



TOOLS FOR ACTION SERIES

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACTS OF
BC INDICATOR PROJECTS

OCTOBER 2008



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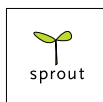
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Executive Summary

This report consists of the findings of a research initiative centered on the following question: To what extent do indicator projects have impacts on the community capital of a sample of British Columbian cities and regions?

Our research method involved administering a two-part on-line survey to a non-random sample of project leaders and/or key stakeholders who were involved in one of the 39 completed or ongoing indicator projects in BC. A total of 26 respondents from different indicator projects completed the online survey, resulting in a response rate of 67%.

The first part of the survey elicited information on the general characteristics of BC indicator projects. Approximately half the respondents said their projects were sponsored by a non-profit organization and just under half reported that their project was sponsored by a government agency. Of the 26 indicator projects that were surveyed, 10 respondents identified their project as urban, 10 respondents identified their project as regional in focus, and 5 respondents identified their project as rural, while one respondent did not know. 70% of the projects surveyed included the public in the formulation of indicators, while the remaining projects did not involve members of the public in the task of formulating indicators.

The second part of the survey elicited information about the impact of indicator projects on select components of the six elements of community capital: human capital, social capital, cultural capital, natural capital, economic capital and physical capital (for definitions of all terms, read section 2 of the report).

In terms of human capital, most respondents felt their indicator project had a positive impact on local leaders in terms of increasing their knowledge of and skills to address community issues.



In the area of social capital, most respondents said that their indicator project had a positive impact on the relations between local non-profit organizations in terms of increasing knowledge exchange, trust, and the number of opportunities to develop community-based projects. Respondents also reported that knowledge exchange, trust, and opportunities to develop community-based projects have also been enhanced between non-profit organizations and local governments. Respondents were less optimistic about the impact of their indicator project on the relationship between the private sector and non-profit organizations – fewer people indicated that there had been a positive impact and many people were unsure about the impacts. Respondents were split in their responses regarding the impacts of their indicator project on the relationships between the private sector and local government, with approximately half of the respondents saying the impacts were positive and half saying that their project had no effect.

With regard to cultural capital, respondents said their projects had a positive impact on local leaders by increasing their interest in participating in public decision-making processes and awareness of diversity issues. However, the projects were not as effective at increasing community members' support for artistic expression in public spaces. Despite increasing awareness of diversity issues, respondents felt that there was no impact in terms of increasing local leaders' will to improve opportunities for including traditionally excluded populations in community decision-making.

In terms of natural capital, approximately 40% of respondents felt that their project generally had a positive impact on leaders' awareness of local natural capital. However, a similarly high proportion of respondents indicated that they were unsure of the impact in this area. Additionally, respondents were for the most part quite unsure of their project's impacts on political and private leaders around the issue of policy developments that aim to restore or sustain local natural capital.

In the case of economic capital, most respondents felt that their indicator project did not result in any local interest to develop local financial

institutions or to develop fair trade purchasing policies, specifically among local government and the local private sector.

Finally, in terms of physical capital, respondents were split between positive impacts and no impacts on the will of community members, community leaders, political leaders, and private sector leaders to contribute to the development of new or existing physical capital, with approximately half of the respondents indicating a positive impact and half saying no impact.

In sum, the indicator projects varied between having positive or no impacts, depending on the area of community capital being measured. There were no areas of community capital where the respondents felt that their indicator project had any negative impacts. This is an important finding in that it shows that none of the responding communities had a negative experience as a result of conducting an indicator project.

There were, however, a number of questions where respondents felt that they were unable to determine the impacts of their indicator project on the component of community capital being measured. The high proportion of unsure answers may have happened as a result of the fact that many of the impacts being measured are immaterial in that they are changes in awareness, attitudes or levels of awareness, which are difficult to measure from the perspective of only one stakeholder of a given project. The complete results of the survey and related discussion are featured in the following pages.



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Introduction

This publication is the second installation in the *Tools for Action Series*. The other publication is titled *Tools for Action: A Resource Guide for Designing a Community Indicator Project*. It can be found on our website.

In 2004, SPARC BC collected information on community indicator projects in British Columbia for the purpose of publishing an inventory of BC indicator projects, entitled *Tools for Change: BC Community Indicator Resource Guide*. This publication served as a compilation of all of the indicator projects that were either underway or recently completed across British Columbia in 2004. Brief profiles for each indicator project were featured in the publication, including information about contact personnel, descriptions of the purpose and outcomes of the indicator project in question, as well as lessons learned from each project. Needless to say, we were very impressed by the number and sophistication of indicator projects in BC and wanted to assess the general impact of these projects.

After much deliberation about how to assess the general impact of indicator projects in BC, we decided to address the following question: To what extent do indicator projects have impacts on the community capital of a sample of British Columbian cities and regions? The primary purpose of researching this question is to improve our understanding of the immaterial impacts of indicator projects in BC communities (i.e. changes in the awareness, attitudes, knowledge and will of local stakeholders, etc.) and, in particular, to encourage ongoing discussion about how indicator projects can best serve the communities who create them.

