

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TASK FORCE REPORT

TO THE OICF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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FINAL REPORT OF THE OICF NEEDS ASSESSMENT TASK FORCE

I. Background, Charge, and Vision

Five years ago, OICF began a concerted effort to increase its positive impact on the quality of life on Orcas Island. This effort was prompted by nationwide data suggesting that communities prosper when community foundations take a leadership role in identifying and then focusing efforts on the most pressing needs of their communities. In 2010, OICF launched an extensive and comprehensive effort across eight sectors¹ to identify and document needs on Orcas Island. The process, described succinctly on the OICF website at <http://oicf.us/oicf-in-the-community/need-assess/>, resulted in a 2011 final report that was widely shared with the community and donors, and was used to guide program and grant decisions. The assessment served OICF well, but as a needs assessment model, its major limitations were that (a) it took 18 months for volunteers to conduct focus group sessions, and (b) the sessions lacked end-user involvement (i.e., the majority of group participants were service providers).

Nevertheless, the report was cited by OICF's 2012 Sustainability Task Force as a key to the foundation's long-term growth and priorities, and it, along with information provided by the regional Opportunity Council's Prosperity Project Survey (<http://oicf.us/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/2010-San-Juan-Prosperity-Project-report.pdf>), provided the motivation and direction for our first Focus Area Initiative (FAIT) in the area of physical, mental, and dental health. Appropriately, the 2012 Board retreat on strategic planning called for "leading community efforts to address critical needs of our island," including the creation of a Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF). The task force was appointed in the spring of 2013 and charged to "explore and recommend options for credible, feasible, and sustainable assessment of community needs for Board action, in keeping with the OICF Strategic Plan."

All of the Task Force's work was guided by our vision of how OICF can best support the growth of a vital and healthy Orcas community. The NATF articulated this vision as follows:

We see our island as a bounded, diverse, and exquisite space. But it is a space where some do not flourish for various reasons, including lack of food, shelter, medical care, employment, and a network of support. The Community Foundation has the ability and capacity to lead islanders in addressing these issues. To do so will require capturing data about our island's needs, some of which are not yet articulated, on an ongoing basis.

Such work requires nurturing of collaborative networks across sectors. OICF can play a central and important role as a convener of such networks, hosting efforts to identify needs and gaps in delivery, and bringing together organizations that can collaborate to meet those needs. OICF's strength is in its high degree of freedom to work across all areas, unlike organizations that are bounded by a particular mission or sector.

We see OICF as moving past building nonprofit capacity to building community capacity. We also view OICF as a positive change agent that both provides data about islanders' needs for all to use and takes a proactive role in addressing those needs.

¹ Arts & Culture, Early Childhood, Economy & Transportation, Education, Environment, Health, Housing, and Social Services

Since its inception, the NATF met a dozen times from June through December 2013, and covered a wide range of topics including definitions of need, assessment processes, methodology, and data sources. The Task Force developed a set of key definitions, sectors of need on our island, and recommendations for action.

The Task Force also recognized that needs exist over a broad range of human endeavor, from food security to nurturing creative thinking. We produced a Community Needs Matrix (Appendix A) to illustrate this breadth and identified sectors and subsectors in order to help guide future deliberations on needs assessment practices.

NATF believes that important needs, i.e., unacceptable gaps between current and desired conditions, can exist within all the levels of our matrix. During its deliberations, the NATF confronted the question of whether some sectors, e.g., housing or food security, are inherently “more needy” than others. Moreover, while there are many unmet needs in the community, some may not be appropriate for OICF involvement. Over the long term, judgments regarding importance are better made at the level of those using the needs assessment results.

II. Defining Needs and Indicators

The NATF has adopted the following definitions of community needs and indicators in the context of Orcas-specific needs assessments. The most useful indicators for our purposes on Orcas Island possess the qualities of (a) ease of collection and processing over time (e.g., decennial census data) and (b) highly plausible relationship to a condition to which the indicator is pointing. However, the NATF acknowledges that the size of our population and the difficulty and cost of gathering robust island-specific data are limiting factors in conducting needs assessments that are predominantly empirical.

