

FAQ **MEDICINE HAT'S** **VitalSigns®**

What is Medicine Hat's *Vital Signs*?

Medicine Hat *Vital Signs* is an annual check-up through which Community Foundation of Medicine Hat & Southeastern Alberta measures the vitality of our city, identifies significant trends, and assigns grades in **ten** areas critical to Medicine Hat's quality of life.

The report card data is a compilation of numerous research sources, much of it local, which will help the community make connections between issues and trends in different areas. The findings are presented in a reader friendly format to make them as accessible as possible.

An expanded, in-depth report is also made available on our website, complete with links to original community research.

Medicine Hat's *Vital Signs* is part of a national Vital Signs initiative led by Community Foundations of Canada (CFC); our community foundation is one of many across Canada issuing a Vital Signs report. Every year our findings will also inform a national report issued by CFC.

Which indicators will you be measuring?

Community Foundation of Medicine Hat & Southeastern Alberta has consulted with a wide range of community groups to ensure our indicators capture the area's unique issues and attributes.

Each community chooses its own indicators, but there are common themes and core indicators which are published in every Vital Signs report, as available, and upon which Community Foundations of Canada bases its national report.

For 2008, those core indicators include:

- Life expectancy
- Child poverty rate
- Rental vacancy rate
- Voter turnout
- Air quality
- Employment growth
- Obesity rates
- High-school completion
- Immigrant incomes
- Attendance at cultural events

Why are you participating in this program?

Because our community foundation works with a wide range of community groups, we get a comprehensive view of local issues.

Measuring our community's vitality in critical areas will increase the effectiveness of our grantmaking, help us to inform our donors about issues and opportunities in the community, and assist us in making connections between individuals and groups to address those issues. We also feel Vital Signs provides an excellent context and catalyst for our community to have important conversations and take action together.



Are you working with other organizations in the community?

Medicine Hat's Vital Signs is an initiative of **Community Foundation of Medicine Hat & Southeastern Alberta**; however, we are consulting with a number of community organizations and leaders, including **City of Medicine Hat, Palliser Health Region, Medicine Hat College, Chamber of Commerce, Volunteer and Community Information Centre, Medicine Hat Police Service, Economic Development Alliance of SE Alberta, Community Futures Entre Corps etc.)** and plan to gather valuable research information from numerous sources in the community.

Where did the idea for *Vital Signs* come from?

Medicine Hat's Vital Signs is based on a project of the Toronto Community Foundation and is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation provided critical support for the program's national expansion.

Why did community foundations establish this program?

Community foundations see enormous value for donors and the entire community in *Vital Signs*. Measuring the vitality of Canadian communities in critical areas helps community foundations:

- Increase the effectiveness of our grantmaking
- Better inform our donors about issues and opportunities in the community
- Assist us in making connections between individuals and groups to address those issues
- Providing a context and catalyst for community discussion and deliberation

What other communities are participating in *Vital Signs*?

This year, *Vital Signs* is being published in 15 communities: Victoria, metro Vancouver, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Waterloo Region*, Guelph-Wellington, London and Middlesex, Toronto, Oakville, Greater Sudbury, Ottawa, Greater Montréal, Fredericton and Saint John.

**Published by The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation and the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation*

To see other *Vital Signs* reports, visit www.vitalsignscanada.ca.

How is *Vital Signs* different from other indicator initiatives?

Different indicator initiatives exist across Canada. Some track specific issues at a local level, such as a police department monitoring crime levels. Others analyze national data from a particular perspective, such as sustainability. All play an important role in helping us better understand our communities.

Medicine Hat's Vital Signs will build on existing initiatives in four valuable ways:

Collate broad range of data: We will develop a distinctly broad picture of the community using relevant national data and identifying local research on a wide range of subject areas.

Engage the community: *Vital Signs* will reflect the community because it will involve the community at every level, from determining the report's indicators and exploring research sources, to assigning grades.

Create a national report: Because community foundations across Canada are participating in this project we will be able to share results and track local trends at the national level.



Publish research you can read! We are committed to publishing a reader-friendly document that appeals to a wide range of readers looking for a snapshot of quality of life and of community vitality.

How will *Vital Signs* add value to current research?

Another benefit of *Vital Signs* is its ability to draw public attention to the terrific indicator work already taking place in our community.

By consolidating new and existing data *Vital Signs* makes a wide range of information easier to access.

Individuals and organizations interested in detailed analysis of particular areas can simply use our *Vital Signs* website links to find the in-depth reports they need.

How can I get more information?

Contact the Community Foundation at (403) 527 9038 or e-mail info@mhcf.ca

