

United Way Community Indicators

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Study Purpose and Methodology

Study Purpose

In 2005, with funding from the Rasmuson Foundation and the Juneau Assembly, the United Way of Southeast Alaska (UWSEAK) asked McDowell Group to facilitate a Juneau community assessment using the Compass II© methodology. Compass II© is a planning and public involvement process developed by the United Way of America to help communities identify important and timely issues and to engage the assets and key players to address them.

In 2009, funding was again made available, and UWSEAK asked McDowell Group to review the Compass II© results and work with community members to develop a set of Juneau community indicators. The indicators were to address the United Way's three areas of focus: health, education and income stability and to help answer the question, "How is the community of Juneau doing?"

Purpose of the Indicators Project

The purpose of the project is to identify a concise set of indicators that reflect broad public priorities. The indicators are not an exhaustive statistical profile, but rather a way of headlining progress or lack thereof on key issues for policy makers and the public. When regularly updated and widely distributed, the indicators will 1) help identify trends in community quality of life, and 2) help mobilize public involvement.

Study Methodology

The project included research to learn about and evaluate Juneau community priorities, as well as on longer-term issues and "best practices" for community indicators. If indicators focus too much on what people perceive to be the current "crises", they may miss fundamental issues and trends that drive community health over the long-term. On the other hand, indicators that ignore immediate, high-profile issues risk being seen as irrelevant. The goal was a blending of long-term and shorter-term perspectives that address both the following questions:

- What indicators say the most about the community as a whole over time?
- What indicators do we need in order to track the issues we know are community priorities now?

Process for Developing Indicators

Basic tasks for the study included:

- Form an Advisory Group of approximately 12 community members (four meetings altogether)
- Review the main themes and priorities identified in the 2005 Juneau Compass Assessment
- Develop a broad list of potential indicators with help from the Nonprofit Leadership Council (United Way partner agencies) and the Advisory Group

- Understand the challenges and priorities of local social service providers by interviewing their representatives
- Obtain public input using an on-line survey and presentations to community groups including the United Way Board of Directors, Juneau's three Rotary Clubs, and the Juneau Chamber of Commerce
- Develop final recommendations with the Advisory Group
- Summarize the study, including indicator recommendations, in a report to the public

Role of the Advisory Group

The Advisory Group provided important insight and guidance throughout the study. The purpose of the group was to help the project team understand what key themes the indicators should address and what indicators would be most meaningful to the community. The Advisory Group was made up primarily of volunteers from Rotary Club. Jim Powell, a Juneau resident who is engaged in doctoral research on community sustainability indicators also participated in the Advisory Group and provided valuable assistance to the project.

Definition of Community Indicators

An indicator report card is a tool for informing and mobilizing citizens and policy makers to improve the quality of life for everyone. The Sustainable Seattle organization, which has long been active in the use of community indicators in Washington State, defines them as "bits of information that highlight what is happening in a large system." The key word in this definition is "highlight."

Indicators do not tell us everything we need to know to understand whole communities or issues, and they are not a substitute for the range of data needed to develop and evaluate effective social strategies and programs. Rather, indicators spotlight key information that everyone who is concerned about the community should be aware of. Indicators are akin to the gauges on a piece of machinery or the headline of a news story. They say something about the essence of a situation and invite people to dig deeper according to their own interests and priorities. To be effective, indicators must have a clear, logical relationship to the systems they represent.

It is easy for community indicator sets to become cumbersome and confusing. There is a natural tendency for those developing indicators to want to be inclusive. Different civic groups and organizations have different priorities, and all typically want to see theirs directly reflected in public indicators.

Nevertheless, it is important to keep the report card concise. Explaining, updating and publicizing a large indicator set can be challenging and expensive, and it risks losing the attention of the public. For example, a community effort in Sitka produced a set of 40 indicators in 1999 using grant funding. The indicators were last updated in 2002.

Community Indicators vs. Program Measures

As just noted, community indicators are data that highlight key trends within a large system. Program measures are data that describe the activities and impacts of a specific initiative. Data used for program evaluation typically is too "granular," or finely detailed, to tell us much about the big picture. For example, social service organizations may collect dozens, or even hundreds, of statistics about their clients. Most are relevant mainly to the individual client, a group of clients, or a particular type of program.

A statistic might be suitable as a program measure and also as a community indicator, however, if it is informative about both. For example, the number of beds and occupancy rate for a homeless shelter is a measure of how effectively the shelter is operating, but it also tells us something about the severity of homelessness in general throughout the community. To know whether a program measure is suitable as a community indicator, it is necessary to understand all the forces that influence that measure. This is the challenge of the United Way Indicators Project, to understand the extent to which measures represent, in some way, the health of the whole community.

Scope of the United Way Indicators

The United Way Juneau Indicators Project was designed to identify 12 to 15 indicators that address the United Way's areas of focus, namely health, education and income stability. The small set is to help ensure that 1) indicators can be updated annually, or at most biannually, with reliable data and without excessive cost, 2) relevance to the broad community is clear, and 3) indicators are easy for the public to find and understand.

Community vs. Economic Indicators

The United Way community indicators are designed to complement the annual economic indicators published by the Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC). The United Way indicators have an entirely different purpose, however. Economic indicators are a tool for mapping economic strategies. The United Way community indicators are a tool for mobilizing efforts to meet social needs.

