmental measures	
Indicator Focus Area	Framing and Sample of Indicators				
Education			Education (childcare, student/teacher ratio, emotional competence, basic knowledge, high school completion, university degree)	Education and Skills (human capital, GCSEs, no qualification)	Education (test score, school level absence, further education beyond 16, % not entering higher education)

International Indices					
Index	Community Indicators Victoria	Community Indicators Queensland	Canadian Index of Wellbeing	ONS Measuring National Wellbeing Programme	Child Wellbeing Index
Economy	Dynamic Resilient Local Economies (economic activity, employment, income, skills, work-life balance)	Dynamic, resilient local economies (economic activity, employment, income and wealth, skills and work life balance)	Living Standards (median income, % low income, economic security index, labor force, unemployment, employment quality)	What we do (unemployment, satisfaction with job) Personal Finance (median income, household wealth, satisfaction with	Maternal Wellbeing (income support, pension credit, child tax credit)
Demographics	Culturally Rich and Vibrant Communities (cultural diversity)	Demography (population size and structure, population stability, diversity and family structure)			
Public Safety			Community Vitality (crime, safety, trust, help)	Where we live (crime, safety)	Crime (burglary rate, theft rate, damage rate, violence rate)
Natural Environment	Sustainable Built and Natural Environments (transport accessibility, energy, housing, water, open space, air quality, biodiversity, waste management)	Sustainable built and natural environment (housing affordability, transport accessibility, water, biodiversity)	Environment (ground level ozone, GHG emissions, energy production, water yield, ecological footprint, etc.)	Natural Environment (GHG emissions, protected areas in the UK, renewable energy consumption, recycling rates)	Environment (air quality, natural environment, bird species, road safety, sports/leisure, distance to school)
Health			Healthy Populations (self-rated health, self-reported diabetes, life expectancy, % smokers, % probable depression, health service rating, influenza immunization, life expectancy)	Health (life expectancy, illness/disability, health satisfaction, mental illness)	Health (emergency admission to hospitals, hospital attendances, Disabled Living Allowance)

Appendix 1

International Indices					
Index	Community Indicators Victoria	Community Indicators Queensland	Canadian Index of Wellbeing	ONS Measuring National Wellbeing Programme	Child Wellbeing Index
Social Environment	Healthy Safe and Inclusive Communities (early childhood, safety, service availability, learning, community connectedness)	Healthy, safe and inclusive communities (personal health and wellbeing, community connectedness, lifelong learning, service availability)	Community Vitality (community inclusion, participation) Time Use (working hours, time pressure, unpaid care to seniors, elderly leisure activity, elderly volunteering,)	Personal Wellbeing (high life satisfaction, worthwhile rating, happiness, anxiety, mental wellbeing) Our Relationships (satisfaction with family life, social life)	
Government/Politics	Democratic and Engaged Communities (citizen engagements)	Democratic and engaged communities (citizen engagement)	Democratic Engagement (voter turnout, income, satisfaction with democracy, confidence in parliament, registered voters, % women in parliament)	Governance (voter turnout, trust in government)	
Culture/Recreation	Culturally Rich and Vibrant Communities (arts and cultural activities, leisure/recreation)	Culturally rich and vibrant communities (arts and cultural activities, sporting and recreational activities, cultural diversity)	Arts, Culture, Recreation (time spent on leisure activities, volunteering, fitness, visit to National Parks, vacation)	What we do (leisure time, volunteering, arts/ culture, sports)	Environment (sports/leisure)
Mobility	Sustainable Built and Natural Environments (transport accessibility)		Time Use (commute time)	Where we live (transport access)	Environment (distance to school)

International Indices					
Index	Community Indicators Victoria	Community Indicators Queensland	Canadian Index of Wellbeing	ONS Measuring National Wellbeing Programme	Child Wellbeing Index
Housing	Sustainable Built and Natural Environments (housing)		Living Standards (housing affordability)	Where we live (accommodation) Housing (overcrowding, shared accommodation,	

Sample Community Satisfaction Survey[1,2]

"Social Indicators for New York Local Governments"

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http://www.mildredwarner.org/restructuring/fiscal-stress

[1] This is a sample questionnaire that focuses on the effects of fiscal stress on the wellbeing of Upstate New York residents. Since this is a template survey, the contents can change to fit the needs of each community. The questions and format of this survey are inspired by the survey used by the AARP and the Australian Center for Excellence for Local Government

AARP. (2014). *State of the 50+ in Onandaga County, New York*. Washington, DC: Angela Houghton. (http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/general/2014/State-of-the-50-Plus-in-Onondaga-County-New-York-AARP-res-gen.pdf).

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[2] This survey format would be most effective for paper-based or online surveys. If conducting a phone survey, using a simpler format may be easier to administer.

Community Satisfaction Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your response will be valuable in informing your local government officials about community satisfaction and wellbeing. The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. Your response will be kept confidential. If you have any questions or concerns about the study or how the results will be used, please do not hesitate to contact your local government officials.

PART 1: Government Services

1. On a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, please rate the following:

	1 (Poor)	2 (Inadequate)	3 (Adequate)	4 (Good)	5 (Excellent)
Adequacy of the following services in your community:					
Public transport	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Education (K-12)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Waste collection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Road quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public safety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adequacy of activities in your neighborhood/city/town:					
Sports and Recreation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arts and Culture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Town Events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adequacy of local parks, reserves and open spaces in your community in terms of:					
Upkeep	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accessibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adequacy in your community of:					
Bikeways	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Walking Paths	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall performance of your local government in delivering an appropriate range and quality of services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. How important are the following issues for you? Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not important and 5 being very important:

	1 (Not Important)	2 (A little Important)	3 (Important)	4 (Fairly Important)	5 (Very Important)
Access to affordable housing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to pay monthly rent or mortgage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to pay utility bills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public transport accessibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal safety	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Opportunities for recreation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of street repair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 2: Community Characteristics

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very unsatisfied and 5 being very satisfied, please rate the following:

	1 (Very Unsatisfied)	2 (Unsatisfied)	3 (Satisfied)	4 (Fairly Satisfied)	5 (Very Satisfied)
Quality of life in your community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Desire to continue living in your community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health services in your community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cost of living in your community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Occupational or work choices in your community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Green spaces in your community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Air quality in your community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 3: Demographics

1. **What is your age range?**

☐ 17 and under ☐ 35-44 years old ☐ 65-74 years old
☐ 18-24 years old ☐ 45-54 years old ☐ 75 and above
☐ 25-34 years old ☐ 55-64 years old ☐ I don't want to say

2. **What is your gender?**

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ I don't want to say

3. **Please specify your ethnicity or race:**

☐ White ☐ Black or African American ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
☐ Hispanic or Latino ☐ Native American or American Indian ☐ Other_____

4. **What is your household situation?**

☐ Living alone ☐ Family with children at home
☐ A single person, sharing accommodation ☐ Family without children at home

5. **Which of the following best describe your living situation?**

☐ Homeowner ☐ Renter ☐ Other

6. **What is the highest level of education that you completed?**

☐ Less than high school ☐ Some college, no degree
☐ High school graduate ☐ Bachelor's degree or more

7. **What is your household income?**

☐ Less than $24,999 ☐ $50,000 to $99,999
☐ $25,000 to $49,999 ☐ $100,000 or More