

# Preface

Community indicators projects are plentiful. These projects capture the quality of life in towns, cities, counties, metropolitan regions, and larger geographic regions. Community quality-of-life (QOL) indicators are increasingly being integrated into overall planning and other public policy activities. The community indicators project reports are used not only in monitoring and evaluation applications but also in the context of increasing citizen participation in guiding communities towards achieving desired goals.

This is the fourth book in a series covering best practices in community QOL indicators. Each volume presents individual cases (chapters) of communities at the local or regional levels that have designed and implemented community indicators programs. In Volume IV, we present nine chapters from a variety of contexts: cities such as the City of Phoenix (Arizona, USA), Jacksonville (Florida, USA), and Bristol (UK), suburban communities areas such as Long Island (New York, USA) and Sydney (Australia), larger regions such as Vancouver (Canada), and townships such as Sobantu (South Africa).

The focus could be on general QOL indicators (e.g., City of Phoenix or the Long Island Index) or specific set of indicators focusing on topics such as race relations (e.g., Jacksonville), mental health (Dallas, USA), and gender equality (European cities). Each chapter in this volume presents a history or context, followed by a description of how the indicator systems were selected and applied, and then discussion of policy implications and outcomes. What is clear in this volume is the continuing evolution of QOL indicator systems and their applications so that decision making in communities and regions is enhanced.

Chapter 1 (Improving the Quality of Life in a City of Phoenix, Arizona Neighborhood through Collaborative Investment) is co-authored by John Burk and Richard C. Knopf. The chapter describes the community indicators project of the City of Phoenix. The indicators project involves a set of 18 indicator variables reflecting neighborhood stability. Through interviews and focus groups, the project documented the neighborhood's assets and the citizens' collective vision for improving the QOL in their community along each of the 18 indicators. Needed action was identified and prioritized guided by the literature on community health.

Chapter 2 (The Long Island Index: New Approaches to Telling a Region's Story) is authored by Ann Golob. The chapter describes the Long Island Index. The authors

describe the characteristics Long Island shares with similar suburban communities as well as its distinctive features. Long Island has 14% of New York State's population and 25% of the state's political entities. The authors describe the *Index's* multi-factor analysis using a combination of research tools. For example, the indicators show wide gaps between richer and poorer school districts in relation to education. The data are also compared to a similar suburban region in Northern Virginia. Further, survey data are used to add to the overall research picture. The authors also discuss means to promote the Index to a variety of stakeholder groups such as elected officials, schools, other non-profits, libraries and civic organizations, as well as the general public.

Chapter 3 (Lessons from a Community-Based Process in Regional Sustainability Indicator Selection: The Case of Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory) is co-authored by Meg Holden, Cameron Owens, and Clare Mochrie. The authors describe how the Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory conducted a comprehensive public engagement process to derive key indicators of sustainable development. This process is described in great detail. The case demonstrates how citizen volunteers can be engaged to help in the development of a community indicators project.

Chapter 4 (Mental Health Indicator Parity: Integrating National, State, and Local Data) is co-authored by Deepak Prabhakar, Raquel Y. Qualls Hampton, and Kathryn M. Cardarelli. The focus of this chapter is on mental health indicators in Dallas County. The authors describe how they compiled available mental health data to describe the prevalence of mental illness in Dallas County and in Texas, with comparisons to national rates. Mental health indicators are further broken down by age, race/ethnicity, education, and poverty level.

Chapter 5 (The Importance of Local Information: Quality of Life Indicators in Bristol) is co-authored by Samantha Shepherd and Sarah McMahon. The chapter describes one of the longest standing community indicator projects in the UK. The authors describe how the Bristol City Council has used QOL indicators to become highly effective tools for improving local quality of life.

Chapter 6 (Understanding the Political Significance of Community Sustainable Development Indicators in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Case Study from Sobantu Township, Pietmaritzburg) is authored by Alan Terry. This chapter describes an indicators project funded by the Department of International Development in India and South Africa. The goal of the project was test the notion whether the process of developing community-led indicators would enhance effective participatory development. The results show some positive outcomes.

Chapter 7 (Jacksonville's Race Relations Progress Report: Creating Change through Community Indicators) is authored by J. Benjamin Warner. The author describes how the Jacksonville Community Council Inc. created an annual "report card" capturing the community's progress in eliminating racial disparities in the quality of life in Jacksonville, Florida. The report provides lessons into how community indicators projects can add meaning through disaggregating key populations.

Chapter 8 (Gender Equality and the Quality of Life: Examples of Best Practices from Nine European Cities – The EQUALABEL Project) is authored by Almudena Moreno Minguez. The chapter addresses gender equality indicators captured

at the community level. The author describes the European framework project, EQUALABEL that was conducted in nine cities across the European Union.

The final chapter (Quality of Life through Innovation Indicators: The Case of Peripheral Suburbs of Sydney) was co-authored by Cristina Martinez-Fernandez and Tavis Potts. This chapter discusses the concept of innovation ecosystems for assessing innovation intensity in peripheral areas of metropolitan regions. This concept is important because it is considered to be a significant driver of economic prosperity and sustainability of suburbs.

The chapters in this volume illustrate the complex, integrated, and multifaceted issues that QOL indicators represent. It is our desire that this information will spur leaders, citizens and policy makers to explore and apply indicators to strengthen QOL in their communities and regions.

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