Some might argue that, if economic strategies are successful, social needs will take care of themselves. History has shown that a healthy economy does not make the needs of the elderly, young, infirm, or underprivileged go away, however. Further, a lagging economy means that fewer dollars must be allocated over greater need. An effective community must mind its economy, of course, but it must also understand and assist its most fragile citizens. The latter is the job of the United Way and its partner agencies. The United Way indicators are designed to assist that work.

Types of Indicators

Indicators may track any of several things that are important to an interest group. Some indicators might describe a situation, others might describe what's being done about it, still others might describe how people are being changed as a result of what's being done. Community-level indicators often focus on the scope or intensity of an issue (for example, the number of crimes committed where alcohol is a factor). In this way the public can easily see whether things are improving or not, even though the indicator may not capture the reasons behind the trends.

Observations vs. 3rd party reports vs. Self-reports

There are three basic types of data, each of which has strengths and weaknesses as an indicator.

- **Observations** are statistics that are triggered by a well-defined, formal system such as those that track medical procedures, police incidents or school grades. If observations are based on a sound methodology, and that methodology is closely followed, the data is highly reliable. Some observation methods are challenging, however. For example, the annual homeless count involves sending a team of surveyors around town to record the number of homeless people on a single day. This is a difficult process to execute, and many experts believe the homeless count is not a complete picture of community homelessness.
- **3rd party reports** are statistics generated by surveying a peer group, service providers, or others who are knowledgeable about a population. For example, the School Climate and Connectedness Survey asks

students about school life in general, but not about their personal behavior. The extent to which third-party reports are reliable depends largely on the expertise and cooperation of those participating.

- **Self-reports** are statistics generated by surveying individuals about their own behavior. This often involves asking about sensitive information. An example is the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which requires parental consent for students under the age of 18 to participate. The most common criticism of this type of research is that people don't always tell the truth or may not remember data about themselves.

Indexes

An index is a number computed from other numbers. An index has no inherent meaning. It is useful only when it is compared to itself over time or to the same index in another location. For example, the Gallup Healthways Index of Wellbeing purports to measure the wellbeing of Americans based on survey results covering 6 areas: life evaluation, emotional health, physical health, healthy behaviors, work environment, and basic access. On January 1, 2010 the index was 66.1. To know if that is good or bad, one would need to look at trends and additional information about why the index might or might not be changing.

Aggregated Indicators

Indicators for complex issues or relationships sometimes work best when they are grouped together. For example, home prices are one housing indicator. To track affordable housing, however, it is more useful to express home prices as a function of ability to pay, for example "average home price divided by household income". Sometimes several indicators are reported as a cluster. For example, a "public safety" cluster might include indicators for crime, accidents, emergency care and disaster readiness.

Indicators to Avoid

Science students often are taught that the only failed experiment is one that doesn't prove anything. The same is true of indicators. An indicator that is not reliable or timely is not useful. Indicators need to have certain characteristics in order to give us reliable, timely information. The next few paragraphs give examples of indicators that are inherently flawed.

INDICATORS THAT ARE AMBIGUOUS

We would like indicators where movement in one direction or the other is clearly positive or negative. An ambiguous indicator might be:

- # of high school students with a job after school (Does this mean they are responsible, or poor, or neglecting their studies so they can buy a video game?)

INDICATORS THAT ARE SUBJECT TO EXCESSIVE "STATIC"

We would like indicators that are driven primarily, if not entirely, by the issues that are important to us, not outside influences. For example:

- # of medical specialty services available in Juneau (Used alone, this is not a good health indicator because the number is largely determined by population size and economics and doesn't give information about the quality of service.)

INDICATORS FOR WHICH DATA IS NOT RELIABLE (I.E. NOT SYSTEMATICALLY COLLECTED AND ANALYZED)

We would like indicators for which data is collected using a defined (preferably field tested) methodology. Examples of information we might like to have but for which there is no reliable source includes:

- # of youth with no place to go after school (This is hard to define and therefore hard to measure. There are no generally accepted statistics for this condition.)
- # of volunteer hour donated by local residents (Some organizations track volunteers closely, others loosely, others not at all. Arriving at a community-wide total quickly becomes guesswork.)

INDICATORS FOR WHICH DATA IS NOT CONSISTENTLY COLLECTED AT THE BOROUGH LEVEL

In most cases, we would like indicators that can be updated every year or two without conducting special research, especially when that research would require additional funding. Examples include:

- Census data - available only every ten years.
- Data collected for a particular study when regular future updates are not part of the methodology or have not been funded.

High Quality Indicators

The best community-level indicators are, then:

- Clearly positive or negative
- Closely related to the issue of interest
- Based on data that is reliable, consistent and cost-effective to obtain

Rationale for Juneau Indicators

UWSEAK, the Advisory Group and the McDowell project team met twice to discuss the purpose and methodology of the project. They also discussed the community priorities that emerged from the Compass II© process in 2005 and the extent to which they may have evolved in the years since. Then the study team conducted new research for this study. As noted earlier, information about Juneau community priorities and potential measures was collected in several ways, including:

- Developing a broad list of potential indicators with help from the Juneau members of the Nonprofit Leadership Council (United Way partner agencies) and the Advisory Group.
- Interviewing the leaders of local social service providers
- Obtaining and analyzing public input gathered through an on-line survey and during presentations to community groups such as Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce

Key Themes for Juneau

The final two meetings of UWSEAK, the Advisory Group and the McDowell team were devoted to discussion of what had been learned. First, the group reached agreement about a number of key themes that represent broad priorities within each of the three United Way areas of focus. Second the group discussed potential indicators for each of the key themes.