The first section of this report consists of a series of definitions of the key terms that frame our research project. The second section involves an explanation of our methodological approach to answering the aforementioned question. The third section is our analysis of the survey results and the fourth section consists of our conclusions. The appendices comprise the final section, which include an overview of SPARC BC and our work on indicators of well being, the survey questions, the list of all indicator projects that were surveyed, and a reference page.

2. Definitions of key terms

In this study, we examine the perceived impacts of ‘indicator projects’ on ‘community capital’. An indicator project is an exercise in knowledge production. Indicator projects can be diverse in terms of content and methodology, with specific projects being tailored to the particular interests, needs, and concerns of a given institution, community and/or region. For the purposes of this research project, indicator projects are unified by one common characteristic, namely that they integrate diverse data sets from multiple disciplines of study for the purpose of creating a holistic picture of the state of one or several aspects of community life.

Community capital consists of six elements: human capital, social capital, cultural capital, natural capital, economic capital and physical capital. For the purpose of this research project, we have borrowed heavily from the work of Mark Roseland, especially his conceptual work on community capital in his book *Toward Sustainable Communities: Resources for Citizens and Their Governments*. We selected the concept of community capital to inform our questions about the impact of indicator projects for four reasons: (a) it is capable of accounting for social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of community life; (b) it has discreet parts that are clearly defined but not overly restrictive in conception; (c) it is sufficiently defined so as to provide a useful backdrop to research questions about the impacts of a project on different facets of community life; and (d) it is, at least partly, informed by community development work and theory in British Columbia. In the paragraphs below, we offer a thumbnail sketch of all six elements of community capital.

Roseland defines human capital as the knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being. For the purposes of our research we have also included the concept of ‘will’ to our understanding of human capital, which we define as a predisposition of an individual or group to act in certain ways.

The social capital element of community capital constitutes the 'glue' that holds communities together. It is the trust and relational processes that brings people together to share knowledge and understandings, and to create patterns of social interactions. We define social capital as the relationships between people that promote knowledge exchange, trust and collaboration for the purpose of achieving local consensus-oriented action. It includes informal social networks and personal relationships, as well as formal social development programs.

Cultural capital can be defined as a myriad of relational or personal activities, artistic and/or everyday expressions, as well as objects that represent different traditions and values. It also involves beliefs and attitudes that lead to particular forms of behavior that people identify as 'part of my culture'. Another key component of cultural capital are activities that facilitate participation from diverse community members in policy-making processes related to issues that affect their lives. As such, we subsume public participation processes under the rubric of cultural capital because we contend that participation by diverse groups in decision-making processes is often a determinant of the strength and diversity of local cultural capital.

According to Roseland, natural capital refers to any stock of environmental assets that yields a flow of valuable goods and services into the future. Roseland suggests that environmental assets can be usefully divided into three categories: 1) non-renewable resources, such as minerals and fossil fuels; 2) the finite capacity of natural systems to produce 'renewable resources' such as food crops, forestry products and water supplies; 3) the capacity of natural systems to absorb our emissions and pollutants without side effects. Although natural capital is a distinct feature of communities, its condition is related in many ways to human awareness and behavior. As such, we subsume awareness about, behavior toward and will to preserve the natural environment as a component of natural capital.

Economic capital consists of the resources (i.e. money) that are used to achieve security in a person's material life, as well as the community and

political will to achieve such security for community members. Roseland notes that economic capital can be looked at in the way we allocate resources and make decisions about our materials lives. There is also an ethical side of economic capital that involves fair trade purchasing policies and other corporate social responsibilities.

As the final element of community capital in our conceptual framework, physical capital involves the time spent producing resourceful materials such as machinery, plants and facilities which can later be used in producing other products. As Roseland notes, some may refer this form of capital as produced capital, manufactured capital or public capital.

Given these definitions of community capital, it is important to note that we have stretched some of these meanings beyond their regular definitional boundaries for the purpose of this research. This means we have related particular human attitudes and behaviors to a given element of community capital, which is not always the case in Roseland's original articulations. For example, in the case of economic capital, we do not strictly consider money, but also the ethics of using money and political will to implement fair trade purchasing policies in communities. As such, we are employing a conception of community capital that is broad enough to assess several different ways indicator projects in BC impact the communities in which they are operant.



3. Methodology

Our method for data collection involved the development and administration of an online survey. This survey was conducted among a non-random sample of project leaders and/or key stakeholders involved in one of the 39 community indicator projects identified in BC through *Tools for Change*. The survey was administered using Survey Monkey. A total of 26 participants from different indicator projects completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 67%. Below is the list of indicator projects that had a respondent complete the online survey:

1. Castlegar Wellness Assessment Project
2. Comox Valley Report Card of Community Well-Being
3. Community Resilience Project - Centre for Community Enterprise
4. Dawson Creek Food Share Research Project
5. Delta Community Impact Profile
6. Fraser Basin Sustainability Indicators Project
7. Georgia Basin Action Plan
8. Gulf Islands - Measuring Our Progress
9. Langley Community Impact Profile
10. Nanaimo Regional District - State of Sustainability Project/ Monitoring Program
11. New Westminster Healthy / Sustainable Community Project
12. Quesnel Sustainability Indicators Project
13. Richmond Poverty Report Card
14. Richmond State of the Environment
15. Smithers Quality of Life Index
16. Upper Vancouver Island Early Childhood Development Research Project
17. Vancouver - City of Vancouver: Social Indicators Report
18. Vancouver - Downtown Eastside Community Monitoring Report
19. Vancouver - FCM Quality of Life Indicators - A Vancouver Perspective
20. Vancouver - Greater Vancouver Homeless Count

