



**A STUDY OF QUALITY OF LIFE &
WELL-BEING IN DOÑA ANA COUNTY
(2013 – 2014)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This LWV-GLC Quality of Life and Well-Being Study was designed around three goals: (1) To develop a working knowledge of the quality of life and well-being development model; (2) To examine how local governmental and non-governmental entities are utilizing a quality of life (QOL) approach to guide their actions; and (3) To consider measuring civic engagement in Doña Ana County as a local QOL indicator. In pursuing these goals, the committee reviewed the scholarship and interviewed key informants in Doña Ana County organizations using a QOL perspective for assessment and planning purposes.

The concept of quality of life was developed by social scientists interested in identifying indicators of human development that went beyond market-focused measures of gross domestic product (GDP) and income. In the context of deindustrialization and late capitalism, scholars found that raising the GDP in highly developed nations did not necessarily have an impact on the quality of life and well-being of the citizenry, and that increasing levels of economic inequality were associated with growing social dysfunction, such as chronic health problems, violence, and poor educational performance of school children. In his book *Development as Freedom*, economist Amartya Sen conceptualizes human development as expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy, with emphasis on the “common good,” much like the ideas Thomas Jefferson articulated in the founding documents of the United States. While market mechanisms represent important means to expanding freedoms, the capability of individuals to take advantage of freedoms depends also on other determinants, such as social and economic arrangements, facilities for education and healthcare as well as political and civil rights. Over the past three decades numerous indices of QOL and well-being have been developed and the QOL movement has grown. Today, municipalities are increasingly using a QOL approach for assessment, planning and decision-making.

This study found that the elected officials of the City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County and civic leaders of non-governmental entities (e.g., The Ocotillo Institute, Ngage New Mexico, and Viva Doña Ana) are utilizing a QOL approach in current local and regional assessment and planning initiatives. Moreover, a substantial amount of private funding is being invested in Doña Ana County to develop institutionalized mechanisms for promoting a greater quality of life for the citizenry. One common dimension of QOL models of particular interest to the LWV is civic engagement. Scholars argue that civic engagement only occurs if individuals and communities know how to become involved and have a sense of empowerment to make a difference. The study committee reviewed trends in civic engagement locally and nationally, examined popular measures of civic engagement, and identified four important dimensions of civic engagement in Doña Ana County, including community attachment and trust, access to knowledge, opportunities to engage and taking action.

Based on the findings of the study, the committee makes four recommendations: (1) That LWV-GLC members become knowledgeable about and engage individually and organizationally with QOL initiatives in our community; (2) That the LWV-GLC advocate for public decision makers in Doña Ana County and New Mexico to utilize a comprehensive QOL approach for planning, assessment, and other public decision making purposes; (3) That the LWV-GLC take a leadership role in local efforts to conceptualize, measure, and increase civic engagement in Doña Ana County, particularly through voting participation and protection against voter suppression; and (4) That future programming and planning by the LWV-GLC take into account the racial/ethnic and class differences in the level of QOL and well-being in Doña Ana County.

I. INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of life and ensuring the happiness of the citizenry are ideas enshrined in the U.S. Declaration of Independence with the reference to the unalienable rights of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” and in the preamble of the U.S. Constitution with the words “to promote the general welfare.” The U.S. League of Women Voters (LWVUS) was founded upon and has long supported public policy positions that aim to promote the general welfare of individuals and communities at the national, regional and local levels. Quality of life related policies advocated by LWVUS include the protection of public health and the environment, equal access to quality education, employment and housing, the promotion of self-sufficiency for individuals and families, the reduction and prevention of poverty, the promotion of well-being, development and safety of all children, and much more. An emerging quality of life movement of the late 20th century is reflected in a 2011 resolution passed by the United Nations that recognizes that the common indicator of well-being -- gross domestic product – “was not designed to and does not adequately reflect the happiness and wellbeing of people in a country” and thus “additional measures that better capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and well-being” are needed (UN Resolution 65/309, July 19, 2011).

The LWV-GLC Quality of Life & Well-Being Study Committee developed three goals to guide their research:

1. To develop a working knowledge of the quality of life and well-being development model and global movement;
2. To explore how a Quality of Life (QOL) approach is currently being utilized by governmental and non-governmental entities in Doña Ana County; and
3. To examine how civic engagement, a concept that is central to the mission and work of the League of Women Voters, is included within quality of life models and to consider the possibilities of measuring civic engagement in Doña Ana County.

In pursuing these goals, the committee reviewed the literature on the quality of life and well-being approaches and interviewed key governmental and non-governmental informants who are engaged in applying a quality of life approach to assessment, planning and decision-making in Doña Ana County. The information gained from the interviews was woven into this report in the various sections rather than presented as a transcript of each interview. The literature consulted and the interviews conducted for this study are listed, respectively, in the References and Appendix A of this report.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Quality of Life and Human Capacities & Functioning

The concept of quality of life is used in academia as well as community initiatives, governmental policies, and legislation and is studied from many different perspectives and disci-

iplinary groundings ranging from philosophy to social policy to social sciences. In the most general sense, scholars and practitioners define quality of life (QOL) as *the overall well-being of individuals and societies* (Nussbaum and Sen 1993). Quality of life and well-being models can be applied to both individuals and larger social units, such as nations, regions and local counties. QOL is related to but distinct from concepts of standard of living, freedom, human rights, and human security. QOL is a holistic concept that aims to move beyond macro-economic measures of human development to embrace a wide-range of indicators of human capacities and functioning.

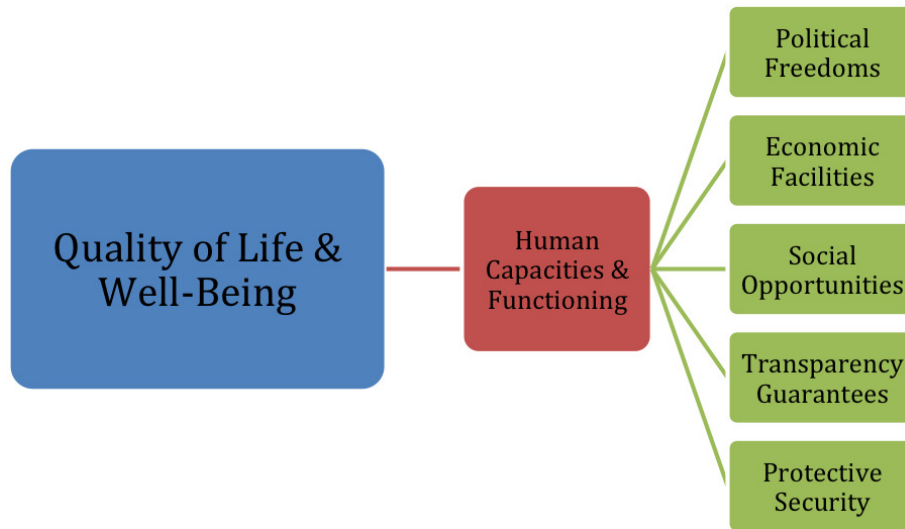
The term QOL is often associated with Amartya Sen, an economist who has spent his life studying economic development and policies related to social equality and freedom. Sen critiques economic development approaches that focus solely on market-defined indicators, such as gross domestic product (GDP) that measures the market value of goods and services. Instead, Sen and his colleagues proposed focusing on the enhancement of human capacities and functioning to assess in a more holistic way the strivings of all persons to live a quality life in a way they value.

