

# A Decade of Experience with Community Indicators in Spokane

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## Measuring Flood Resilience Webinar

National Academy of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine, 9.28.2016

# In case you're wondering.....

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# A word about the Spokane region



- 100th largest metropolitan area in the U.S.  
When combined with neighboring Idaho city, 75<sup>th</sup> largest combined MSA
- Economy - healthcare, retail, manufacturing, tourism
- Most economic performance measures – lower than U.S. & WA benchmarks
- Sports crazy town, especially for basketball



# Eastern Washington University



- One of 4 “regional” universities in Washington state
- Currently, about 13,250 students
- A few dozen masters degrees offered, w/ one applied doctorate
- Strong desire to be of value to the region outside of the classroom led to the founding of the Institute in 2002.





# Spokane Indicators Initiative has always been about a broader community, not just EWU



- Project celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary next month
- Genuine collaboration with many organizations spontaneously coming together after attending a conference put on by the [Community Indicators Consortium](#)
  - United Way
  - Spokane Regional Health District
  - Spokane Economic Development Council
  - Two foundations
  - City of Spokane
  - EWU



# Our motivations



- EWU President: “ Build a better database”
  - Banish anecdote & replace with fact
- That belief shared by all members of the steering committee
  - So much information was available on the web but not being captured in a meaningful way
  - Ultimately, our goal was to assist more informed decision-making
- Implicitly – a desire to “move the needle”



# Steering committee worked hard on agreeing on a process & principles



- Process – involve as many stakeholders as one could through focus groups
- Principles
  - Learn from best practices
  - Take a comprehensive approach to the categories
  - Adopt a neutral stance
  - Target user: an average resident who wants to be informed
  - Keep the design simple & use visuals
- Launch – October, 2006



# Current look 2 iterations later: Spokane Trends

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## WELCOME

Thank you for visiting the Community Indicators Initiative of Spokane, an online community resource offering a centralized location to learn more about Spokane County. Over 185 indicators are highlighted, all supported by trusted, reliable sources and continually updated.

These measures were chosen by residents of the County through a careful process and represent the preferences of what to measure from the available data. As you begin to examine the nine main categories, we hope you find the information relevant and useful in your daily work and decision-making.



People



Culture & Recreation



Economic Vitality



Education



Environment



Health



Housing



Public Safety



Transportation



Priority Spokane

## ABOUT US

The Community Indicators Initiative of Spokane seeks to improve local, private and public decision-making by providing relevant

businesses, business organizations, researchers, and the press.

- To track progress over time of various efforts toward a healthier, more vibrant

A community indicators project must receive its inspiration, general direction, and ultimately, validity from the citizens



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# Users



- Many corners of the community
  - Public sector: staff & some electeds
  - Private sector: banking, retail, real estate, economic development
  - Healthcare
  - Press
  - Non-profits
  - Grant writers
- A good percentage of users from outside Spokane
- Priority Spokane – a high level leadership group formed to act on the gaps

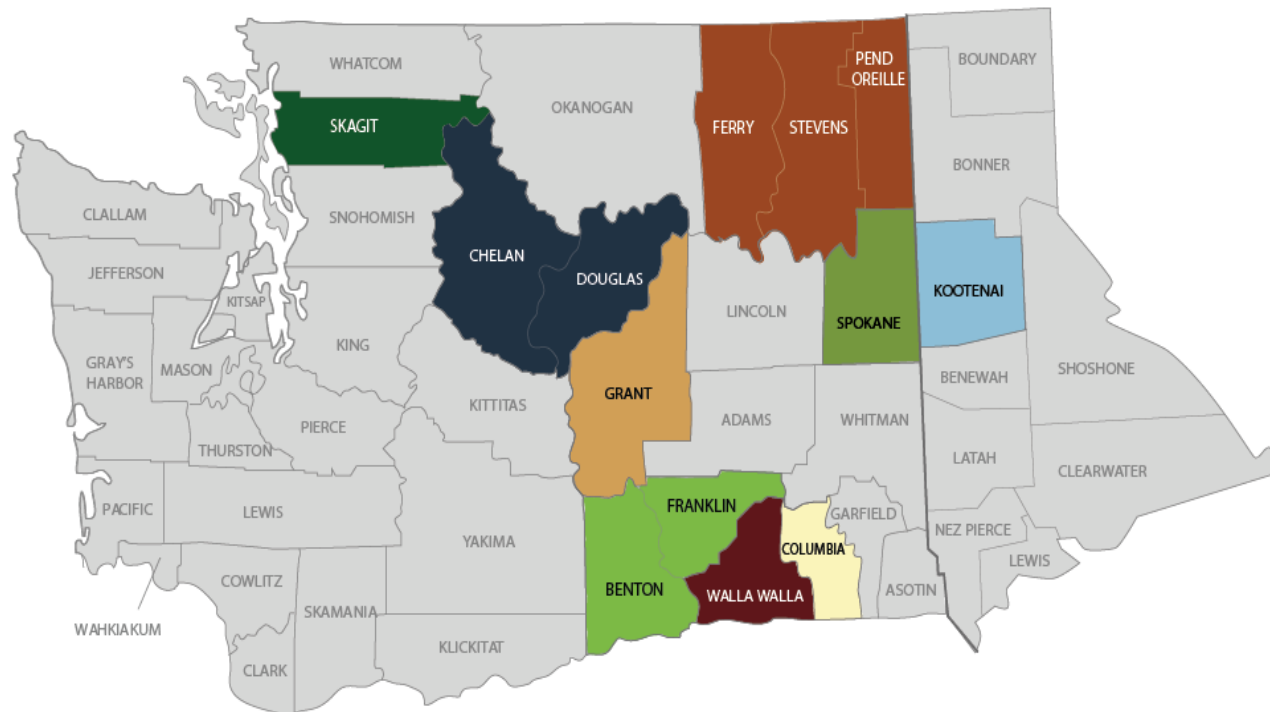


# Expansion to other counties over the past decade



## EWU Community Indicators Projects

The shaded counties represent all community indicator projects in Washington and Idaho managed by Eastern Washington University, its partners. Click on a shaded area to go to the website for that county/region.