-
21. Vancouver - GVRD Livable Region Strategic Plan
 22. Vancouver - GVRD Sustainability Report
 23. Vancouver - Food Security Indicators
 24. Vancouver - Olympic Games Impact
 25. Vancouver - Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory
 26. Vancouver - Vital Signs

There are several important limitations to identify with regard to our research on the above projects. First, our use of survey data provides a very thin description of how and why indicator projects contribute to changing BC communities in particular ways. Second, our survey elicited information from project managers and key stakeholders, whose perceptions of the impact of their indicator project may be biased in favor of the project, compared to say policy makers or members of the public. Third, our conceptual framework is generic and does not account for the multiplicity of other contextual factors that may influence local change, the indicator project in question or its outcomes. Given these limits, it is important to treat the conclusions of this study with caution.

4. General characteristics of indicator projects in BC

In this section, we analyze participant responses to questions about the geographic location of their indicator project, the types of organizational sponsors of their indicator project, the basic characteristics of how indicators were formulated in each project, as well as the basic purposes of indicator projects in BC.

4.1. Types of communities that implemented an indicator project

Most respondents identified their project as either urban or regional in scope, comprising 77% of the total number of indicator projects that were surveyed in our study.

Community Type	Frequency	Percent
Urban	10	38.5
Rural*	5	19.2
Regional**	10	38.5
DK/NA	1	3.8
Total	26	100

* Any community with a population of under 25,000

** Any geographical area that contains several distinct municipalities and/or towns (i.e. Fraser Basin region)

4.2. Types of organizational sponsors of indicator projects

Respondents were asked how they sponsored their indicator project. Over half of the indicator projects surveyed were sponsored by non-profit organizations, accounting for 54% of the projects. The remaining projects were sponsored by a government body, with responses being split equally between municipal level government sponsors and regional level government sponsors.

Sponsor Type	Frequency	Percent
Non-Profit Organization	14	53.8
Municipal Government	6	23.1
Regional Government	6	23.1
Total	26	100

4.3. Public involvement in formulating indicators

In many indicator projects, leaders of the project will typically engage questions about involving members of the public in the indicator development process. The majority of surveyed indicator projects involved the public in the process of formulating indicators, accounting for 69% of all projects. About one third of the projects did not involve members of the public in the process of formulating indicators.

Public Involvement	Frequency	Percent
Public was involved	18	69.2
Public was not involved	8	30.7
Total	26	100



4.4. General purposes of indicator projects

All respondents were asked coded questions about the purpose of their indicator project in order to determine whether the sample of indicator projects were similar in their general purpose. All respondents noted that the purpose of their indicator project involved assessing select domains of community life. Relatively few respondents identified the task of setting time-based targets as a component of the purpose of their indicator project, accounting for only 23% of the total.

Purpose	Frequency	Percent
To assess the state of select domains of community life	26	100
To set time-based targets in select domains of community life in addition to assessing them	6	23

4.5. Institutional affiliation of survey respondents

Respondents were asked to identify the type of institution with which they are affiliated. Almost 40% of respondents were affiliated with community organizations. Just under one third of respondents said they were affiliated with a government agency. Respondents who selected the 'other' option, in most cases, identified themselves as contract project managers.

Institutional affiliation	Frequency	Percent
Community Organization	10	38.5
Government	8	30.8
Public	4	15.4
Other	4	15.4
Total	26	100

5. Survey results on indicator project impact

In the following sections, we provide an analysis of our survey results on the perceived impact of indicator projects with relation to each element of community capital. Many of our questions are framed according to four classifications of people living in communities: community members (i.e. local resident), community leaders (i.e. activist, executive director, etc.), political leaders (i.e. elected official), and private sector leaders (i.e. business owner, business manager, etc.).

5.1 Impact of indicator projects on human capital

This section includes an analysis of the impact of indicator projects on human capital, including the following components of human capital: local leaders' knowledge of local issues, local leaders' skills to address local issues, local leaders' will to address local issues, political leaders' knowledge of role of long term strategic planning in addressing community issues, and community members' knowledge of available human capital in their community.

5.1.1. Impact of indicator projects on local leaders' knowledge of community issues

Almost all respondents (92%) felt that their indicator project had positive impacts in terms of creating knowledge of local issues among community members and political leaders. Also, almost three quarters of respondents felt that their indicator project enhanced their knowledge of community leaders, with regard to community issues.

Type of impact	Community members' knowledge of community issues		Community leaders' knowledge of community issues		Political leaders' knowledge of community issues	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	24	92.3	25	73.1	24	92.3
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0
No	1	3.8	0	0	1	3.8
DK/NA	1	3.8	1	3.8	1	3.8
Total	26	100	26	100	26	100

5.1.2. Impact of indicator projects on the skills of local leaders' to address community issues

Almost half of responses to the question about the skills component of human capital indicated that indicator projects had no impact on the skills of community leaders' to address local issues, while a similar number of respondents stated that their project had a positive impact. As for political leaders, 39% of respondents said that their indicator project had a positive impact on their political leaders' skills to address community issues and only 23% said that there was no impact.

