

Community Needs Assessment

SPOKANE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

2013



Purpose

The 2013 Community Needs Assessment was conducted by Priority Spokane. The purpose was to prioritize the needs of the community, especially among those living in poverty and with least access to resources, and to promote collaborative opportunities to improve health and well-being in Spokane County.

Community Engagement Process

Step 1: Priority Spokane members served on the planning committee, headed by Dr. D. Patrick Jones, Executive Director, EWU Institute of Public Policy & Economic Analysis. Dr. Jones and his team maintain the Spokane Community Indicators Initiative (CII), a database intended to provide democratic access to information needed by individuals, organizations, and government for decision-making (communityindicators.ewu.edu).

Step 2: Over 300 email invitations were extended to community members, inviting them to participate in one of five taskforce committees: Healthy People, Education, Economic Vitality, Public Safety, and Environment. Each taskforce was headed by members of Priority Spokane having expertise in that area.

Step 3: Each committee reviewed CII indicators for their area, discussed which indicators were out-of-date and why, and suggested new indicators that reflected current needs. A viable metric had to be submitted with each suggestion, one that could be easily tracked annually by the EWU team.

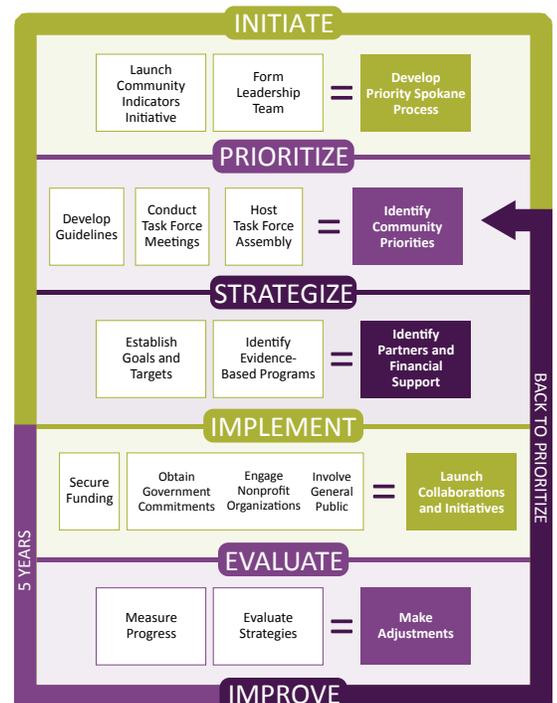
Step 4: Committee members engaged in lively and thought-provoking conversations about how to prioritize their indicators. Participants were encouraged to consider root causes or closely correlating factors behind the indicators; for example, the fact that most of those in the county jail have less than a high school education. Votes were tabulated and the top three priorities from each committee were forwarded to the final meeting.

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A unique collaboration of community leaders who endeavor to create a vibrant future for Spokane County by implementing community-defined goals.

We serve as a catalyst and convener for data-driven and focused improvements to economic vitality, education, the environment, health, and community safety.



Community Engagement Process *(continued)*

Step 5: About 75 individuals/organizations from the 150+ who participated in the committee process attended the taskforce assembly. The fifteen committee priorities were presented and thoroughly discussed. At the close of the meeting, each person could vote for their first, second, and third choices; the choices were weighted three, two, and one point respectively. The 3 areas that received the most votes were: mental health, high quality jobs, and early intervention programs.

Step 6: Using the results from the community vote and grouping similar areas of work, the final five priorities are listed below. After hearing from community content experts on the top 5 areas, PS determined to direct their work around **mental health issues**.

2013 Priority Areas for Spokane County

- Accelerate to a high-performing economy
- Ensure that all our children are ready for Kindergarten
- Increase the accessibility, resources, and attitudes regarding mental health
- Improve educational attainment (PS's current focus, with middle school emphasis)
- Increase the % of population w/ healthy weights, by among others, promoting walking, biking & transit use

Conclusion

Priority Spokane led a similar process in 2009 that resulted in educational attainment being the top priority. Since then high school graduation rates have improved because the community became aware and began to collaborate in new ways to accomplish a single priority that was based on data. We are beginning to see systems change, which is the only way to accomplish long-term results.

The many partners of this prioritization assessment process see opportunities for the same level of awareness, convening, catalyzing, and collaboration moving forward to build a true culture of health in Spokane County.

Next Step: Strategize

- Analyze issue further - define target population
- Compile community assets working on issue
- Identify gaps in services
- Identify model practice strategies
- Identify funds to implement strategies

Guidelines in Community Prioritization

- An issue that affects the greatest number of residents in Spokane County, either directly or indirectly.
- A condition that is unambiguously below where we want it to be, via a comparison to a benchmark or its own trend.
- A condition that is unambiguously above a benchmark, and therefore one that we want to preserve.
- An issue that is predictive of other outcomes, as best as we can currently determine.
- An issue that appears to impact several aspects of community life.
- A condition that we, at the local level, have some opportunity to change.
- A proposed time horizon: 5 years

During 2012 in Spokane County

- The share of 10th graders who felt sad or hopeless for almost every day for two weeks or more in row was 29.0%, matching the 2006 share.
- The percent of adults who self-reported that their mental health was not good on 14 or more days in the last 30 days was 10.9% increasing from 10.6% in 2006.
- The local government expenditure on a per capita basis for mental health was \$88.03, increasing from \$35.27 in 2001.



priorityspokane@greaterspokane.org
priorityspokane.ewu.edu