B. Amartya Sen's Five Basic Types of Freedoms

In his book *Development as Freedom*, Sen (1999) begins by examining all that human development encompasses in terms of how it affects life outcomes for individuals and communities. Development is seen as expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy, with emphasis on the "common good," much like the ideas Thomas Jefferson articulated in the founding documents of the United States. Sen points out that while income can be very important as a means to expanding freedoms, the capability of individuals to take advantage of freedoms depends also on other determinants, such as social and economic arrangements, facilities for education and healthcare as well as political and civil rights (e.g. the liberty to participate in public discussion and scrutiny). Sen (1999: 5) argues, "If freedom is what development advances, then there is an argument for focusing on the overarching objective, rather than on some particular means, or some specially chosen list of instruments." The difference here from traditional approaches to development, which tend to focus on GNP and individual income levels, is seeing *freedom* as the principal ends of development as well as the means.

Sen (1999) identifies five basic types of freedom that are seen as instrumental to expanding human capacities and functioning: 1) political freedoms; 2) economic facilities; 3) social opportunities; 4) transparency guarantees; and 5) protective security. Each of these distinct types of rights and opportunities, as depicted in Figure 1 below, helps to advance the general capability of a person to achieve the life she or he values. Sen gives numerous practical examples of the relationship between different types of freedoms and enhanced quality of life through increased opportunities for individuals to develop their own capabilities for self-agency in achieving the life they value. The notion of developing self-agency is another key departure from traditional approaches of development for individuals who lack the freedom of access to a whole host of opportunities.

Figure 1. Amartya Sen’s conceptualization of Quality of Life & Well-Being



C. Quality of Life Approach and Public Policy

The QOL development approach calls for major shifts in public policy that encourage effective interconnections between organizations and promote values that ultimately create changes in interpersonal and inter-organizational interactions, market transactions, and structural arrangements. Sen’s work and the scholarship and praxis of many others has led to a growing awareness that economic growth alone does not capture social progress of a nation or community.

There is also growing evidence to suggest that more economic growth in economically developed countries, such as the United States, does not necessarily enhance the quality of life of all individuals or groups within the country or community. Macro-level economic growth in the context of growing economic inequality has been found to be associated with many indicators of social dysfunction, negatively effecting not only individuals but also whole communities (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Given the high level of household income inequality in New Mexico (McNichol, Hall, Cooper and Palacios 2012), and presumably in Doña Ana County, a quality of life approach for assessment, planning and decision-making has the potential to help create positive social change in our community.

III. MEASUREMENT AND INDICES

Measurement issues are central to the scholarship and research on quality of life models, particularly as they relate to assessing the well-being of actual individuals and communities. Scholars and practitioners rigorously debate how best to measure human capacities and functioning and which indicators are most useful for assessing the complexities of well-being

of individuals and communities. Assessment of QOL happens at all levels of society -- the global level by comparing QOL between countries, the national level by comparing QOL between regions/states, and the local level by comparing QOL between households within a local community.

A. Subjective and Objective measures

Scholars and practitioners use both subjective and objective indicators of well-being at the individual and community levels. Subjective measures of well-being are designed to capture information about how people actually experience their lives. Subjective measures are based on self-reports of satisfaction and fulfillment in absolute and relative terms as well as day-to-day emotions, such as happiness, joy, stress, anger, and affection. An example of a subjective measure of well-being is the Gross National Happiness Index, which is discussed below. Objective measures of well-being tend to focus on material conditions and other outcomes in people's lives such as levels of and access to opportunities related to health, education, financial security, housing, transportation, and food security. Indices that combine multiple indicators or measures are often used to assess QOL and well-being because they are easy to understand and combine complexity with parsimony.

B. Popular Global and Local Indices of Quality of Life & Well-Being

At the global level of analyses, there are various popular indices that measure QOL of a country, including the Human Development Index (HDI), Inequality-adjusted HDI, Gender Inequality Index, Happy Planet Index, Social Progress Index, and many more. There are also quality of life indices that have been developed to focus on the well-being of individuals and communities, such as the Gross National Happiness Index and the Gallup Healthways' Well-Being Index. This section of the report reviews the aforementioned global and local Quality of Life indices and discusses the implications of these measures and indices for quality of life in Doña Ana County.

1. Human Development Index (HDI)

The Human Development Index (HDI) is one of the most common measures of QOL and is a composite statistic that combines measures of: (1) life expectancy, (2) educational attainment and literacy, and (3) standard of living measured as income. This index was developed in the 1990s by economists Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen who were working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Using this index, countries are classified as a low, medium, high or very high human development country. The HDI moves beyond economic measures and includes indicators of human capacities and functioning to assess the overall quality of life and well-being of the aggregate of individuals in a country. The HDI is used in the popular annual Human Development Report of the UNDP and has been important for policy initiatives of global development agencies such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Figure 2. The Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme



2. Gender Inequality Index and the Inequality-adjusted HDI

Given the persistent gender disparities in quality of life outcomes, the United Nations Development Programme developed a Gender Inequality Index (GII) that aims to expose and help remedy the significant differences in the distribution of health, education and labor market access among girls/women and boys/men, which are measured by the HDI (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii>). The focus on gender inequality has led to a more general inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI), which was introduced in the 2010 Human Development Report. The IHDI is an index of the average level of human development of people after considering the existing inequalities within a country, which have been found to distort lived experiences of the majority of populations (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/ihdi>).

The gender inequality and inequality-adjusted indices have emerged in a global context of increasing inequalities and the growing awareness of the empirical association between economic inequality in a community and the social pathologies within that community (e.g., mass incarceration, poverty and violence). Generally speaking, quality of life is better in societies and communities where income and wealth are more equitably distributed (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009) than in places where there is a huge gap between the income (and thus status) of the majority of the population and an elite class.

3. Happy Planet Index (HPI)

The HDI and IHDI have both been criticized on a number of grounds and alternative indices have been developed. Recently the New Economics Foundation developed the Happy Planet Index (HPI) that measures national well-being against resource use and the ecological footprint of the country. The HPI aims to measure happiness and well-being of people and the environment rather than measure a nation's success on its productivity. This index aims to measure five ways to happiness, including connecting to others, being active, taking notice of the world around you, keep learning throughout the life course, and giving to others (Marks 2010).

4. Social Progress Index (SPI)

Another recent initiative, based at Harvard University's Business School, has developed the Social Progress Index (SPI) that aims to measure social progress directly and focus on outcomes rather than inputs. This index also aims to be a practical tool for practitioners to drive faster social progress and is a holistic measure. Social progress is defined as "The capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish the building blocks that allow citizens and communities to enhance and sustain the quality of their lives, and create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential" (Porter, Stern and Green 2014).

The three dimensions of the Social Progress Index, as illustrated in Figure 3, include: (1) Basic Human Needs as measured by nutrition and basic medical care, water and sanitation, shelter, and personal safety; (2) Foundations of Wellbeing as measured by access to basic knowledge, access to information and communications, health and wellness, and ecosystems sustainability; and (3) Opportunity as measured by personal rights, personal freedoms and choice, tolerance and inclusion, and access to advanced education. A listing of the indicators for each dimension of the Social Progress Index is found below in Table 1.

Figure 3. Dimensions of the Social Progress Index.