Type of impact	Community leaders' skills to address community issues		Political leaders' skills to address community issues	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	13	39.4	10	38.5
Negative	0	0	0	0
No Impact	11	42.3	6	23.1
DK/NA	2	7.7	3	11.5
Total	26	100	26	100

5.1.3. Impact of indicator projects on local leaders' will to address community issues

Over three quarters of respondents said that there was a positive impact on community leaders' will to address community issues as a result of the indicator projects and 65% of respondents felt this was also the case for political leaders.

Type of impact	Community leaders' will to address community issues		Political leaders' will to address community issues	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	20	76.9	17	65.3
Negative	0	0	0	0
No Impact	4	15.4	6	23.1
DK/NA	2	7.7	3	11.5
Total	26	100	26	100

5.1.4. Impact of indicator projects on political leaders' knowledge of the role of long-term strategic planning in addressing community issues

Most respondents noted that their project had a positive impact on political leaders' knowledge of the role of long-term strategic planning in addressing community issues, accounting for 62% of all responses. No respondents indicated that there was a negative impact, but over a quarter of respondents felt that there was no impact in this area.

Type of impact	Frequency	Percent
Positive	16	61.5
Negative	0	0
No Impact	7	26.9
DK/NA	3	11.5
Total	26	100

5.1.5. Impact of indicator projects on community members' knowledge of human capital available in the community

Most respondents (73%) noted that their project had a positive impact on community members' knowledge of human capital available in the community. Almost a quarter of respondents felt that there was no impact, however.

Type of impact	Frequency	Percent
Positive	19	73.1
Negative	0	0
No Impact	6	23.1
DK/NA	1	3.8
Total	26	100

5.2. Impact of indicator projects on social capital

In the data tables below, we analyze participant responses to questions about the following two components of social capital: knowledge exchange between non-profit organizations, local government and businesses; and, trust between non-profit organizations, local government and businesses.

5.2.1. Impact of indicator projects on knowledge exchange between non-profit organizations, local government and businesses

Most responses (62%) to questions about the relationship between indicator projects and local knowledge exchange indicate that indicator projects had a positive impact on knowledge exchange processes between non-profit organizations. Similarly, responses to the question about the impact of indicator projects on knowledge exchange processes between non-profits and local government were mostly positive, with positive responses accounting for 73% of the responses.

However, in the cases of knowledge exchange between non-profits and businesses, as well as between businesses and local government, only 23% of the respondents indicated that their project had a positive impact. This is not to say that respondents felt that there was no impact or a negative impact, but rather that around half of the respondents felt unsure about the impacts in terms of knowledge exchange between these local stakeholders.

Type of impact	Knowledge exchange between NPOs*		Knowledge exchange between NPOs on local government		Knowledge exchange between NPOs and businesses		Knowledge exchange between businesses and local government	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	16	61.5	19	73	6	23.1	7	23.1
Negative	0	0	1	3.8	0	0	0	0
No Impact	7	26.9	1	3.8	8	30.8	6	23.1
DK/NA	3	11.5	5	19.2	8	46.2	14	53.8
Total	26	100	26	100	26	100	26	100

*Non Profit Organizations (NPOs)

5.2.2. Impact of indicator projects on trust between non-profit organizations, local government and businesses

Indicator projects had a varied impact on local trust, according to respondents. Half of the respondents indicated that indicator projects had a positive impact on trust between non-profit organizations. Similarly, 50% of respondents reported that their project had a positive impact on trust between non-profits and local government. Again, respondents had a hard time speaking about the impacts of the indicator projects on the business sector, with almost half of respondents unsure about whether or not the indicator projects served to improve the trust between the non-profit sector and the private sector.

Type of impact	Trust between NPOs		Trust between NPOs and local government		Trust between NPOs and businesses	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	13	50	13	50	6	23.1
Negative	1	3.8	2	7.7	0	0
No Impact	2	7.7	4	15.4	8	30.8
DK/NA	10	38.5	7	26.9	12	46.2
Total	26	100	26	100	26	100

5.3. Impact of indicator projects on cultural capital

In the data tables below, we provide an analysis of participant responses to questions about the following components of cultural capital: local support for more artistic expression in public spaces, interest in participating in local decision making processes; local will to develop policies and programs that empower socially excluded populations to participate in public decision-making processes; and, awareness of diversity issues in community.

5.3.1. Impact of indicator projects on local support for artistic expression in public space

Around half of the respondents indicated that their project had no impact on community members' and community leaders' support for more artistic expression in public spaces, accounting for 46% and 50% respectively. Again, respondents had difficulties assessing the impact in terms of the business community, with over a third of respondents saying they were not sure whether their indicator project increased private sector leaders' support for artistic expression in public space, although 19% did say that they felt there was a positive impact in this area, while a third said there was no impact.