Mindful that a focus on everything is a focus on nothing, the participants at the Advisory Group discussions worked hard to keep the number of themes manageable. In the end, the group determined that 15 themes should be included:

Health

1. Access to care
2. Suicide
3. Substance abuse
4. Infants and children
5. Seniors
6. People with mental and physical disabilities

Income Stability

11. Access to employment
12. Shelter
13. Poverty
14. Young adult stability
15. Family stability

Education

7. Readiness to learn
8. Early elementary performance
9. Success in high school
10. Community-building in schools

Matching Themes with Indicators

For each key theme, the study team, UWSEAK and the Advisory Group considered a number of indicator options with the goal of finding one for each theme. They applied the following criteria:

- The indicator has a central relationship to the theme that can be clearly demonstrated.
- The indicator is compelling to the public and easily understood as positive or negative.
- The indicator is based on data that is reliable, consistent and cost-effective to obtain

The table shows the types of indicators identified by the group as meeting these criteria for each theme.

Key Themes and Types of Indicators Identified for Juneau

Focus Area and Key Themes	Type of Indicator
Health	
1. Access to care	Insurance coverage
2. Suicide	Student assessments or self-report surveys
3. Substance abuse	Self-report surveys
4. Infants and children	Birth weight
5. Seniors	Availability of end of life care
6. People with mental and physical disabilities	Availability of care
Education	
7. Readiness to learn	Language facility
8. Early elementary performance	Academic assessment
9. Success in high school	Graduation and dropout rates
10. Community-building in schools	Student and parent involvement
Income Stability	
11. Access to employment	Childcare capacity and quality
12. Shelter	Supported housing and % of income for housing
13. Poverty	Eligibility for poverty relief
14. Young-adult stability	Teen pregnancies or self-report surveys
15. Family stability	Family violence

Relationships between Indicators and Themes

Following is a general discussion of how the potential indicators are related to the 15 key themes. A more precise description of the proposed indicators and a full list of the data sources may be found in the next chapter. In general, data will come from local and state government agencies, self-report surveys (specifically, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) administered annually to Juneau high school students), in-school assessments, and in one or two cases, from nonprofit agencies. Data and data sources are discussed in more detail below.

Health

Access to care: Availability and affordability of services are the two main components of access to care. Since the number and type of services available in Juneau is largely determined by population size, the team focused on affordability, specifically insurance coverage. They chose two primary indicators of coverage, the overall number of people with insurance and the number of children who are covered through Denali Kid Care.

Suicide: Suicide is a key indicator of mental health. 80 percent of suicides are associated with a combination of depression and substance abuse, and risk is highest between the ages of 15 and 24. The number of annual suicides is not a useful indicator because it is small and varies considerably from year to year. One option is to use self-report data from the YRBS, but that is only available every two years. The best annual data is from the Signs of Suicide (SOS) assessment program begun in Juneau in 2007. SOS provides standardized screening for ninth graders with respect to suicide risk and depression. The program also includes education and intervention steps and has been shown to reduce suicide attempts. In 2007 and 2008, 23 percent of Juneau ninth graders showed symptoms associated with a major depression disorder within the preceding six months and/or significant suicidal thoughts within the preceding year.

Substance abuse: Alcohol consumption is a factor in a great number of police incidents. The number of incidents is a useful proxy for community alcohol abuse. There are relatively few arrests for drug crimes, however. A more comprehensive indicator of drug abuse is the YRBS, which tracks drug use reported by high school students. The wording of the current YRBS survey is not ideal because it groups oxycodone, an extremely dangerous and prevalent drug, with other prescription drugs that are chemically different and are misused in different ways. Nevertheless, aggregating the responses to several drug-oriented questions in the YRBS provides a good indicator of drug use among this vulnerable population.

Infants and children: This broad area is difficult to capture in one or two numbers. However, the number of low birth-weight babies is accurately tracked and widely used as a proxy for overall child health because it correlates with many other pre-natal, post-natal and child development issues.

Seniors: Because of the current age demographic in Juneau, the next two decades will see a dramatic increase in the number and percentage of seniors in the population. Seniors have both positive impacts and significant needs. Access to end of life care was chosen as a proxy for senior health issues partly because it is an inescapable need that will more and more confront the community.

People with mental and physical disabilities: A healthy community has the capacity to care for those with special needs. Two indicators were identified. One is a proxy for the extent of need: the number of adults who report having difficulties with daily activities. The other is a measure of Juneau's capacity to respond: the number of people waitlisted for services.

Education

Readiness to learn: A growing body of research indicates that language facility when a child enters kindergarten is an important indicator of that child's readiness to learn. Many school districts, including Juneau, have begun using a screening tool called "Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening" (PALS) to assess young children's facility with the basic building blocks of language.

Early elementary performance: There is consensus among most educators that the ability of third-grade students to read and write is a predictor of future academic performance. Standards Based Assessments regularly conducted in the third grade are a convenient measure. We include math assessments as well, since math skills are key to many careers and the data is readily available.

Success in high school: We include both graduation and dropout rates as they offer complementary perspectives and both statistics are readily available and closely tracked by the school district.

Community-building in schools: The two previous education indicators measure academic success. This indicator is a proxy for the complex role of schools in producing good citizens. Most data on student involvement in the community or community involvement in schools is incomplete and unreliable. However, the YRBS provides consistent, self-reported information about student volunteering and parental involvement.