Community needs are gaps between current and desired conditions. The discrepancy, when measured appropriately, can give rise to insights about magnitude (e.g., the degree of difference between actual and wanted), importance (e.g., the urgency of closing the gap), and the possible ways to change current conditions or achieve desired conditions to reduce unwanted gaps. In this context, needs assessment is a combination of information gathering and community engagement working toward the goal of measuring and assigning values to current and desired conditions.

The NATF acknowledges the lack of Orcas-specific data, and that information gathering needs to include both quantitative and qualitative methods. In particular, the NATF realizes the critical role of the judicious use of conversations and case studies to augment and add depth to objective data.

Indicators are statistics derived from available data sources that illustrate current conditions. They serve as objective reference points to identify specific needs that may initially surface as impressions or judgments. For example, a community may have a general sense that food security for children is a major issue. A useful (and convincing) indicator is the percentage of public school children who are eligible to receive free lunches. Such an indicator is useful over time, because it is a standard objective measure that can help to assess the increase/decrease in the local need to address food security through various services.

III. Recommendations

The NATF carefully considered OICF's vision, mission and goals in making the following recommendations to the Board of Trustees. We realize that OICF's role in the community is best understood as a convener and facilitator, rather than as a provider of services. We also emphasize that establishing partnerships with other organizations is vital for building the community of assistance providers required to address our island's needs, and should be achieved whenever possible.

It will take time and resources to put into place the infrastructure to conduct ongoing needs assessments for Orcas Island as described below. Yet real needs exist now, so in the near term, NATF encourages OICF to set priorities and focus its efforts on those need areas in which it can achieve tangible results, working in collaboration with island donors and nonprofits. The NATF recommends that mental health and addiction issues, already identified in the last OICF Needs Assessment as a significant health need, be the board's first priority for the immediate future.

Our recommendations require commitment of additional resources, especially during the critical next steps of ongoing data gathering, securing community inputs into needs assessments, and establishing priorities. However, OICF is already well positioned to conduct this kind of outreach to the community.

A: Building Capacity for Ongoing Needs Assessments on Orcas Island

Recommendation A1: OICF should appoint a standing committee of five to seven board and community members to guide ongoing needs assessment and indicator efforts. This committee would manage the efforts of the working groups described below, establish tools for assessing needs, and identify priorities for OICF consideration. This standing committee should report to the OICF and FAIT semi-annually, or as needed.

Recommendation A2: OICF should allocate additional financial and human resources, including volunteer training, to advance the work of the community working groups for sector-specific needs assessments, as described below. And, OICF should seek outside partners for needs assessments including regional public or nonprofit agencies such as the Opportunity Council.

Recommendation A3: OICF should continue to serve as a facilitator to improve intra- and inter-sector communication among and between nonprofits as well as off-island resources. NATF is cognizant of current efforts to establish an information HUB to address this need, and believes such an entity could assist OICF and the community at large in sharing vital information about needs, resources, and gaps.

Recommendation A4: OICF should develop a range of sector-specific indicators through a multi-year process of community involvement identifying the most credible and practical indicators, and supplemented by the results of off-island assessments by other data-rich sources such as the Opportunity Council. That process should engage community groups made up of experts and stakeholders from various sectors to establish and evaluate key measures of conditions in their own areas of interest and capacity. These efforts should be initiated and guided by the standing OICF Needs Assessment Committee referenced in Recommendation A1. Results should be shared widely with donors and the broader community. As noted above, such indicators can

focus community resources and attention and also provide valuable measurements of progress towards community-identified goals.

Recommendation A5: OICF should form temporary, ad hoc community working groups starting with (but not limited to) the sectors we identified in our matrix (health, social welfare, education, transportation, economic development, environment, and arts and culture). These working groups should incorporate the capacities of established Orcas nonprofits to help identify the real needs of those requiring services, set priorities, and identify strategies to deliver services. A significant level of the on-going data-review and inputs required for needs assessments can be met by working groups committed to providing input to FAIT and the OICF Grants Committee.

B. Elements of Needs Assessments for Orcas Island

Recommendation B1: OICF should use systematic needs assessments to gather and analyze Orcas specific data. Assessments need to be sustainable over time and credible in the eyes of the community. The methods used to assess needs should fit the issue being considered. This means that assessments may be either quantitative or qualitative, but NATF notes that qualitative methods may fit many of the needs of our small, mobile, rural population.