Type of impact	Community members' support for more artistic expression in public space		Community leaders' support for more artistic expression in public space		Private sector leaders' support for more artistic expression in public space	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	4	15.3	3	11.5	5	19.2
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Impact	12	46.2	13	50	11	33.8
DK/NA	10	38.5	10	38.5	10	38.5
Total	26	100	26	100	26	100

5.3.2. Impact of indicator projects on community members' interest in participating in local decision-making processes

Most of the respondents indicated that their project had a positive impact on community members' interest in participating in local decision-making processes, accounting for 58% of total responses to this question. Just under 20% of respondents said that their indicator projects had no impact; however, almost a quarter of respondents were unsure of the impact of their projects in terms of creating interest in local decision-making among community members.

Type of impact	Frequency	Percent
Positive	15	57.7
Negative	0	0
No Impact	5	19.2
DK/NA	6	23.1
Total	26	100

5.3.3. Impact of indicator projects on the will of local leaders to empower socially excluded populations to participate in local decision-making processes

Over a third of respondents felt that their indicator project had positive impacts in terms of increasing community and political leaders' will to develop policies and programs that empower socially excluded populations to participate in public decision-making processes. However, there was also over a third of respondents that felt there was no impact on this front. Over a quarter of respondents were unsure about the impacts in this area, possibly because impacts on policy changes are slow to show.

Type of impact	Community leaders' will to develop policies and programs that empower socially excluded populations to participate in public decision-making processes		Political leaders' will to develop policies and programs that empower socially excluded populations to participate in public decision-making processes	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	10	38.4	9	34.6
Negative	0	0	0	0
No Impact	9	34.6	10	38.5
DK/NA	7	26.9	7	26.9
Total	26	100	26	100

5.3.4. Impact of indicator projects on local leaders' awareness of diversity issues in community

Most respondents indicated that their project had a positive impact on community members' and community leaders' awareness of local diversity issues, accounting for 65% and 54% respectively. In the case of political leaders', there was only a slight difference among the positive category and no impact category, with 38% and 35% respectively. Again, about a quarter of respondents were unsure about the impacts on the various stakeholders.

Type of impact	Community members' awareness of diversity issues in community		Community leaders' awareness of diversity issues in community		Political leaders' awareness of diversity issues in the community	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	17	65.4	14	53.8	17	38.4
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Impact	3	11.5	6	23.1	3	34.6
DK/NA	6	23.1	6	23.1	6	26.9
Total	26	100	26	100	26	100

5.4. Impact of indicator projects on natural capital

In the following data tables, we analyze participant responses to questions about the following four components of natural capital: local awareness of condition of natural capital; the will of local leaders to develop policies and programs that aim to restore or sustain the condition of natural capital; impact of indicator projects on community leaders' will to publish and promote information about the condition of local natural capital; impact of indicator projects on political leaders' will to assess the conditions of local natural capital.

5.4.1. Impact of indicator projects on local leaders' awareness of the condition of natural capital

Approximately 40% of respondents felt that their project generally had a positive impact on the awareness of local natural capital for community members, as well as the community, political, and private sector leaders. However, a similarly high proportion of respondents indicated that they were unsure of the impact in this area, accounting for the same result of 39% across all four categories. About one fifth of respondents felt that there was no impact in this area for the various stakeholders.

Type of impact	Community members' awareness of the condition of local natural capital		Community leaders' awareness of the condition of local natural capital		Political leaders' awareness of the condition of local natural capital		Private sector leaders' awareness of the condition of local natural capital	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	11	42.3	10	38.4	11	42.3	10	38.4
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Impact	5	19.2	6	23.1	5	19.2	6	23.1
DK/NA	10	38.5	10	38.5	10	38.5	10	38.5
Total	26	100	26	100	26	100	26	100

5.4.2. Impact of indicator projects on will of local leaders to develop policies and programs that aim to restore or sustain the condition of natural capital

Respondents were for the most part (42%) quite unsure about the impacts of their project in terms of its impacts on political and private leaders around the issue of policy development that aims to restore or sustain local natural capital. Almost a third of respondents, however, thought that there was a positive impact on political leaders in this area and just under a quarter of respondents felt this was also the case for private sector leaders. However, over a quarter of respondents said that there was no impact in this area for political leaders, and over a third thought this was also the case for private sector leaders.

Type of impact	Political leaders' will to develop policies and programs that aim to restore or sustain local natural capital		Private sector leaders' will to develop policies and programs that aim to restore or sustain local natural capital	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	8	30.7	6	23.1
Negative	0	0	0	0
No Impact	7	26.9	9	34.6
DK/NA	11	42.3	11	42.3
Total	26	100	26	100

5.4.3. Impact of indicator projects on community leaders' will to publish and promote information about the condition of local natural capital

Almost half of the respondents felt unsure about the impact of the indicator projects on community leaders' will to publish and promote information about the condition of local natural capital. The remaining respondents were evenly split between there being a positive impact and no impact in this area.

Type of impact	Frequency	Percent
Positive	7	26.9
Negative	0	0
No Impact	7	26.9
DK/NA	12	46.2
Total	26	100

5.4.4. Impact of indicator projects on political leaders' will to assess the conditions of local natural capital

Again, a significant proportion of respondents were unsure about the impact of the indicator projects on political leaders' will to assess the conditions of local natural capital. Among those that did feel they could respond to this question, more felt that there was a positive impact than no impact at all (35% compared to 23%).