Income Stability

Access to employment: The number and types of jobs available in a community has a huge impact on social needs and quality of life, but falls largely outside the capacity of social service organizations to address. Economic development being the purview of the Juneau Economic Development Council, this project focused instead on the extent to which Juneau residents are able to access the employment opportunities that exist.

One key measure of employment access is the availability of quality childcare. Childcare is especially key in communities, such as Juneau, where a relatively high cost of living means both parents often are in the workforce. Official counts of childcare slots are limited to those at licensed facilities. Those counts also record whether staff at the facility have child development credentials. These statistics are not ideal, because use of unlicensed facilities is common. They are a reasonable proxy for overall childcare, however.

Shelter: Although there are many issues associated with housing affordability, a common denominator is that no one can maintain income stability or economic independence without a place to live. Two types of indicators were chosen. One focuses on the ability of working families to find stable shelter: the proportion of households paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing. The other indicator addresses the

capacity of the community to accommodate fragile individuals and families who are trying to move toward stability: the number of units of supported housing and transitional living.

It was determined that supported housing and transitional living are particularly critical indicators because they are relevant to both health and income stability. Although we know of no readily available statistic, the components of this information are collected by DHSS and service providers. The expectation is that the United Way will develop this indicator using information from DHSS and United Way partner agencies.

The proportion of households paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing is available from the American Community Survey (U.S. Census) as a rolling three-year average. It can also be computed using housing cost data available from Alaska Housing Finance Corporation and income data from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The most recent data shows that 45 percent of Juneau renters pay more than 30 percent of their household income for housing. The statewide average is 38 percent and the U.S. average is 30 percent.

Poverty: Poverty is a factor in many community issues, and it can be defined in many ways. One of the most widely known and easily understood measures of poverty is the number of children eligible for free or reduced cost lunches in school. This number is tracked by the school district, but must be adjusted somewhat to be fully inclusive as an indicator (see page 16).

Young adult stability: Teen pregnancies cut across health, education and economic lines, but are particularly relevant to income stability because of the well documented economic challenges of single- and teen-parent households. Teen pregnancies are well tracked and may be viewed as a proxy for a variety of risky situations and behaviors that are barriers to achieving income stability in younger households.

Family stability: Family violence was chosen as the indicator for family stability because the overall, long-term financial and social costs to the community of this devastating condition are especially great and because this indicator speaks to public safety in general, as well as to family issues.

Indicator Coverage

In deciding on the final indicator set, the group also considered the fact that all of the 15 key themes are relevant to more than one of the United Way's focus areas. The table below illustrates how broadly the key themes and their indicators apply. There are only a few cells in the table where cross-relevance of the themes might not be apparent. In fact, a case could be made for placing a check in every cell. This is an indication that the indicators are, indeed, capable of "highlighting what is happening in a large system."

Areas of Overlap among Key Themes

Focus Area and Key Themes	Health	Education	Income Stability
Health			
Access to care	✓		✓
Suicide	✓		✓
Substance abuse	✓	✓	✓
Infants and children	✓	✓	✓
Seniors	✓		✓
People with mental and physical disabilities	✓	✓	✓
Education			
Readiness to learn		✓	✓
Early elementary performance		✓	✓
Success in high school		✓	✓
Community-building in schools		✓	
Income Stability			
Access to employment	✓	✓	✓
Shelter	✓	✓	✓
Poverty	✓	✓	✓
Youth stability	✓	✓	✓
Family stability	✓	✓	✓

Indicator Recommendations

The next set of tables show the fifteen themes identified during this project, the 21 indicators chosen to represent those themes, and the source data for each indicator. Source data are not yet verified in every case. The next step in the process of implementing the indicators will be to obtain current data for the full set. That process will determine whether all of them are feasible to maintain. During the verification process, it may be discovered that one or two of the chosen indicators is not practical. As discussed earlier, a slightly smaller set of indicators should not be viewed as necessarily inferior, even if some issue coverage must be sacrificed. Keeping the set concise and focused will help maximize its public impact and, therefore, usefulness.

The following acronyms and abbreviations are used in the tables:

- ABVS - Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics
- ACS - American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau)
- AEYC-SEA - Association for the Education of Young Children - Southeast Alaska
- AHFC - Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
- AKAIMS - Alaska Automated Information Management System (DBH)
- ARORA - Database for DMHDD
- BRFSS - Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (DPH)
- DBH - DHSS Division of Behavioral Health
- DCCED - Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
- DEED - Alaska Department of Education and Early Development
- DHSS - Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
- DMA - DHSS Division of Medical Assistance
- DMHDD - DHSS Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities
- DOLWD - Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- DPH - DHSS Division of Public Health
- JHC - Juneau Homeless Coalition
- JPD - Juneau Police Department
- JSD - Juneau School District
- PALS-K – Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (Kindergarten)
- SOS – Signs of Suicide Program
- YRBS - Youth Risk Behavior Survey (question #s in the table refer to the 2009 survey)

Health

Theme	Indicators	Data Source
Access to care	% of CBJ residents without health insurance	DCCED/Division of Insurance
	% of children eligible for and covered by Denali Kid Care	DHSS/DMA
Suicide	% of ninth-grade students identified by the SOS program	JSD
Substance abuse	# of alcohol-related police calls	JPD
	# and % of high school students who have used at least one dangerous drug other than alcohol more than 9 times in their lifetimes (cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, XTC, inhaling, illicit prescription drugs)**	JSD/YRBS Q#54 to 61*
Infants and children	% of low birth-weight babies	ABVS
Seniors	# and % of seniors who can be accommodated in end-of-life care	UW agencies***
People with mental and physical disabilities	# adults with disabilities who report having a hard time with daily activities	DPH, BRFSS
	# of people with severe or chronic mental illness who are waitlisted for services	AKAIMS

Notes:

*The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a well-established, field-tested methodology. In part because Alaska law requires prior parental permission before students may be interviewed about their personal behavior, the YRBS is expensive to administer and is fielded only every other year. The permission requirement also means that some students do not participate in the sample. Currently, the YRBS is the best information available about many of the significant social issues affecting high school students, however.