Table 1: Indicators of the three dimensions of the Social Progress Index

Basic Human Needs	Foundations of Wellbeing	Opportunity
Nutrition & Basic Medical Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undernourishment • Depth of food deficit • Maternal mortality rate • Stillbirth rate • Child mortality rate • Deaths from infectious diseases 	Access to Basic Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult literacy rate • Primary school enrollment • Lower secondary school enrollment • Upper secondary school enrollment • Gender parity in secondary enrollment 	Personal Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political rights • Freedom of speech • Freedom of assembly/association • Freedom of movement • Private property rights
Water and Sanitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to piped water • Rural vs. urban access to improved water source • Access to improved sanitation facilities 	Access to Information and Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile telephone subscriptions • Internet users • Press freedom index 	Personal Freedom and Choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom over life choices • Freedom of religion • Modern slavery, human trafficking and child marriage • Satisfied demand for contraception • Corruption
Shelter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of affordable housing • Access to electricity • Quality of electricity supply • Indoor air pollution attributable deaths 	Health and Wellness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life expectancy • Non-communicable disease deaths between 30 & 70 years • Obesity rate • Outdoor air pollution attributable deaths • Suicide rate 	Tolerance and Inclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women treated with respect • Tolerance for immigrants • Tolerance for homosexuals • Discrimination and violence against minorities • Religious tolerance • Community safety net
Personal Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homicide rate • Level of violent crime • Perceived criminality • Political terror • Traffic deaths 	Ecosystem Sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenhouse gas emissions • Water withdrawals as a percent of resources • Biodiversity and habitat 	Access to Advanced Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Years of tertiary schooling • Women's average years in school • Inequality in the attainment of education • Number of globally ranked universities

5. Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index

Another popular index that is gaining attention is the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index. The GNH Index is a subjective measure of well-being that includes an assessment of individual level happiness or satisfaction related to ten domains: (1) economy, (2) government, (3) environment, (4) community, (5) culture, (6) education and learning,

(7) health, (8) psychological well-being, (9) time balance, and (10) work as outlined in Figure 4 below. The GNH Index was first developed at the Personality and Well-Being lab at San Francisco State University and is currently being further developed and disseminated by the Happiness Alliance of the Happiness Initiative and the Gross National Happiness Survey (<http://www.happycounts.org/>). The Happiness Alliance is a grassroots organization that aims “to provide tools, resources and knowledge to foster grassroots activism for a new economic paradigm” (www.happycounts.org/about.html). Ultimately the Happiness Alliance hopes that policy makers across the country will use the GNH Index to guide decision-making in their organizations and locals.

Figure 4. Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index made up of ten domains of Happiness

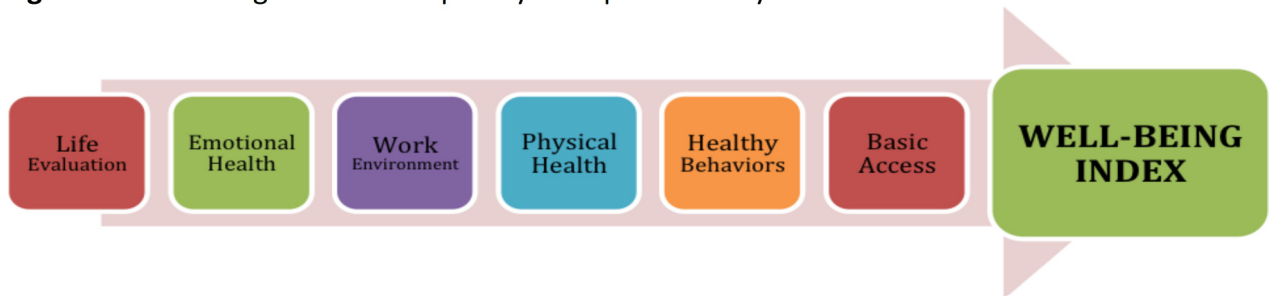
6. Gallup-Healthways’ Well-Being Index (WBI)

Like measures at the global level, there are various indices that include a composite measure of objective and subjective measures of quality of life and well-being. One of the largest data sets on QOL of individuals and communities in the United States is developed by Gallup-Healthways. In 2008, this company launched their Well-Being Index (WBI) that is a composite statistic of six sub-indices related to: (1) life evaluation, (2) emotional health, (3) physical health, (4) healthy behavior, (5) work environment, and (6) access to basic resources. Gallup-Healthways aims to provide in-depth, real-time view of Americans' well-being to give governments, communities, employers and health plans insight into the health

of their populations (<http://www.healthways.com/solution/default.aspx?id=1125>). Gallup-Healthways publishes a “*State of Well-Being Report*” that uses the WBI to compare the well-being of U.S. communities, states, and congressional districts. This report can be accessed at <http://info.healthways.com/wbi2013>. The research and methodology underlying the WBI are based on the World Health Organization definition of health that “includes not only the absence of infirmity and disease but also a state of physical, mental and social well-being.”

Gallup-Healthways conducts 500 – 1000 telephone interviews daily via landlines and cell-phones. Interviews are conducted in Spanish and English. Respondents are randomly chosen and weighted by gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, region, adults in household, cell-phone-only status, and phone lines.

Figure 5. Well-Being Index developed by Gallup-Healthways

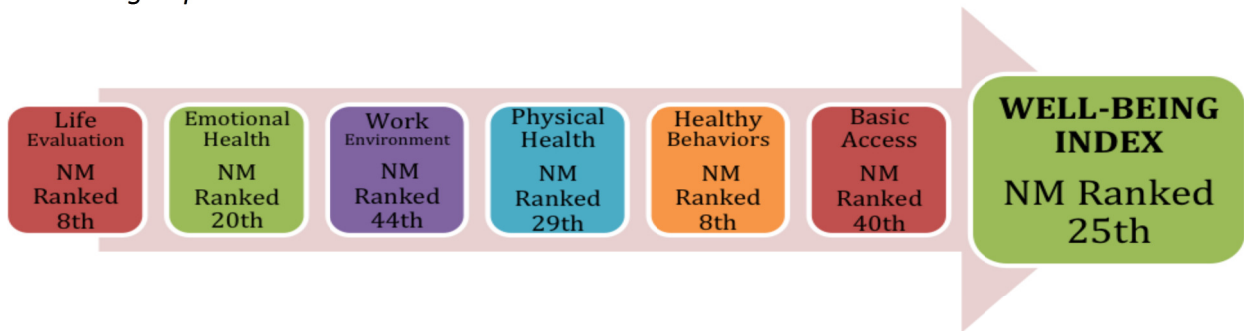


7. Gallup-Healthways’ Well-Being Index for New Mexico

The Gallup-Healthways’ *Well-Being Index* for New Mexico: According to the *2012 State of Well-Being Report* that compares the 50 U.S. states, New Mexico ranked 25th (or in the third quintile) overall among the fifty states on the composite Well-Being Index. The ranking of New Mexico on each of the WBI sub-indices varied. The highest rankings for New Mexico were for the life evaluation index (ranked 8th) and the health behaviors index (ranked 8th). New Mexico ranked 20th on the emotional health index and 29th on the physical health index. The lowest rankings for New Mexico were for the basic access index (ranked 40th) and the work environment index (ranked 44th).

The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Report also compares the data on the WBI for each Congressional District in the United States (N=436). Out of 436 U.S. Congressional Districts, New Mexico’s 2nd Congressional District, covering the southern third of the state including Doña Ana County, ranked 307th on the WBI rankings for 2012, which represents the fourth quintile nationally. NM 1st Congressional District, an area in the center of the state including Albuquerque, ranked 118th and is in the second quintile nationally. The 3rd NM Congressional District, covering the northern third of the state and including Santa Fe, ranked 188th and is in the third quintile nationally. The municipalities of Santa Fe and Albuquerque have embraced the QOL development model and are working collectively to develop policies and goals based on multiple indicators of QOL and well-being.

Figure 6. Well-Being Index for **New Mexico** as reported in Gallup-Healthways' *2012 State of Well-Being Report*



Each of the above indices of quality of life and well-being aims to move beyond the singular income based and market-based measures (e.g., GNP) of human development that became popular among governments and international agencies since the 1950s. Most of these indices combine both subjective and objective measures of QOL. The shift to more holistic and multi-dimensional measures of well-being of individuals, communities and whole nations reflects the wisdom of older cultural and spiritual knowledge of first nations or indigenous people around the world who have long believed and practiced the interconnectedness and interdependency of social, economic, physical, and spiritual dimensions of life.