Type of impact	Frequency	Percent
Positive	9	34.6
Negative	0	0
No Impact	6	23.1
DK/NA	11	42.3
Total	26	100

5.5. Impact of indicator projects on economic capital

In the tables below, we offer an analysis of respondents' perceptions of the relationship between their project and three components of economic capital: local will to develop local financial institutions, local will to develop fair-trade purchasing policies, and community members' interest in being involved in decision-making process related to allocation of municipal tax dollars.

5.5.1. Impact of indicator projects on local leaders' will to develop local financial institutions

Most respondents generally indicated that their project had no impact on community leaders' or political leaders' will to develop local financial institutions, accounting for 46.2% of all responses in both categories, although there was a significant proportion of respondents that were unsure. Only about one fifth of respondents felt that there was an impact in this area for community and political leaders.

Type of impact	Community leaders' will to develop local financial institutions		Political leaders' will to develop local financial institutions	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	3	11.5	3	11.5
Negative	0	0	0	0
No Impact	12	46.2	12	46.2
DK/NA	11	42.3	11	42.3
Total	26	100	26	100

5.5.2. Impact of indicator projects on local leaders' will to develop fair trade purchasing policies

Most respondents indicated that their project had no impact on local leaders' will to develop fair trade purchasing policies. The remaining majority of respondents were unsure. A fairly small proportion of respondents felt that there was a positive impact on the various stakeholders in this area.

Type of impact	Community leaders' will to develop fair-trade purchasing power		Political leaders' will to develop fair-trade purchasing policies		Private sector leaders' will to develop fair-trade purchasing policies	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	4	15.4	2	7.7	1	3.8
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Impact	11	42.3	14	53.8	14	53.8
DK/NA	11	42.3	10	38.5	11	42.3
Total	26	100	26	100	26	100

5.6. Impact of indicator projects on physical capital

The table below features an analysis of participant responses to questions about the impact of their indicator project on community will to contribute to new or existing physical capital

5.6.1. Impact of indicator projects on the will of local leaders leaders to contribute to new or existing physical capital

Responses to questions about the impact of indicator projects on the will of the community to contribute to new or existing physical capital were, for the most part, split evenly between positive, no impact, and unsure. Across all four of the above categories, 30.8% of all respondents indicated that they were unsure about the impacts in this area. Responses to questions about community members' will to develop physical capital were concentrated in the positive and no impact categories accounting for 34.6% in each category. Responses to questions about community leaders' will to develop physical capital were concentrated in the no impact and unsure categories accounting for 38.5% and 30.8% respectively. Responses to questions about political leaders' will to develop physical capital were equivalent in the positive and no impact categories at 34.6%. Responses to questions about private leaders' will to contribute to physical capital generally indicated that projects had no impact, accounting for 42.3%.

Type of impact	Community members' will to contribute to new or existing physical capital		Community leaders' will to contribute to new or existing physical capital		Political leaders' will to contribute to new or existing physical capital		Private sector leaders' will to contribute to new or existing physical capital	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Positive	9	34.6	8	30.8	9	34.6	7	26.9
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Impact	9	34.6	10	38.5	9	24.6	11	42.3
DK/NA	8	30.8	8	30.8	8	30.8	8	30.8
Total	26	100	26	100	26	100	26	100

6. Conclusion

For the most part, respondents felt that their indicator project had either positive impacts or no impacts on the selected components of community capital. There were no areas of community capital where the respondents felt that their indicator project had any negative impacts. This is an important finding in that it shows that none of the respondents had a negative experience as a result of conducting an indicator project.

Respondents were most positive about the impacts of their indicator projects on the human and social capital components of community capital. Respondents started reporting no impacts or 'DK/NA' in higher proportions when the questions turned to cultural, natural, economic and physical capital, which may be attributable to at least three factors.

First, the nature of the questions about these components may have sought information on impacts that were never considerations of the sample of surveyed indicator projects. As such, the findings provide some insight into what kinds of immaterial impacts one should not expect of an indicator project – unless of course the project includes a specific focus on such areas.

Second, given that there were no questions about the timing of the indicator projects, it is impossible to determine whether the timing of the project played a role in the lack of impacts in the aforementioned areas. In future studies of the immaterial impacts of indicator projects in these areas specifically, it might be beneficial to ask when the indicator project took place to get a better sense of whether or not there has been time for immaterial impacts to actually occur. It may also be useful to broaden the scope of questions in the above areas to explore material impacts that are easier to measure (i.e. new bike paths, more curb cuts, etc.).

Finally, a third factor that could account for the high proportion of Don't Know responses could be the framework used in the survey. The framework was fairly complex and used a significant amount of terms that might be considered jargon. Although these terms were all defined in the survey

instrument, respondents, especially people who are busy with their day to day tasks, may not take the time to read all the definitions. As a result of the complex nature of the framework, respondents may have become frustrated with the survey and chose to select Don't Know as a response to keep moving at a decent pace through the survey. The framework does, however, include a wide variety of ways in which to consider the impacts of the indicator projects that allows for a comprehensive look at the impact. If the study were to be replicated, a way of balancing the complex nature of the framework and the comprehensiveness of the framework would be to borrow the concepts of the framework, but lay them out in more plain language.