**The YRBS questions addressing drug abuse are not structured to be very useful as indicators of overall illegal drug use among students. An alternative substance abuse measure is the number of referrals for drug treatment as reported in the AKAIMS data system. The AKAIMS figure does not include referrals by private counselors, however it is a good reflection of year-to-year trends

***Complete information about end-of-life services for seniors is not currently available. Use of this indicator will require that local agencies that serve seniors help assemble this data.

Education

Theme	Indicators	Data Source
Readiness to learn	% of students with a summed score below benchmarks on the PALS-K assessment*	JSD
Early elementary performance	% proficient on Grade 3 Standards Based Assessments in reading (by Native and non-Native)*	JSD/DEED
Success in high school	Dropout rate: % of student body that leaves between 7 th and 12 th grade without a transcript request (by Native and non-Native)	JSD/DEED
	Graduation rate: % of 9 th grade cohort that gets a degree in 4 years (less those who leave with a transcript request (by Native and non-Native)	JSD/DEED
Community building in schools**	# of high school students who volunteer at least two hours per week	JSD/YRBS Q#95
	# of high school students whose parents talk with them at least once a week about what they are doing in school	JSD/YRBS Q#92

Notes:

*The PALS-K assessment is primarily an internal process to help teachers evaluate the individual needs of incoming students and to plan for how to address those needs. The PALS-K assessment is, therefore, an indicator of the scope of the challenge. The next indicator, Grade 3 Standards Based Assessments, are largely a measure of how well the literacy challenge has been addressed in the years between kindergarten and third grade.

** Both indicators for community building in schools are YRBS results and, therefore, available only every other year. Another option is data from the annual School Climate and Connectedness Survey. However, the SCCS is a more indirect measure than the YRBS. It does not obtain prior parental permission and therefore cannot ask students to report personal behavior. It is limited to questions about how students perceive their environment and the actions of others.

Another possible indicator of community-building in schools is the number of parents who attend parent-teacher conferences. This data is tracked by some schools, but is not currently collected or aggregated for the district as a whole.

Income Stability

Theme	Indicators	Data Source
Access to employment	# of licensed child care slots per 100 children under 5 and % where at least one staff person has a child development credential	AEYC
Shelter	# units of supported housing and transitional living*	JHC and UW agencies
	% of homeowners and renters paying 30% or more of their household income for housing	ACS or compute from AHFC and DOLWD data**
Poverty	% of children eligible for free or reduced lunch***	JSD
Young adult stability	# of teen pregnancies per 1,000 girls 15 to 19 years of age	DHSS/DPH
	% of high school students who say there is at least one non-parent from whom they could seek help if they had an important question	YRBS Q#95
Family stability	# of family violence police calls	JPD

Notes:

* This is another indicator for which data exists, but must be assembled by local agencies if it is to be used effectively as an indicator.

** The ACS publishes this data for Juneau as a rolling, three-year average. Annual information computed from AHFC and DOLWD data would be a better indicator.

*** Discussion with JSD indicates that this data will be most accurate as a poverty indicator if adjusted to account for students who are in foster care.

A Community Mirror

Community indicators of the kind developed for this report are a broad mirror for the community. Their job is to help provoke and sustain community discussion and action. As noted earlier, such indicators are not a substitute for more detailed planning and analysis, and they are not, by themselves, particularly useful for program evaluation. Rather, they are a tool for aligning and motivating public interest.

To be an effective mirror, the indicators should be 1) updated and released every year at the same time, 2) widely distributed in local media and through other channels, and 3) promoted as discussion items on the agendas of as many community groups as possible. Public awareness of the indicators may be expanded with press releases and public service announcements. However, awareness is not enough. It is also important to encourage discussion of the context and meaning of the indicators. Distribution should be accompanied by concise analyses of trends and lessons indicated by the data.

These Juneau community indicators were chosen, in part, because of their association with many of the key issues of concern to community leaders in Juneau. It is true that priorities change overtime, and the indicators may also. Replacing one indicator with another should not be necessary very often, however. The fifteen themes identified during this study will not go away, nor will they become unimportant

The fifteen themes and the indicators associated with them are by no means intended to restrict the spectrum of social strategies or initiatives that might be brought to bear in Juneau, however. To the contrary, they are intended to be a framework for integrating and leveraging a wide variety of programs and ideas that accommodate shifts in short-term priorities. As noted in Sustainable Seattle's first indicator report in 1995:

It is significant to remember that, just as "the map is not the territory," the indicators are not the same as the systems they attempt to measure....The indicators, taken together, provide us with a snapshot of our community, but there is no abstract set of data or comprehensive theory that can take the place of people's direct experiences.

A Personal Call to Action

Indicators reflect a community, but they should also be a touchstone for each of its citizens. Everyone Juneau resident has had some personal experience with at least a few of the conditions being addressed by the indicator set. This makes each indicator potentially a personal call to action. Although the abstract "framework" of the set is important, it is individuals who get things done.