In the context of New Mexico, a place with a large population of Native Americans and culturally diverse peoples, recognizing that quality of life and well-being models embody indigenous knowledge may be important to the acceptance and application of the QOL model in Doña Ana County. Primarily non-native or settler groups are leading the U.S. based quality of life movements and initiatives. In New Mexico, the application of this “new” development model presents an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the history of indigenous based knowledge and cultural practices. This recognition may also help insure the widespread adoption and perceived validity of this approach among the culturally diverse peoples of Doña Ana County.

C. The significance of Race and Place to the quality of life

Quality of life and well-being measures are always place-specific. In other words, **place matters**. QOL measures are always grounded in some socio-political and geographic context that both provide opportunities and constraints to quality of life and well-being. Most neighborhoods and communities in the United States are segregated along racial and class lines. These socio-spatial divisions continue to fracture our society, compounding disadvantages and privilege across generations. Healthy people and healthy places go together. It is well documented that people of color, especially at the lowest income levels, have the worst health outcomes in our society. Neighborhoods of color have the highest pollution levels, the fewest basic services, amenities, and support structures, the most limited access to fresh foods, parks, and other resources for health, and the most entrenched obstacles to economic and social opportunities. Economically distressed

communities, which are primarily communities of color, have the poorest access to essential services such as grocery stores, medical care, transportation, and the fewest social support structures to overcome or eliminate the obstacles. People cannot be healthy if their communities are sick or unsafe, and lack the opportunities critical for well-being such as education, jobs, good schools, and safe housing. The racial disparities and lack of resources are the direct result of longstanding lack of representation and local power (Bell and Lee 2011). For example, unincorporated communities have no authority or budget of their own and are dependent on the decisions of county government.

Changing the structural and cultural components of a place can improve the life trajectory of a generation. When governments invest in roads, parks, transportation systems, school buildings, water systems, and other essential infrastructure it promotes health and equity. As different racialized groups live in increasingly closer proximity, there are new opportunities to transcend historical boundaries of race and culture, and build a broad movement for equity, justice and inclusion. There are also tensions created through the perception of economic competitiveness. According to Bell and Lee (2011) of Policy Link, a national research and action institute, the challenge to building healthy communities is designing strategies and policies that consider race and place, and that build on community assets. They recommend a combination of strategies including: establishing strategic place targets, increasing political power of people of color and immigrants, enforcing laws that prohibit discrimination, shifting public perceptions, engaging vulnerable communities, and targeting policies that disproportionately hurt people of color.

IV. APPLICATIONS OF QOL CONCEPT IN DOÑA ANA COUNTY

There are numerous public officials and governmental entities and non-governmental organizations in Doña Ana County that are using the concept of quality of life in their assessment and planning work. In this section, we summarize the local quality of life work based on interviews with key informants and organizational documents.

A. City of Las Cruces: 2013 National Citizen Survey

In 2013, the City of Las Cruces commissioned a “National Citizen Survey” to gather information from City residents about the quality of life in the community, perceptions of service delivery, civic participation and other issues of local interest. The National Research Center and the International City/County management Association conducted the representative and statistically valid survey and compared the Las Cruces-findings with baseline data for cities across the country. According to the Executive Summary of the Las Cruces survey report, two-thirds of the respondents reported experiencing a good quality of life in the City and believed that Las Cruces was a good place to live (National Citizen Survey 2013, City of Las Cruces). The three characteristics of the City that received the least positive ratings were: (1) employment opportunities, (2) traffic flow on major streets, and (3) ease of bus travel in Las Cruces. Of the 29 community characteristics for which comparisons to the

national benchmark data were available, six characteristics were similar to national comparisons and 23 characteristics were below that of national averages, indicating much room for improvement.

The *City of Las Cruces 2013 National Citizen Survey* included numerous questions related to civic engagement of particular interest to the League of Women Voters, including: perceptions of opportunities for civic activity and trust in city government, participation in non-electoral civic activities, access to knowledge and information, and voting behavior. The findings on the indicators of these types of civic engagement are summarized below.

Perceptions of opportunities for civic activity and trust in city government:

- Residents of Las Cruces responding to the survey rated the volunteer opportunities in the City as somewhat favorable but opportunities to attend or participate in community matters were rated less favorably. Overall, ratings of civic engagement opportunities were below the ratings from comparison jurisdictions.
- In general, survey respondents demonstrated mild trust in local government. About half rated the overall direction being taken by the City of Las Cruces as “good” or “excellent.”
- Respondent’s satisfaction in police services, public schools, sewer services and storm drainage were below the national benchmark averages.
- Respondent’s trust in local government, perceived value of services based on taxes paid, and perceptions of openness of government to citizen participation were similar or below the national benchmark averages. For example:
 - Forty-nine percent said the value of services for taxes paid to Las Cruces was good (41%) or excellent (8%) and 49% said the overall direction that Las Cruces is taking was good (39%) or excellent (10%). These ratings are similar to national benchmark averages.
 - Only 33% of respondents said the job the Las Cruces government does at welcoming citizen involvement was good (27%) or excellent (6%). This rating is much below the national benchmark average.
 - A total of 56% of respondents said the overall image or reputation of Las Cruces is good (43%) or excellent (13%). This rating is below national benchmark averages.

Participation in non-electoral civic activities:

- In terms of participating in civic engagement opportunities, only 29% had attended a meeting of local elected public officials or other local public meetings in the previous 12 months, but 46% reported having watched a public meeting on cable television, the Internet or other media.
- The overwhelming majority of respondents, 95%, had provided help to a friend or neighbor.
- A majority (54%) had volunteered their time to some group or activity in the City of Las Cruces, which was much higher than the national benchmark.

- Forty-two percent of respondents reported that they participated in a club or civic group in Las Cruces over the past 12 months.
- Respondents were asked to rate how frequently they participated in various activities. The most popular activities included visiting a City park and providing help to a friend or neighbor, while the least popular activities were attending a local public meeting and riding a bus within Las Cruces.

Access to Knowledge and information:

- Seventy-six percent of respondents said that they have read the City newsletter and 65% reported that they visited the City of Las Cruces website. These rates are lower than comparable national benchmark data.
- Survey respondents rating of local city cable television and public information services were significantly below national benchmark averages.

Voting participation:

- Respondents showed the largest amount of civic engagement in the area of electoral participation.
- Eighty-four percent reported they were registered to vote and 76% indicated they had voted in the last general elections. The self-reported rates of voter registration and actual voting are higher than the data on actual voting participation, indicating that the survey respondents either exaggerated their voting participation or that citizens more active in electoral politics were over-represented among survey respondents.

B. Doña Ana County: Guiding Principles, Goals and Performances Measures

County Commissioner Billy Garrett has taken the lead on revising the mission statement for Doña Ana County and developing guiding principles for strategic planning. The revised mission statement reads: “Doña Ana County government enhances the health, safety, and quality of life for all residents as determined by law and community interests. Services are provided through innovative leadership and teamwork in a fair, respectful and professional manner.” The guiding principals for Doña Ana County include: (1) functions of government, (2) area development, (3) health care and medical services, (4) economic development, (5) public safety, (6) infrastructure, and (7) community-oriented values. Commissioner Garrett shared a draft of countywide goals and performance measures for each of these seven areas of the county’s guiding principals. Table 2 below includes the guiding principles, countywide goals and corresponding performance measures.