In sum, this assessment of indicator project impacts on select components of community capital yielded mixed results. Although there were a high proportion of respondents who identified positive impacts on social and human capital, the high number of 'no impact' and 'DK/NA' responses to questions about cultural, natural, economic and physical capital suggests that the results of this research project should be treated with caution. By simplifying the survey instrument, increasing the size of the sample in each community, collecting information on the timing of the initiative in question, and broadening the scope of the question types to include considerations of the material and immaterial impacts of indicator projects, future efforts to assess indicator project impact would likely yield richer and more complete results.

7. Appendices

7.1. About SPARC BC and our work on community indicators

SPARC BC was established in 1966 and is a leader in social research and policy, public education, and advocacy regarding issues of accessibility, income security and community development. SPARC BC is a registered non-profit society and a federally registered charity. We are a provincial organization with over 14,000 members, governed by a Board of Directors who come from all parts of BC. Our mission statement, which we revised and recommitted to on our 35th anniversary, is: *SPARC BC works with communities in building a just and healthy society for all*. The following four values guide our work:

- Social Justice: We strive for a just and healthy society, in which social, economic, and environmental well-being are indivisible, through advocating for equality, fairness, and dignity for all.
- Inclusion: We are committed to achieving access and full participation and engagement of all in our diverse society by fostering communication, leadership, partnership, and collaboration.
- Integrity: We are independent, accountable, and non-partisan.
- Learning: We seek, develop and share knowledge and understanding, which encourages citizen participation and informs innovative, effective planning and decision-making.

SPARC BC's indicator work commenced in the mid 1990's when SPARC BC and the University of Victoria's Faculty of Human and Social Development received a five year grant from Human Resource Development Canada to produce several publications in the field of community indicators, including: *Well Being, Community and Measurement: A Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography, as well as Measuring Well Being: Quality of Life Indicator Projects*. More recently, in 2004 SPARC BC published a comprehensive review of community indicator projects in BC titled *Tools for Change: BC Community Indicators Resource Guide*.

Moreover, we have recently been involved in a range of indicator initiatives across the province and the Cascadia region, including the development of the Genuine Progress Index-Pacific, the GVRD's Sustainable Region Initiative, the Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory (RVU) sustainability indicators project, and the Cascadia Progress and Performance Network.

Most recently, we partnered with RVU to complete the research for the Vancouver Foundation's Metro Vancouver Vital Signs 2007 indicator project. This research involved identifying indicators and data sources to assess the sustainability of: transportation, food security, arts and culture, belonging and leadership, the environment, poverty issues, getting started in the community (for immigrants, youth, and young families), health, housing, education, and work.

7.2. Survey questions

Our survey instrument consisted of seven sets of questions. The first set of questions related to the general characteristics of the respondent's community, their indicator project and their role in the project. The following six sets of questions were designed to collect data about the relationships between the respondent's indicator project and select elements and related components of community capital. In order to provide respondents with a sense of the scope of each set of questions, we provided a brief description of the given element of community capital in question. All respondents were asked to use the following scale to indicate their assessment of the relationship in question: positive, no effect, negative, don't know/not applicable.

Section One: Background Information

1. What is the name of the indicator project in which you participated?
2. Indicate the geographic location of your indicator project: urban, rural (under 25,000) or regional.
3. What type of institution sponsored your indicator project?



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4. Was the public involved in formulating indicators?
 5. Did your indicator project assess the state of select domains of community life?
 6. Did your indicator project set time-based targets for the select domains of community life in addition to assessing them?

Section Two: Your Indicator Project and Select Components of Human Capital

7. Please rate your indicator project's impact on the following components of human capital (a drop down menu will appear for each item):

- community members' knowledge of community issues
- community members' knowledge of human capital resources present in the community
- community-based leaders' knowledge of community issues
- community-based leaders' skills to address community issues
- community-based leaders' will to address community issues
- political leaders' knowledge of community issues
- political leaders' skills to address community issues
- political leaders' will to address community issues
- political leaders' knowledge of the role of long-term strategic planning in addressing community issues

Section Three: Your Indicator Project and Select Components of Social Capital

8. Please rate your indicator project's impact on the following components of social capital:

- Knowledge exchange between:
 - i. Non-profit organizations
 - ii. Non-profit organizations and local government

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- iii. Non-profit organizations and businesses
 - iv. Businesses and local government

- Trust between:
 - i. Non-profit organizations
 - ii. Non-profit organizations and local government
 - iii. Non-profit organizations and businesses
 - iv. Businesses and local government

Section Four: Your Indicator Project and Select Components of Cultural Capital

9. Please rate your indicator project's impact on the following components of cultural capital:

- community members' support for more artistic expression in public space
- community members interest in participating in public decision making processes
- community members' awareness of diversity issues in the community
- community leaders' support for more artistic expression in public space
- community leaders' awareness of diversity issues in the community
- community leaders' will to develop policies and programs that empower vulnerable demographics to participate in public decision making processes
- political leaders' will to develop policies and programs that empower vulnerable demographics to participate in public decision making processes
- political leaders' will to evaluate whether inclusive public participation is practiced in the community
- private sector leaders' support for more artistic expression in public space