[Links](#) [FAQ](#) [Other Sites](#) [Indicators at a Glance](#) [Resources](#) [In the Press](#)



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# Lessons learned: Adoption isn't immediate



- To become embedded into the fabric of private & public sector decision-making takes many years
  - Typical issue of making a broader audience aware of something new
  - Don't rely on the "build it and they will come" belief
- Interpreting numerical information – not 2<sup>nd</sup> nature to many
- Key role of indicator champions
- If one can show its application to solving problem, all the better



# A community-wide application: Priority Spokane



- A leadership group, composed of electeds, business, foundations, United Way, health district, higher ed – convened by the Inland NW Community Foundation
- Task: to respond to community's desire to move the needle
- Which needle(s)?
  - Decided to focus on one at a time, over an interval of 5 years
  - Committed to allowing community (focus groups) to decide
- First key issue: raising low high school graduation rates



# Priority Spokane's experience in brief



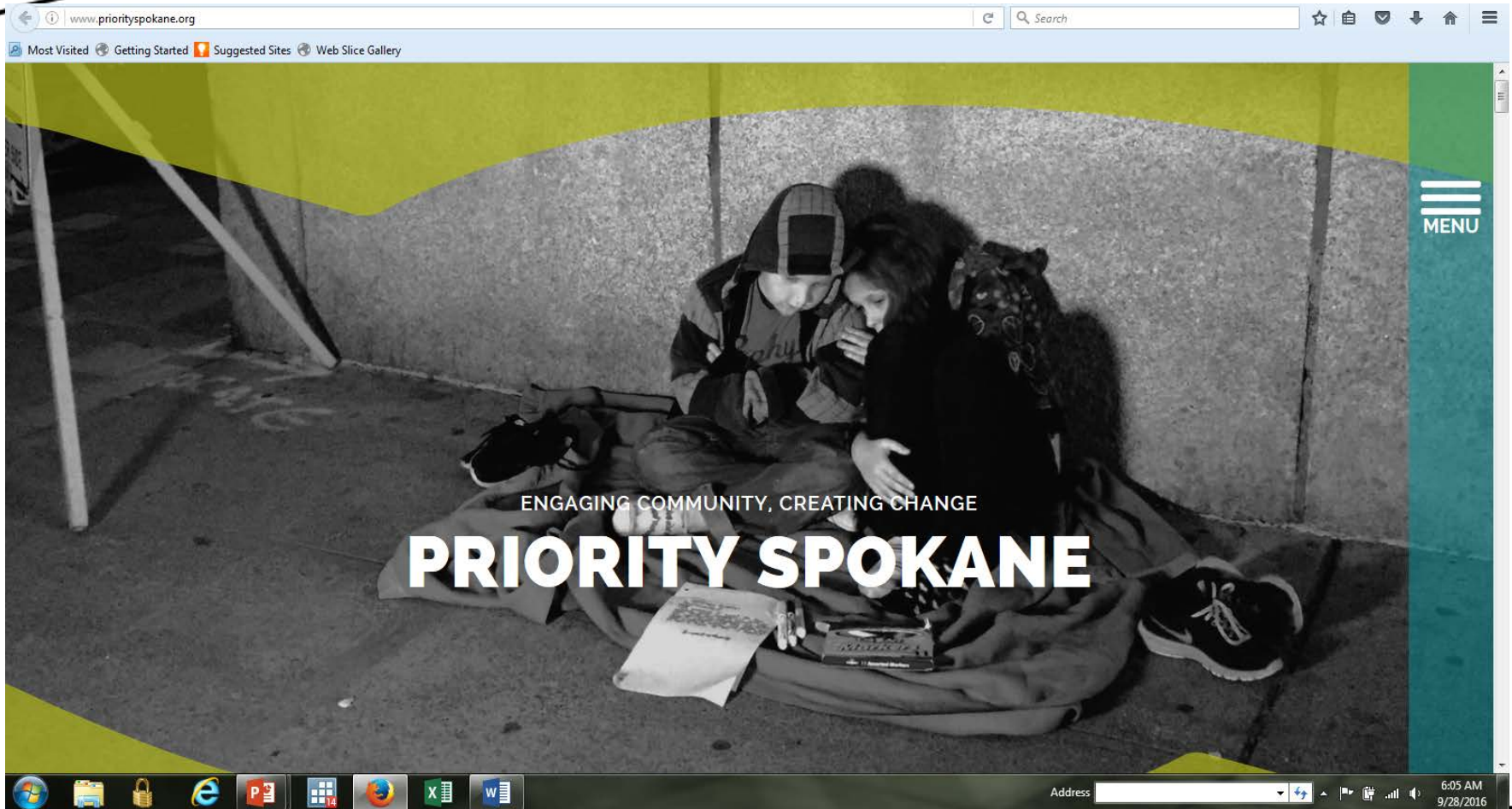
- Our steps to move the needle
  - Learn from best practice research
  - Secure buy-in from affected organizations (school district)
  - Find resources
  - Stand back and let organizations & experts work on it
- Results
  - After 6 years, graduation rates for the largest school district climbed from 57% to 83%; likely 85% for the most recent year
- Recognition: Spokane designated as a city with a “culture of health” by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation





# 2<sup>nd</sup> round Focus: Homeless youth (K-8), by McKinney-Vento definition

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# Thank You!

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