Table 2. Doña Ana County 2017 Goals and Performance Measures related to Guiding Principles (Presented by Commissioner Billy G. Garrett, District 1, August 12, 2013)

Guiding Principles	Countywide Goals	Performance Measures
<p>(1) Functions of Government: Elected officials, managers, employees, and volunteers working together and with other entities in a spirit of mutual respect and public service to carry out the functions of county government in a manner that is courteous, efficient, transparent, accountable, engaged, and responsive to public input.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving internal communication and collaboration* 2. Promote a culture of being pro-active and service oriented* 3. Improve compensation plan. 4. Improve external communications and collaboration 5. Improve staff morale and job satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Strategic Plan Process • Improve customer satisfaction by 10% • Increase by 25th percentile • Increase # of projects with Municipalities by 3 • Retention rates/# of staff to recommend DAC/# of staff feel valued
<p>(2) Area Development: Throughout Doña Ana County – from the smallest colonia to the City of Las Cruces – development will be proactively managed so that land use, transportation, utilities, affordable housing, and public facilities are fully integrated, mutually supportive, and respectful of the unique qualities of each community.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop, and implement Regional Planning Sustainability Development (RSPD)* 2. Improve infrastructure within county 3. Develop and implement Joint Land use Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 contracts for sub-projects • # Miles of paved roads per year • # miles of maintained roads per year • 100 homes connected to sewer per year and 2-3 flood projects per year • A completed and approved plan/ 100%
<p>(3) Health Care and Medical Services: All people living in Doña Ana County will have access to affordable health care and medical services that focus on emergencies, preventive strategies, and eliminating injury and disease that lead to premature death and disability.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the status through prevention and early intervention programs 2. Improve the delivery and coordination of healthcare safety net services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease injury and chronic-disease related death by 2% • Increase # of people with a primary care provider by 10%
<p>(4) Economic Development: Economic development will be supported in all areas of the county and for all segments of the population so that communities throughout the county are viable, a diversified growth strategy is maintained, and every resident can find work that supports a good standard of living.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an economic development plan 2. Streamline process and regulations for economic development across county* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A completed and approved plan/ 100% • Increase customer satisfaction by 80-100%
<p>(5) Public Safety: Doña Ana County will be known as a safe place for</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confine offenders in a controlled environment that is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive 2 national accreditation

<p>residents, workers and visitors based on the effective reduction of serious crimes, risk of fire, and harm from environmental hazards – both natural and man-made.</p>	<p>safe, humane and cost effective</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Reduce criminal activity across the County 3. Maintain emergency response system 4. Prepare for, respond to and recover from all types of emergencies that may occur in the County 5. Develop and maintain partnerships upholding the law protecting life and property, providing a safe environment and a sharing of constitutional rights of all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime rate is decreased by XX% • Maintain response times, XX min for fire/EMS/ambulance • 2 trainings/year and 1 county-wide campaign/year • Increase and maintain XX# of partnerships
<p>(6) Infrastructure: Roads, utilities, flood control structures, public facilities, and other infrastructure systems will be planned, built, and maintained to address critical needs, and maximize economic viability for government entities, taxpayers, and businesses.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a process to approve major capital priorities 2. Develop a long-term asset management plan for roads, county utilities, floods, maintenance, public facilities and fleet* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes approved 100% • A complete documented inventory of roads, county utilities, floods, maintenance, public facilities and fleet.
<p>(7) Community-Oriented Values: Life in Doña Ana County will be enhanced by broad-based support for community-oriented values, such as: the arts and life-long learning, a wide range of recreational opportunities, humane treatment of animals, compassionate care for those in need, conservation of the area’s natural environment, respect for diversity and protection of human rights, and celebration of our multi-cultural heritage.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect significant aspects of the natural and built environment 2. Improve animal welfare throughout the county* 3. Support recreational opportunities* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure TBD • A 75% decrease in # of animals killed in shelters • Maintain X number of parks and ball fields

* Designated as priorities for the County.

C. Viva Doña Ana: Building a Sustainable Future

Viva Doña Ana is a regional project that aims to “create more jobs, economic opportunities, and an increased quality of life for generations to come” (<http://www.vivadonaana.org>). According to the *Viva Doña Ana* website, “In fall 2011, the Camino Real Consortium won a \$2 million Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant funded by The Partnership for Sustainable Communities to integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation and infrastructure (<http://www.vivadonaana.org>). Scott Bernstein, President of the Center for Neighborhood Technology (scott@cnt.org), serves in a leadership role of the project. The consortium is made up of the county, city, New Mexico State University, South Central Council of Governments, Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization, El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization, South Central Regional Transit District, Colonias Development Council, Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation, and consultant partners, including PlaceMakers.

The Viva Doña Ana project focuses on **people**, **places**, and **prosperity** with the aim to develop a Comprehensive Plan to provide strategies, actions, and tools to continue to improve the quality of life in the county. According to the organization’s website (http://www.vivadonaana.org/what_is):

- “A focus on **people** will look at ways to improve and maintain a healthy, happy lifestyle. Issues like access to education and services, safe and reliable ways to move about your community, and a healthy environment will be explored to support people throughout the region”;
- “Vibrant **places** with good homes that are well connected by transportation options can increase the region’s quality of life”;
- “**Prosperity** means exploring how we can build a resilient economy with good jobs, and how we can educate students to be well-prepared to enter the workforce.”

Viva Doña Ana regional project uses a community input process to develop a Comprehensive Plan, Colonia (Community) Master Plan, Border Economic Development Plan, Corridor Management Plan, and Regional Capital Needs Plan. Viva Doña Ana is also working at revising the zoning codes to produce a Unified Development Code, which translates the concepts and aims of the various plans into a zoning plan for the county. The Colonia Master Plan focuses on the 37 colonias in Doña Ana County, which are defined as rural communities or neighborhoods located within 150 miles of the U.S./Mexican border that lack adequate infrastructure and other basic services.

The regional project focuses on six livability principles to guide their work. Livability is a concept that aims to measure a family’s quality of life. These livability principles are:

1. Provide more transportation choices (Decrease household transportation costs, reduce energy consumption, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health);

2. Promote Equitable, Affordable Housing (Reduce the amount of paycheck going to housing and transportation);
3. Enhance Economic Competitiveness (Increase quality education and work options);
4. Support Existing Communities (Concentrate local and federal monies for smart growth);
5. Coordinate Policies & Leverage Investment (Channel local and federal monies for large scale infrastructure investments); and
6. Value Communities & Neighborhoods (Increase amenities such as walking paths, parks, gardens).

D. *Ocotillo Institute for Social Justice*

The *Ocotillo Institute* operates through the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico and is directed by Cindy Corona. This new social justice institute evolved from the Quality of Life Initiative in Doña Ana County, which was initiated in 2011 by County Commissioner Billy G. Garrett and Senator Jeff Bingaman's Field Aide, Jake Rollow. In 2013, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation funded the Ocotillo Institute. In the first two years, the QOL initiative utilized the J. Paul Taylor Social Justice Symposium at New Mexico State University as a springboard for the formation of the Institute. The symposium began in 2005 as a forum to connect members of the broader Las Cruces community with NMSU researchers and teachers. Dr. Lisa Bond-Maupin, Associate Dean in the College of Arts & Sciences, was one of the faculty members who initiated and organized the annual symposium. The 2012 and 2013 symposiums aimed to build community interest and buy-in, as well as planning and work-group processes, to better understand and address poverty in Doña Ana County. The 2012 symposium outlined a multi-year strategy by which economic disparities and major issues of social justice could be addressed in Doña Ana County and the 2013 symposium focused on the definition and importance of community engagement.