Appendix 1 - Interviews with Nonprofit Agency Representatives

Purpose

The interviews were designed to get feedback from United Way partner agencies about issues in the community, including the ones they address as service providers. Attempts were made to contact the executive directors or other representatives of 20 Juneau agencies. Fourteen interviews were completed addressing three main areas:

- Strengths and gaps in local services
- Status of key community issues
- Priorities for community action

In addition, in-person interviews were conducted with two individuals who are experts in the areas identified as highest priority in the 2005 Compass project, namely drug and alcohol abuse and affordable housing.

Major Themes

Many of the representatives took time to address local issues in some detail and in a way that reflects the complexity of real-world challenges. Following are brief summaries of the most-often mentioned concerns:

- Drug and alcohol abuse is a critical problem that is becoming worse. It is a key factor in multiple other conditions and issues.
- The economic health of the community has a major effect on social service needs and in/out migration. The mismatch between incomes and housing costs is a serious economic issue.
- There are two key needs in the process of stabilizing fragile individuals and families. The first is affordable, transitional housing that bridges the gap between emergency shelter and long-term housing. This is most acute for low-income families, the homeless, domestic violence victims, and people with mental health issues, disabilities, and other special needs. This means affordable rental units and a significant increase in supportive housing services.
- Although Juneau agencies work well together, there is a big need for case management/coordinated access and delivery of multiple services, especially for families and people with mental health needs.
- Many key services and programs are either not affordable or not sufficient to address high-risk youth who are "under the radar" (poor or with little supervision/family involvement).
- The needs of the elderly are straining available services and those needs will increase substantially in the future as our population ages.
- We have made progress in promoting volunteerism and community dialogue.

Summaries by Question

Greatest strengths of the Juneau nonprofit sector

Collaboration, dedication to mission, and use of volunteers were most often mentioned as strengths. Several people praised the United Way for its coordinating and supporting role.

Caps in nonprofit services

Services for the homeless and those with mental health issues were often mentioned. Also supportive services in general, either combined with housing or delivered in-home. Some cited a need for case management and counseling services for people and families faced with multiple issues.

Special strategies needed for youth?

Opinions were split, with slightly more people saying Juneau is not much different from other towns its size. Several people said that lack of programs and opportunities is not the issue, but rather that some youth cannot access what s available because of cost, lack of transportation or lack of family support

Key demographic trends for Juneau

Many people cited economic trends, in particular rising cost of living relative to local income levels. With respect to social trends, the implications of aging was most often identified. Homelessness was second.

Effects of "clashing ideologies"

Most people said polarization either was not a significant issue or that it was a factor mainly with respect to economic development, rather than social issues.

Status of key community issues

The table below shows the number of agency interviewees who said an issue has been getting better, minus the number of people who said it is getting worse. A positive number means that more people said "better" or "much better," and a negative number means that more people said "worse" or "much worse." ("Stayed the same" responses are not shown.)

Agency representatives as a whole said the five issues have shown some improvement:

- Physically healthy lifestyle
- Volunteer involvement
- Community dialogue
- K-12 educational opportunities
- Racial/ethnic tension

"Services for the elderly/disabled" is perceived to be about the same.

The other issues received more negative than positive responses. The eight issues perceived most negatively by the agency representatives a group are:

- Family economic security
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Affordable medical care
- Poverty
- Affordable housing
- Homelessness
- Services for mentally/emotionally ill
- Access to childcare

In the past three years have the following community issues gotten better, worse or stayed about the same?

Community Issue	Net Better
Commitment to a physically healthy lifestyle	6
Volunteer involvement in the community	6
Productive community dialogue	5
Access to quality K-12 educational opportunities	3
Racial or ethnic tension	1
Services for the elderly or people with disabilities	0
Access to programs and recreation for youth	(1)
High school dropout rate	(1)
Overall quality of life in Juneau	(2)
Family violence, including abuse of children or adults	(4)
Attractiveness of the community for young adults	(4)
Access to child care	(6)
Availability of affordable housing	(7)
Homelessness	(7)
Services for people with mental or emotional issues	(7)
Poverty	(8)
Drug and alcohol abuse	(9)
Access to affordable health care	(9)
Economic security for working families	(13)

Status of 2005 Compass priorities

People said the priorities from the 2005 Compass process are still relevant, however with some qualifications. 'Drugs and alcohol' and 'affordable housing' continue to be major concerns. Promoting volunteerism is seen as a moderate success story and, therefore, as somewhat less of a priority, as is improving community dialogue. There is still moderate concern about racial tension. Some pointed to specific areas where over-representation by Natives reveals a community weakness, for example in the justice and child welfare systems.

Connections that nurture children and youth is still seen as an important topic, but interviewees said the issue needs to be defined more precisely. Mental health, domestic violence and homelessness were most often suggested as possible additions to the list of top priorities.

Two or three local issues for broad-based community action now

Most often mentioned were mental/emotional health, homelessness, drug/alcohol abuse, affordable housing, and abused/neglected kids. Support for families and affordable health care were also identified by more than one person.

Substance Abuse and Affordable Housing

The two issues accorded the highest priority in the 2005 Compass II assessment were substance abuse and affordable housing. To learn more about the current status of these issues, the study team interviewed a local expert in each of the fields. Following is an overview of major points made by the interview subjects.

Substance Abuse

Addressing alcohol is mainly a matter of political will. It's a policy issue more than a service delivery issue. The main determinants of alcohol abuse are price and availability. In Juneau, we have too many beverage licenses per capita, especially too many package stores. Southeast Alaska is the highest-consuming region of Alaska, approximately 40 percent higher than the statewide average. This is partly because our big influx of tourists, and especially the tourism workforce, boost drinking levels in the summer.