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- private sector leaders' awareness of diversity issues in the community
 - private sector leaders' will to evaluate whether diversity issues are addressed in the workplace

Section Five: Your Indicator Project and Select Components of Natural Capital

10. Please rate your indicator project's impact on the following components of natural capital:

- community members' awareness of the condition of local and/or regional natural capital
- community leaders' awareness of the condition of local and/or regional natural capital
- community leaders' will to publish and promote information about local and/or regional natural capital
- political leaders' awareness of the condition of local and/or regional natural capital
- political leaders' will to develop policies and programs that aim to sustain local and/or regional natural capital
- political leaders' will to assess the conditions of local and/or regional natural capital
- private sector leaders' awareness of the condition of local and/or regional natural capital
- private sector leaders' will to develop policies and programs that aim to sustain local and/or regional natural capital

Section Six: Your Indicator Project and Select Components of Economic Capital

11. Please rate your indicator project's impact on the following components of economic capital:

- community leaders' will to develop local financial institutions
- community leaders' will to develop fair-trade purchasing policies
- political leaders' will to develop local financial institutions
- political leaders will to develop fair-trade purchasing policies
- private sector leaders' will to develop fair-trade purchasing policies

Section Seven: Your Indicator Project and Select Components of Physical Capital

12. Please rate your indicator project's impact on the following components of economic capital:

- community members' will to contribute to new or existing physical capital
- community leaders will to contribute to new or existing physical capital
- political leaders' will to contribute to new or existing physical capital
- private sector leaders' will to contribute to new or existing physical capital



7.3. Complete list of indicator projects that were sent the survey

1. BC Regional Socio-Economic Indices and Profiles
2. Castlegar Wellness Assessment Project
3. Comox Valley Report Card of Community Well-Being
4. Community Resilience Project – Centre for Community Enterprise
5. Cowichan - Status of the Community Report
6. Dawson Creek Food Share Research Project
7. Delta Community Impact Profile
8. Fernie Quality of Life index
9. Fraser Basin Sustainability Indicators Project
10. Georgia Basin Action Plan
11. Gulf Islands - Measuring Our Progress
12. Langley Community Impact Profile
13. Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, and Katzie Community Impact Profile
14. Nanaimo Regional District - State of Sustainability Project/ Monitoring Program
15. Nanaimo Social Status Report
16. New Westminster Healthy / Sustainable Community Project
17. New Westminster Official Community Plan Update Statistical Profile
18. New Westminster Report: Working Towards a Racism-Free Community
19. Quesnel Sustainability Indicators Project
20. Revelstoke Community Development Action Plan
21. Richmond Poverty Report Card
22. Richmond State of the Environment
23. Smithers Quality of Life Index
24. Sunshine Coast - Report Card for a Sustainable Community
25. Surrey and White Rock Community Solutions
26. Tri-Cities and Anmore / Belcarra Community Solutions
27. Upper Vancouver Island Early Childhood Development Research Project

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28. Vancouver Agreement Monitoring Initiative
 29. Vancouver - City of Vancouver: Social Indicators Report
 30. Vancouver - Downtown Eastside Community Monitoring Report
 31. Vancouver - FCM Quality of Life Indicators - A Vancouver Perspective
 32. Vancouver - Aboriginal Indicator System
 33. Vancouver - Greater Vancouver Homeless Count
 34. Vancouver - GVRD Livable Region Strategic Plan
 35. Vancouver - GVRD Sustainability Report
 36. Vancouver - Food Security Indicators
 37. Vancouver - Olympic Games Impact
 38. Vancouver - Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory
 39. Vancouver - Vital Signs



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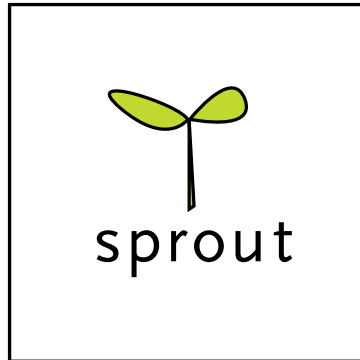
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resources for social change

As SPARC BC's ongoing knowledge transfer initiative, Sprout resources are designed to facilitate learning about and the practice of community-based research methods and community development strategies.

Sprout is a symbol of growth and innovation and can be found on all SPARC BC resource guides and workbooks that have been developed for you to use with groups of committed people who care about community well being. By nature, Sprout resources are fusions of theory and practice — mixtures of big ideas and small steps for cultivating positive change in your community. Each year, we will add new publications to Sprout based on your input. Let us know what you would like to see in Sprout!

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Find us Online: www.sparc.bc.ca



THIS RESEARCH REPORT SERVES AS A TOOL FOR CUTIVATING AN UNDERSTANDING OF SOME OF THE BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF INDICATOR PROJECTS IN BC. IN THIS RESEARCH REPORT, WE ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING QUESTION: TO WHAT DEGREE DO INDICATOR PROJECTS HAVE IMPACTS ON THE COMMUNITY CAPITAL OF A SAMPLE OF BC TOWNS, REGIONS AND CITIES?