Building on the momentum of the Quality of Life Initiative, the Ocotillo Institute was formed to provide a sustainable organizational structure and network to recruit and mentor the leadership needed to organize both communities and resource providers so that they are better able to work together to improve quality of life. The Ocotillo Institute uses an integrated social change approach to quality of life issues, which takes into account the need for both top-down and bottom-up action, and short- and long-term goals to create a more socially just county community, by recognizing and collectively addressing the needs of those who are most marginalized. The Ocotillo Institute also draws upon the work of the Empowerment Congress of Los Angeles County that was initiated by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and based on the nonviolence theology of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

The Ocotillo Institute is currently working at various stages on three projects: (1) Empowerment Congress of DA County, (2) Comprehensive Economic Study, and (3) Council of Advocates. The Empowerment Congress, modeled after the Los Angeles County Empowerment Congress, is a "community-based network made up of county residents, elected officials, non-profit organizations, and businesses coming together through civic engagement oppor-

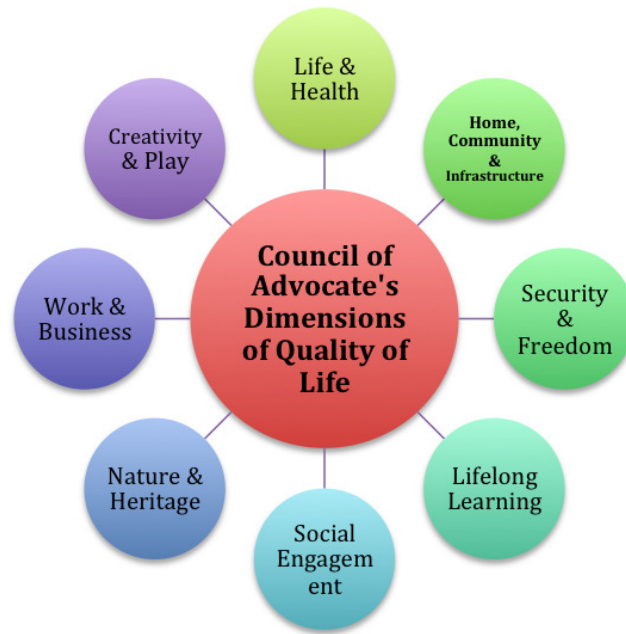
tunities and uniting around county-wide and localized issues.” The goal of the Empowerment Congress is to build local knowledge and create collaborations for positive outcomes. The Comprehensive Economic Study aims to provide a comprehensive view of the current economic conditions for Doña Ana County as well as identify obstacles and opportunities for improving the local economic landscape.

The *Ocotillo Institute’s Council of Advocates* project brings together community members, experts and practitioners in Doña Ana County to produce a local annual report that will assess the current status and trends of quality of life in the county. The eight areas of well-being that make up the work groups of the Council of Advocates are:

1. *Life & Health* – All people should have access to quality health services, access to appropriate and healthy nutrition, and a healthful environment.
2. *Home, Community & Infrastructure* – Shaping of the physical world; All people should have access to a home and the opportunity to share in a sense of community through the creation and use of home, community space and supportive infrastructure.
3. *Security & Freedom* – All people should have security and freedom as in fair and equitable treatment, protection from harm, and prevention of loss.
4. *Lifelong Learning* – All people should be able to develop knowledge and skills through nurturing and rich educational environments at all stages of life.
5. *Social Engagement* – All people should be able to take part in political action, participate in community/civic engagement/service organizations and strengthen community and family structures.
6. *Nature & Heritage* – All people should be able to be grounded through faith or conscience, have access to the “out-of-doors”, and participate in activities tied to the nature and traditions of the region.
7. *Work & Business* – All people should be able to participate in entrepreneurial activities and find employment where they are fairly compensated.
8. *Creativity & Play* – All people should be able to participate in recreational activities, utilize creative and artistic expression, and enjoy beauty in its many forms.

The interconnectedness of these areas of quality of life is depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Dimensions of Quality of Life identified by the Ocotillo Institute



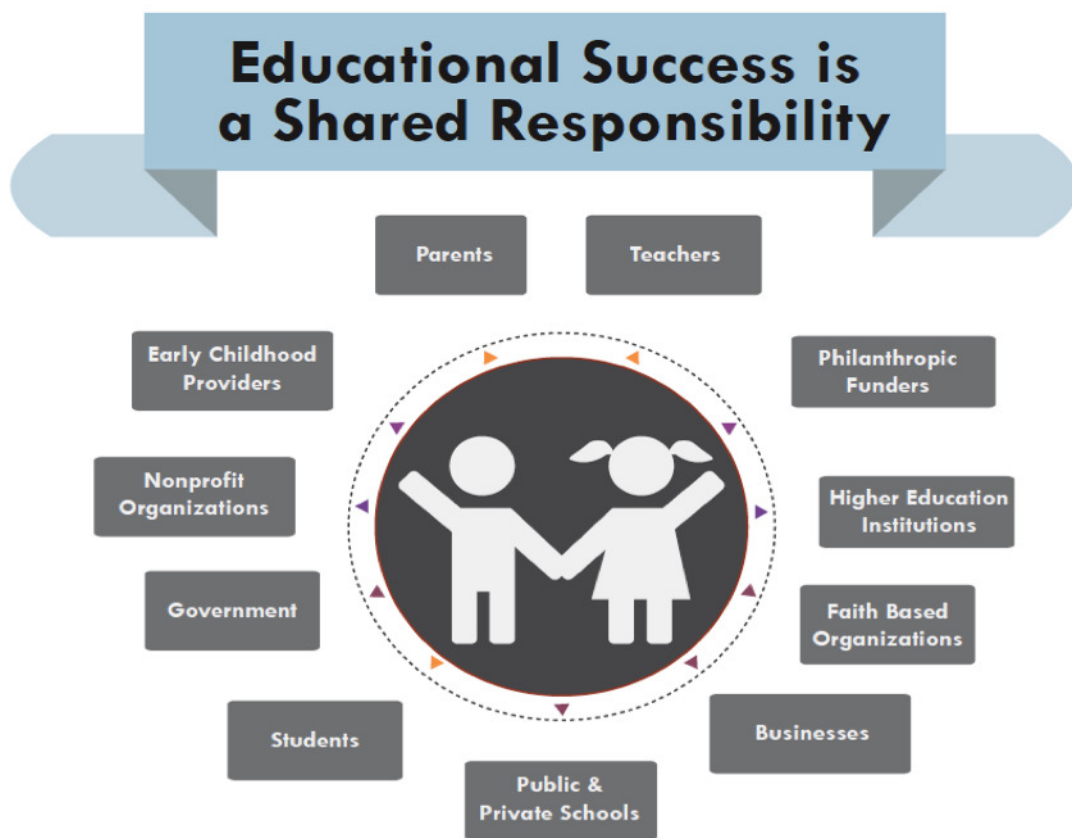
E. Doña Ana County Education Partnership Initiative (Ngage New Mexico)

The DAC Partnership Initiative is being facilitated by Ngage New Mexico, formerly known as the Institute for Community Engagement. The organization was founded in 2009 by a group of citizens concerned about the quality of life for everyone in Doña Ana County. The formation of this group grew out of a realization that no matter how much elected officials are strongly committed to creating a better community, they cannot do it alone. What was and is needed are many citizens who are deeply engaged to help create change that leads to a better life for all county residents.

The mission of the Ngage New Mexico organization is to serve as a catalyst to advance the well-being of all people of Southern New Mexico. A catalyst is something that causes or accelerates change. Frank Lopez, Executive Director of Ngage NM, says, "As a catalyst for change we value collaboration, consensus building, and data-informed solutions for the betterment of our entire community. We focus our collective energy on facilitating deep community engagement to achieve those things that will contribute to a better quality of life."

