

Regional Index of Sustainability Indicators, facilitated by Jan Brown

Existing Resources/Efforts

The following existing resources and efforts – which might help inform the development of a regional index of sustainability indicators - were identified during the three listening post sessions:

- The Natural Step – Although it has an environmental emphasis and is weak on social and economic sides, it is an important resource as a sample of indicators.
- The Family Safety Network – Driggs Chapter of the national organization – They've recently done a survey on feelings re: change in Teton County, ID, indicating a good degree of hopelessness among the population.
- EPA, HUD and DOT – Access the grantor sources for what others are doing
- *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam – Look at the indicators he uses on socioeconomics
- Center for Neighborhood Technology – Chicago – Has created maps that show housing and transportation costs that increase with commuting distance to city centers. Could be an indicator for our four counties that show impact of traveling far to work
- Non-Governmental Organizations in our counties such as Henry's Fork Foundation and Teton Regional Land Trust track our recreation assets and amenities; studies may show economic and other values to track
- E-Center in Rexburg is looking at constraints to creating jobs in Upper Valley
- HUDUSER.GOV has known data from Census that show past trends; HUD Sustainability website – see what is already there that we should access right now
- Local Resources such as BYU-Idaho and each city/county planning department may also have trend data that we shouldn't overlook. Past interns at Boise State also have done work in this area; check on BYU-I recycling program being implemented
- Charture Institute in Jackson. Jonathan Schechter already tracking sustainability factors in Teton County, WY – no need to re-create the wheel if his can expand
- Aspen Institute & Rocky Mountain Institute – both tracking indicators in Colorado; also looking at efficiency of energy utilities
- State Energy Offices – for both ID and WY- should be tracking data
- Colorado has a Sustainable Development Code – we should compare their end product to what Code Studio may have in mind for our model code
- Smart Growth Coalition – Idaho organization may have metrics; does Wyoming have state organization that also could work toward alignment on principles?
- Federal and State Statistics – Census, Labor Depts, Chambers, Energy Information Administration – all have data that is out there and need not be re-collected
- State DEQs for Air and Water Quality Indicators – Need to find out what is already being monitored so we can easily establish a measurable baseline
- Public Health Departments and Soil Conservation Districts – similarly are monitoring drinking water and groundwater/surface water sources

Information Gaps

The following information gaps were identified; they may need to be filled in order to develop the regional index of sustainability indicators:

- Social Responsibility – Need to know the level of business interest in this aspect of sustainability
- Environmental Stewardship – Assess business interest in contrast to individuals and NGOs
- Economic Differences between Two Teton Counties – compare/contrast
- Public Awareness of Teton Valley Comp Plan – Surveys being conducted right now will lead to lessons learned from the process; Metrics could result
- Amenity definition and values – need to assign \$ value to intangibles
- Extent of noxious weed infestation – focus on foreclosed properties and assess ability to manage what we have/where we are
- A Real Four-County Database – We need to share data we don't even realize we have. Reason to have a Council of Governments or some mechanism
- Regional GIS standards and database that align across two states – compatibility will be a big question on our data pool. Consider the GIS group called EIRRC. They are looking for a mission and chair is in Rexburg.
- List of appropriate sites for various business types – Need a four-county list to support future economic development that is best for everyone (best site should be identified among all four counties, not just each county's favorite)
- Top 50 employers – Need regional list – who are they, # employed by each
- Seasonal Economic Activity – Need better description of highs and lows; how seasonal traffic patterns and other seasonal fluctuations affect our region
- Value of Tourism to Local Economies - Assess \$ value of fisheries, wildlife populations and recreation resources
- Cost of Visitor Impacts to Above – what is cost of public abuse of resources?
- Local Food Systems and Access to Local Food – Need more info to describe what we currently have in entire region
- Value of Productive Ag Land – Quantify current and future values given trends that show competition for land and water for uses other than raising food
- Statistics on Region's Energy/Resource Consumption – vehicle fuels, natural gas, propane, electricity, solid waste, and transportation
- Energy Knowledge/Education – what more do we need to know?
- Metrics on Cycling and Pedestrian Use – monitoring needed
- Public Health & Wellness – how are we doing in these counties re: obesity, disease, etc.
- Current Sustainability Efforts & Priorities – lessons being learned

Critical Areas of Focus (to measure/monitor)

The following critical areas should be incorporated into the development of regional index sustainability indicators:

- Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)– Quantifiable
- Quality of Life – Three legs of sustainability should be monitored
- Sense of Place – We need to monitor as this is a place-based landscape

- Community/Neighbor Relationships – Track who well legacy residents and newcomers are treating each other – like Old vs. New West
- Public Sense of Control over Change – Track this during this 3-yr process?
- Consumption of Locally Produced Food
- Household Energy Use
- Degree of Transience – e.g. empty seasonal residences; job turnover ; need to measure so we can focus on helping folks stay here and protect/advocate for their jobs/well-being
- Living Wage Employment Opportunities
- Water Quality and Quantity – as a measure of good management
- Getting Grants – to pay for monitoring indicators and then using indicators to justify more grants
- Economically Viable Communities – Use indicators to help struggling towns see how to make progress
- Culture – should be a result of sustainability. Places should be “nice” and fun to live in. This is in contrast to places that retain a “pioneer” mindset where suffering and little joy/culture is expected
- Protection of Natural Resources - a fundamental behavior change is needed
- Education – central to all other indicators, yet essential to approach together rather than independently
- Waste – reduction of both solid waste and pollutants. Essential to see and track economic potential and return on investment
- Energy Metrics – Three Types:
 - Near-term Investment in Generation – measure long-term benefits in our region to support economic arguments for investment in alternative sources
 - Efficiency – measure the economics “per gdp”
 - Use – measure per person over the long-term

Interested Publics/Underserved Populations

Publics that should be invited to participate as the development of the regional index of sustainability indicators:

- Ag Community – top priority; include organic farmers as well as large farmers and ranchers
- Business Community – hospitality, professional services
- Educational Institutions – High school and college academics, BYU-I, EITC Include recent graduates as well as students of all ages; Teton Science School
- Public Land Management Agencies - National Park Service included
- Visitor Services - Ski resorts, lodging, outfitters/guides
- Elected Officials and Key Decision Makers - both public and private
- Planning Administrators
- Real Estate Agents
- Chambers of Commerce

- Minorities - Hispanic communities, Native Americans, Democrats
- Senior Citizens
- Commuters to Jackson
- “Courthouse Crowd” – defined by contributor as government busy bodies
- Religious groups
- Conservation Organizations
- All Residents - by using a relevant survey tool