The best indicator of whether a community has an alcohol problem is simply consumption per capita. (This statistic can be adjusted over time to account for the average age of the community because older people drink less.) Raising the tax on alcohol is an obvious step to take. It not only would reduce consumption, it would raise money for treatment and shift more of the economic cost to abusers. (In 1998, abusers paid for less than half of the economic damage they caused, according to an Anchorage indicators report)

Attacking other drugs is harder. Best practices call for a three-pronged approach: enforcement + prevention + treatment Here again, availability and price are key. That's the enforcement part. Oxycontin is in Juneau because we can afford it. It's also easy to get, in part because it is overprescribed. If we didn't have money, we would have much more methamphetamine, which is cheap to make. Prevention is a matter of smart policy and education. Policy makers still don't understand the economics of prevention.

Affordable Housing

The Juneau Homeless Coalition and the Affordable Housing Commission address two ends of a spectrum, and there is a gap in between. The former is concerned mainly with poor families and homelessness. The latter is working on affordable home ownership. In between, and often unaddressed are people trying to move from temporary to long-term, stable housing. These are people that have enough money that they don't qualify for subsidized programs, but they can't afford market rates. This area is sometimes called "workforce housing."

The number of homeless in Juneau is not known. An Empire article referenced "up to 300" children and teens. There are 250 to 300 Housing Choice vouchers issued in Juneau with the homeless preference. Another challenge is seasonal housing for summer workers. No clear ideas have been proposed. Rental units are not only expensive, but often in poor condition. Landlords say they have no incentive to maintain them. We also need supported housing, but state funding changes from year to year. Dialogue with the state is not very effective yet

The average sales price of a home is not an indicator of "affordable." Those houses are out of range of the people who need housing. The most significant indicator is the percent of median income needed to rent an apartment. In Juneau, it is 45 percent at least 10 points higher than what is considered sustainable. Juneau needs more SRO housing. A recent land-use code change made this easier (less parking and open space required.) But there is little or no commercial interest in developing this type of housing. Affordable housing is always subsidized (federal). Juneau needs to plan to take advantage of those subsidies. To be funded, projects must fit within a local plan that in turn, fits within a state plan.

Solving Alaska's housing challenges will take big investment and there is no housing subcommittee in the legislature. Low Income Housing Tax Credits don't work well in Juneau because they're geared toward large projects. Rent-to-own is popular, funded by tribal (NAHASDA) funds. One innovation for Juneau to consider is an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which is linked to a stable, municipal revenue source. That allows access to federal matching funds for specific projects. The next Housing Situation Report update by the CBJ (from 2006) will be in 2011.

Appendix 2 - Web-survey Results

Participation in the web survey was voluntary (or “self-selected”) rather than by random sampling. When interpreting the results, therefore, it is important to remember that they represent only the views of the survey respondents and cannot be assumed to represent the whole community. It is also important to keep in mind that the survey examines people’s *perceptions* and does not attempt to establish whether those perceptions are based in fact.

The table shows selected demographic characteristics of the 247 survey respondents compared with the overall Juneau population. The main differences between survey respondents and Juneau residents in general is that survey respondents are more likely to be female, white, and to be somewhat higher income. They likely represent a longer average length of residency. Ninety-eight percent of respondents consider themselves full-time residents. Comparative residency data for the population as a whole is not available. These differences are consistent with the fact that survey participation was promoted most heavily among business and professional groups, i.e., Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce.

Demographic	Respondents n=247	Juneau Residents
Gender		
Female	71%	50%
Male	29	50
Average Age	48.5 years	47 years*
Ethnicity		
Alaska Native	8%	17%
White/Caucasian	84	75
Other	8	8
Median Household Income**	\$85,000	\$62,000
Average Length of Residency	18 years	n/a
Neighborhood of Residence**		
Auke Bay and out the road	15%	13%
Douglas Bridge and north	7	6
Douglas Bridge and south	15	7
Downtown and Thane	14	20
Twin Lakes to Fred Meyer	7	12
Mendenhall Valley	43	42

* Average age of Juneau residents who are 19 or older. (Median age for Juneau is 38.1 years)

**Comparisons with Juneau residents are approximate

Status of Key Community Issues

This table addresses the same topics as the table with the identical title, above. Here, however, the results are shown as the *percent* of survey respondents, rather than the *number* of individuals. The number in the right-hand column is, therefore, the percent who said “better” or “much better” minus the percent who said “worse” or “much worse.”

The resulting rank order for the web-survey respondents is very similar to that for the partner-agency representatives.

In the past three years have the following community issues gotten better, worse or stayed about the same?

Community Issue	Net Better/ (Worse)
Access to programs and recreation for youth	22%
Commitment to a physically healthy lifestyle	18
Access to quality K-12 educational opportunities	13
Volunteer involvement in the community	11
Racial or ethnic tension	9
Services for the elderly or people with disabilities	7
Productive community dialogue	3
Overall quality of life in Juneau	(2)
Services for people with mental or emotional issues	(3)
High school drop out rate	(13)
Family violence, including abuse of children or adults	(25)
Access to affordable healthcare	(26)
Availability of affordable housing	(26)
Attractiveness of the community to young adults	(33)
Poverty	(35)
Homelessness	(37)
Access to child care	(39)
Economic security for working families	(44)
Drug and alcohol abuse	(60)

Most Important Issue to Address

This was an open-ended question. McDowell Group categorized responses into 10 groups and “other.”