The organization has been able to fully staff up and greatly increase its scope of activities through a major multi-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Ngage New Mexico's top priority currently is a countywide education partnership based on an approach known as "collective impact." Collective impact is a process that is guided by the philosophy that when all sectors of the community come together to take shared responsibility for the education of its children and youth, the impact is far greater than a single organization or community sector can accomplish alone. The sectors include education, business, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, faith-based groups, government and others as pictured below.

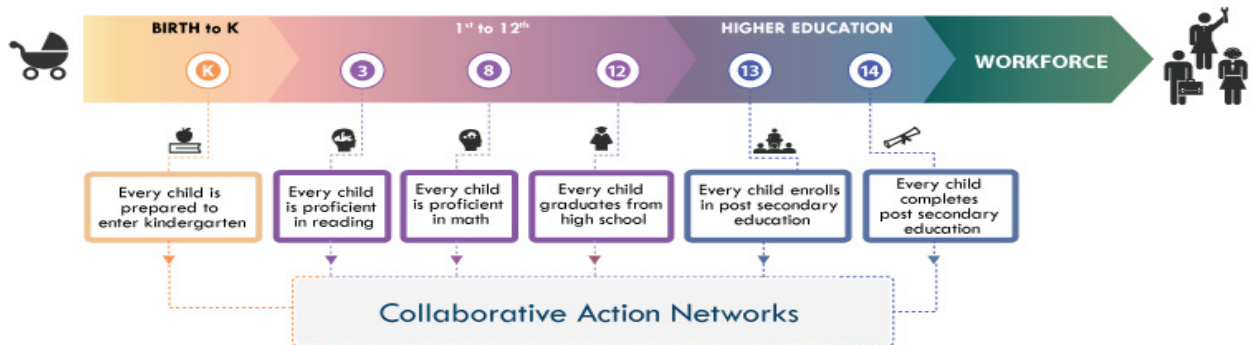
Figure 8. Collective Impact model of the Doña Ana County Education Partnership Initiative



Lopez states, "The most important thing we can do for the future of our county is to improve the education outcomes of our children. The time has come to stop placing blame from one group of people to another. Instead we must work together to ensure 'best practices' that will prepare our children for success. It is not okay for the children and youth in our state or county to be ranked 49th on indicators of child well-being." The W.K. Kellogg foundation is making a commitment to partner with the state of New Mexico for a generation to positively transform the future of New Mexico children.

The education partnership initiative has been in the formative stage since March 2013. Using the "collective impact approach," partners across all sectors of the community are aligning activities, assets, and resources that are most likely to lead to success in school for children in Doña Ana County. This alignment is aimed toward impacting all children's development from "cradle to career" as pictured on the continuum below. Below the continuum are hypothetical benchmarks that are typical of what many communities strive to accomplish with a collective impact approach. The cross sector collaborative action networks that align activities and resources support the achievement of one or more of the pictured outcomes.

Figure 9. The Collaborative Action Benchmarks of the Cradle-to-Career Continuum



A leadership group of top-level executives was formed in 2013. The executives represent the following sectors: business, nonprofits, philanthropy, state and local government, higher education, and K-12 public education districts. The group is headed up by NM Senator Bill Soules who says, "The critical purpose of this group of sector leaders is to open doors and knock down barriers to complex social change which is necessary to transform on a large scale the education outcomes of our children and youth."

Another major leadership group emerged in 2013, which is composed of representatives from preliminary action work groups that grew out of a major community convening on March 1, 2014, of 100 community leaders. The participants cut across all community sectors including teachers, parents and students from the neighborhood community level. These work groups gather input and provide opportunities for frequent communication through forums, workshops and conferences that focus specifically on connecting resources to support parents and teachers in helping children achieve at high levels. These two leadership groups have now been merged into one group known as The Leaders' Circle.

Ngage NM Executive Director, Frank Lopez explains, "Our organization functions as a 'backbone structure' within the concept of collective impact. A backbone organization provides strategic support to community leaders and facilitates development of a common agenda to improve education." In early 2015 The Leaders' Circle will determine a set of community level outcomes that all agree will prepare our children in Doña Ana County from birth to entry into the workforce with the skills and knowledge to succeed in school and life.

Senator Soules states, "Several decades of experience and research provide evidence that the 'collective impact' approach in which all sectors of a community take shared responsibility for improved education outcomes results in much greater impact than when sectors or organizations work in their individual silos. However, it truly takes the broad engagement of

community members to make it work and achieve the outcomes the community passionately cares about."

Multiple community convenings, discussions, parent forums and workshops, and action work groups related to the education partnership initiative are ongoing. To learn about ways you can get involved or for more information visit www.ngagenm.org.

F. *Place Matters of Doña Ana County*

Place Matters Doña Ana County is a new initiative that is working to eliminate health disparities in the county. This non-profit organization is collaborating with the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico and receiving its funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. *Place Matters Doña Ana County* is one of 19 teams working in 27 jurisdictions across the country that is supported by the Health Policy Institute, a program of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (JCPES) based in Washington, D.C. (<http://www.jointcenter.org/>). The JCPES is a national think tank that was founded in 1970s with an interest in policy issues relevant to communities of color. The local *Place Matters* team receives technical assistance from the Health Policy Institute, including grants, access to data, and national-level experts and peer-to-peer learning opportunities (Tallman 2014).

The current coordinator of *Place Matters Doña Ana County* is Kristina St. Cyr. The organization has partnered with local community groups to identify five health priorities in the county: (1) obesity and malnutrition, (2) diabetes, (3) mental health, (4) violence and heart disease, and (5) hypertension and stroke. The top determinants of health disparities in the county have been identified as "poverty, education and workforce development, economic development and opportunity, built environment, and food access and insecurity" (Tallman 2014). *Place Matters* aims to work with local community leaders and stakeholders to address the social, economic, and environmental conditions leading to health inequities.

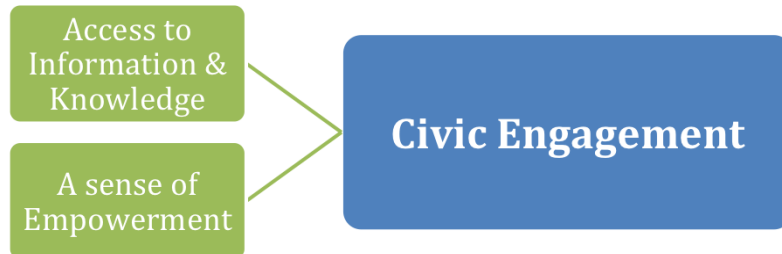
V. MEASURING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AS A DIMENSION OF QUALITY OF LIFE

A. Conceptualization of Civic Engagement

One common dimension of QOL models in the United States of great relevance to the LWV is that of **civic engagement**, broadly defined as individual or group participation in political and civic activities. Civic engagement is closely related to the concepts of democratic participation, citizenship, and social capital. High levels of civic engagement are associated with vibrant communities and high levels of quality of life and well-being. Determinants of civic engagement include socioeconomic status, social trust, social capital and opportunities. Fisher, McInerney, and Stanley (2005) assert that to engage in political and civic activities *one must first have the requisite knowledge or know how to become involved and one must feel a sense of empowerment or self-efficacy*. With these prerequisites met, one is more likely to take action through voting, attending public meetings, volunteering, donating

money and/or engaging in other civic and political activities. This conceptualization of civic engagement is represented in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10. Conceptualization of Civic Engagement (Fisher, McInerney and Stanley 2005).