Recommendation B2: Needs assessments should:

- target those who are experiencing the need including the end users of available services.
- to the extent possible, build on available data.
- be based on broad sampling of residents, which will require strategies to encourage full participation and the involvement of service and/or information providers such as the planned Hub, the Food Bank, and Orcas Family Connections, among others.
- be conducted in priority order based on the input of the recommended working groups, being mindful of what is already known, and what is not known.

Recommendation B3: Needs assessment results should be shared widely with donors and the broader community, and contribute to the direction of OICF initiatives. Such sharing will educate and guide OICF and its donors in prioritizing and selecting grant recipients and in resource alignment; assist OICF in taking a strategic role as a convener of strategic gatherings to address important needs; assist service providers in developing initiatives addressing important needs; and assist all in meeting and even eliminating needs.

APPENDIX A

OICF NEEDS ASSESSMENT TASKFORCE TEMPLATE

Result of an iterative set of discussions among the Task Force during meetings in September/October 2013

Community Building an strategy to engage stakeholders in discussions about needs in various sectors.	Sectors	Baseline Statistics (Indicators)						Supporting Data (Needs Assessments)	Community-derived Benchmarks (Progress towards meeting needs)	Community Building as a strategy to engage stakeholders in discussions about how targeted needs are being addressed over time.	
		Age Groups									
		Birth to 5	6-18	19-26	27-55	56-79	80+-		1-3 years 4-9 years 10+ years		
	Art and Culture <i>By art and culture we mean programming and support both for artists working and living on the Island as well as for those that enjoy and appreciate their creativity. This includes the literary, visual, theater and musical arts as well as many others that generate and sustain our Island community.</i>										
	Economic Development <i>By economic development we mean the capacity to engage and support enterprises that target community needs.</i>										
Education <i>By education we mean learning opportunities, both formal and informal, available to our Orcas Community with an emphasis placed on a sector or sectors needing attention and/or support.</i>											
Environment <i>By environment we mean both the natural one that affects our lives on Orcas Island and over which we have some stewardship responsibility, as well as the culture we establish and maintain for our community.</i>											

Health								
<i>By health we mean medical, dental, and mental wellness, including treatment and prevention of illness.</i>								
Medical								
Dental								
Mental								
Transportation								
<i>By transportation we mean the movement of people to and from Orcas Island and around Orcas Island.</i>								
Interisland								
On-island								
Social Welfare								
<i>By social welfare we mean the essential baseline individual and family needs for food, shelter, and security.</i>								
Food security								
Job security								
Safety services								
Disability services (?)								
Housing								

APPENDIX B

Needs Assessment Data Sources:

County:

General San Juan County

<http://www.sanjuanco.com/index.aspx>

SJ Co Detailed profile (July 2011)

http://www.city-data.com/San_Juan_County-WA.html

SJ Co Prosperity Report 2011

<http://www.opcco.org/oppcotest/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/sjpp2011.pdf>

SJ Co Comprehensive Plan 2007

<http://sanjuan.wsu.edu/agriculture/documents/EconomicDevelopmentReport.0.6.pdf>

Milene Henley- budgeting and monthly financial data

San Juan Arts Council

Employment Security

<https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/regional-reports/county-profiles/san-juan-county-profile>

2010 Age Demographics for San Juan County

<http://factfinder2.census.gov>

University of Washington Drug Institute

<http://adia.uw.edu/wastate/sanjuan.htm>

<http://adia.uw.edu/wastate/HYS/sanjuan2012.pdf>

WA State Department of Health- morbidity and mortality

Orcas Island Specific:

Alanon and AA Community

Dental Van participants' evaluation

Fire Department Strategic Plan (recently surveyed and focus groups)

Health Youth Survey (data collected grades 5-12)

High School Senior Projects

Library

Local sheriff

Orcas Family Connections

Orcas Family Health Center- from users - income levels, ethnicity, insured/uninsured and most common diseases

Orcas Island Library online databases- existing- ask librarian to get access to a specific database

Orcas Island Medical Center participant survey

Orcas Island Research Group

OPAL Community Land Trust-from users: income levels, ethnicity, housing costs, housing condition, changes over time

School District

- Readiness to Learn (through the school)
- Research studies being conducted in schools

- School Records

Senior Center