What is the most important issue for the Juneau community to address right now?

Community Issue	Percent Choosing as Most Important
Drugs and alcohol	25%
Affordable housing	19
Jobs/economic development	16
Homelessness	8
Childcare/early childhood and K-12 education	7
Recreational activities for children and youth	5
Access to healthcare	4
Suicide	3
Healthy and safe families	3
Energy cost/sustainability	3
Other*	9

*Other responses include a variety of issues that received two or fewer mentions, as well as approximately 20 people who said “none” or who gave inapplicable answers.

Time Spent Volunteering

Approximately 72 percent of respondents said they volunteer for “local community organizations.” The average amount of volunteer time for respondents who volunteer at least one hour per month is 11.7 hours per month. The average amount of volunteer time for all respondents is 8.4 hours per month.

Additional Comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide an open-ended comment at the end of the survey. Following are verbatim transcriptions:

- Perhaps we should regard our elders and traditions like the indigenous communities. Only strong roots grow strong trees.
- Community service opportunities need more promotion. Not just monetary contributions.
- I am disappointed at the low voter turnout (29 percent) in the last municipal elections with maybe 29 percent of Juneau showing up to the polls!

- As a whole Juneau works hard and works together to overcome social problems. We are much more divided on economic and development issues and how we solve some of our infrastructure problems.
- I appreciate Juneau's overall willingness to hire and retain young people from Southeast Alaska.
- I burned out on volunteering, but intend to start again. As Juneau has become more congested and bureaucracies more complicated (municipal, state, federal), the town's character has changed. There's a lot more frustration and disengagement.
- (It shouldn't) be difficult to cultivate a community atmosphere that indicates to young people that school is important and that the people in Juneau want them to succeed in school.
- Juneau needs to become the state leader in early childhood development and become the Mecca for young families.
- I liked the Bamburners that brought folks together in their neighbors homes and think this is an effective way to handle obtaining support for a program both money and volunteers.
- I see many young people who want to live in Juneau but cannot afford to buy a house. Our houses are becoming run down and people cannot afford to buy them and fix them up.
- I selected economic opportunities as my first priority, as I believe that gives the community the ability to address a lot of the other issues. While we have a high percentage of people with good incomes, we have a lot of people that struggle to make ends meet.
- The United Way has a great website for volunteer opportunities, but not a lot of people know about it.
- (We need) a safe place where people from all backgrounds could access a myriad of different resources such as job skills, family support, activities, lending library, computer/internet access, social skills, support groups, & video conferencing technology to access other resources outside our community would be very helpful.
- I will always love Juneau, but the cost of living is SO high. I can't seem to get out of debt here. I have to relocate to another state where jobs are plentiful and the cost of living is low.
- In the long run quality educational programs at k-12 and higher education are the way to impact poverty and homelessness as well as many other social issues. However, we also need to address problems such as alcohol and drug abuse directly.
- It would be great to get a group started that would problem solve some of the challenges that Juneau faces.....homelessness.....affordable housing.....invasive plants. Juneau is a wonderful place to live.....but I would like to see more community involvement.
- Juneau is a difficult place to be on a retired, fixed income.
- Juneau is a great place.
- Juneau is a transient community in part because it is almost impossible to spend a lifetime here. few 18-35 year olds are able to afford to live in Juneau. A community that is transient like Juneau lacks the dedication for long term commitments.

- Juneau, like America is becoming more polarized by economic class. The middle class is shrinking, poverty growing, wealth is being transferred from the middle to the few at the top.
- Juneauites do not appreciate the level of participation found in this community compared to other communities of its size. There is a failure by public sector employees to appreciate the needs of the private sector. I don't know what can be done about this.
- Juneau is a special and beautiful town. The people as a community are not overly generous but individuals and leaders are great civic citizens.
- Many of these issues are inter-related, so it's hard to separate one from the other.
- My answers are somewhat negative, but I find the community in a forever stalemate
- Stop studying dropout rates and use the money instead to help students
- The children that are homeless with very little resources is a problem and has gotten worse. Daycare is too expensive for my daughter to pay on her own while she is buying a condo, and she also doesn't qualify for Medicaid or WIC. She is still trying to pay off a c-section medical bill.
- The community needs to emphasize self-reliance more than it does. We have become so frail nowadays. Had we been this way as a society 200 years ago we would never have become the great country we are today.
- The Juneau Suicide Prevention Task Force has done amazing work, but there is more to do. We need to target middle school.
- The largest and most pressing challenge in Juneau and all of SE is to bridge the divide between development and no-development factions.
- The level of anger and bitterness in the Empire blogs, before they were mercifully taken down, scared me about the community.
- The schools do not support and encourage linguistic diversity. Lack of support toward diverse ethnic groups and languages leads toward greater racial tension and higher dropout rates among marginalized cultures and races.
- There are lots of one time special events for families and kids but there are so many families that can't partake because they are working. A lot of young parents feel deserted by the community, and they are.
- Video and commercials should be closed-caption for people who can't hear. There are lot of people who have hearing loss!
- We have too many folks who have a mind set of not in my backyard. For example, they want affordable housing, just not in my neighborhood.
- We need a place for donations (clothes) or clearer information on where we can donate items.
- We need to all be aware that charities are getting a lot less support due to the economic troubles of the country. Families need to know that the community appreciates and supports them morally, ethically and physically.
- Work with communities in Southeastern to be a stronger, healthier region.