Over the recent decades, scholars have argued that there has been a withdrawal of citizens from political and civic life in the United States (Putman 2000; Bellah et al. 1996). This decline in civic engagement (such as a decrease in voting) is associated with increased social isolation and decreased social trust. Some scholars argue that the form of civic engagement has changed recently and has become more individualized and market-focused, especially for young Americans (Zukin et al., 2006). Besides these generalized concerns, civic engagement is particularly consequential for groups that have been historically underserved and places with high levels of social inequality and poverty. Doña Ana County is undeniably a place with historically underserved populations and high poverty. Thus, the level of civic engagement may not only be an indicator of low quality of life, but also a means of improving the overall quality of life and well-being of populations.

B. Trends in NM Youth Electoral Participation

The study committee examined existing data on civic engagement in New Mexico, particularly among young New Mexicans who represent the state’s future, and found evidence that supports the assertion that civic engagement is declining. According to research conducted by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) based at Tufts University, youth electoral participation in New Mexico has been declining over the past three decades and the level of youth voting in the 2010 midterm election in New Mexico was significantly lower than the levels in other U.S. states. As shown in Figure 11, the percentage of youth (voter) turnout for midterm-elections has decreased from a high of 37.7% in 1982 to 21% in the 2010 midterm-election. Moreover, the data from the 2010 midterm-elections show that NM voter turnout of voters in the 18-29 year age range (20.5%) ranked 41st out of all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In addition, NM voter registration of persons in the 18-29 year age range (34.9%) for the 2010 midterm-elections ranked the **LOWEST (51st)** among all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Figure 11. Historical Trends of NM Youth Voter Turnout in Midterm Elections (18-29 years of age). Source: New Interactive Map State by State, Longitudinal Youth Data (www.civicyouth.org)

As suggested by this research on youth voter participation in New Mexico and the findings from the 2013 City of Las Cruces survey discussed above, the low level of civic participation in our community is a concern. The good news is that government and non-government entities in Doña Ana County recognize these concerns and are taking positive actions to assess and increase civic engagement of the diverse communities that make up our population.

C. Civic Engagement Measures and Indicators

In this section, we report on how civic engagement has been measured by local municipalities, specifically by the City of Las Cruces in their 2013 resident survey and by Boulder County, Colorado in their 2013 report on the quality of life and well-being. We have organized the measures/indicators of civic engagement within four constitutive components: (1) community attachment and trust; (2) access to knowledge; (3) opportunities for civic engagement; and (4) taking action. These measures do not represent an exhaustive list but rather are illustrative of the type of data that are commonly collected and used in quality of life and well-being reports.

1. Community Attachment and Social Trust

Community attachment -- Boulder County, Colorado used subjective measures from a survey on how residents feel about Boulder County as a place to live (Questions from Knight Foundation's Soul of the Community survey conducted by Gallup).

Neighborliness -- The 2013 National Citizen Survey, Las Cruces included a measure of neighborliness with the following question: "How often, if at all, do you talk or visit with your immediate neighbors?"

Diverse representation as an indicator of empowerment & inclusion -- Boulder County, Colorado (*2013 Trends Report*) used measures of the gender and ethnic/racial diversity of the leadership in the county including county commissioners, volunteer advisory boards, and nonprofit staffs and boards.

2. Access to Knowledge

Media access -- 2013 City of Las Cruces Survey included the following measures: "Watched a meeting of local elected officials or other City-sponsored public meeting on

cable television, the Internet of other media” (45% said yes), “Read Las Cruces City Newsletter” (76% said yes), and “Visited the City of Las Cruces website at www.las-cruces.org/” (65% said yes). The survey also includes subjective ratings of local government media services and information dissemination. Other possible indicators include: local newspaper circulations and households connected to the Internet.

3. Opportunities for Civic Engagement

Volunteer time and service opportunities -- Boulder County, CO used questions about donating time to a local nonprofit, government entity or faith organization. The number of volunteer organizations may also be an indicator of volunteer/service opportunities. (*The 2013 TRENDS Report, Boulder County, Colorado.*)

4. Taking Action

Charitable giving -- Boulder County, CO used measures of (1) cumulative grants given by community foundation, (2) individual donations to charities and non-profit community groups, and (3) survey responses on decision-making regarding charitable giving (*The 2013 TRENDS Report, Boulder County, Colorado*).

Civic involvement -- Indicators from the National Citizen Survey – Las Cruces 2013 include: “Attended a meeting of local elected officials or other local public meeting” (28% said yes); “Volunteer your time to some group or activity in Las Cruces” (54% said yes), “Participated in a club or civic group in Las Cruces”(42% said yes); and “Provided help to a friend or neighbor” (95% said yes). The survey also includes a subjective rating of the “opportunities to participate in social events and activities.”

Voting behavior -- Boulder County, Colorado used percent of “active voters” casting ballots in 2012 presidential election by party (active voters are those voting in the last general election or individuals registering or updating their voter registration since the last election; and voter turnout and type of voting (early, mail-in, polling-place) for the last three years. Voting behavior (registration and casting votes) trends, voter characteristics (age, ethnicity/race, gender, socioeconomic status), and accessibility and suppression of vote (convenience centers) are also possible indicators.

VI. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This LWV-GLC Quality of Life & Well-Being Study was organized around three distinct goals. The first goal was to develop a working knowledge of the quality of life and well-being development model and global movement. The second goal was to research how this approach is currently being utilized by governmental and non-governmental entities in Doña Ana County. The final goal was to examine how civic engagement, a concept central to the work of the League of Women Voters, is included within quality of life models and to

consider the ways of measuring civic engagement in Doña Ana County. In pursuing these goals, the committee reviewed the literature on quality of life and well-being and interviewed key informants in governmental and non-governmental organizations in the county that are applying a quality of life approach to their assessment, planning and decision-making. To identify measures of civic engagement the committee consulted both the scholarly literature and reports of the quality of life within municipalities across the country.

The quality of life and well-being development model emerged in the late 20th century as a critique of human development models that focused solely on macro-economic indicators such as GNP and income. Economists and practitioners argued that measuring human development only in terms of market related indicators fails to capture the complexities of well-being of human populations, particularly in developed countries at the turn of the twenty-first century. Economist Amartya Sen, among others, advocated for human development models that are more holistic and include multiple dimensions of well-being rather than simply measuring one means of raising one's standard of living. Sen (1999) and others use the concepts of human capacities and functioning to develop multi-dimensional indices, such as the Human Development Index and the Social Progress Index, to assess one's ability to live a high quality life based on one's values.

Findings & Recommendation 1: The study committee found that governmental and non-governmental entities in Doña Ana County have recently adopted a quality-of-life and well-being development model in exciting and promising ways. These entities have different philosophies and take different approaches to utilizing a quality-of-life approach, but each recognizes the multiple dimensions of well-being and is committed to increasing the quality of life and well-being of all in our community. This study also found that QOL initiatives and efforts are taking place in Santa Fe and Albuquerque and that a substantial amount of private foundation money is being invested in Doña Ana County to support local QOL organizations. Given these findings, the committee recommends that LWV-GLC members become knowledgeable about and actively engage with these QOL community initiatives individually and organizationally.

Findings & Recommendation 2: The study committee found that a quality-of-life approach takes a holistic and multi-dimensional approach to human development that has long been appreciated by indigenous populations around the world, including those of New Mexico. Both the quality-of-life approach and knowledge traditions of first nations' people value the interdependency of social, economic, physical, and spiritual dimensions of well-being and the importance of the interconnectedness between people and all living beings. Given that a QOL approach reflects older knowledge traditions that exists in New Mexico and has been an effective model for human development, the study committee recommends that the LWV-GLC advocate for public decision makers to utilize a comprehensive QOL approach/model for assessment, planning, and other public decision making purposes.

Findings & Recommendation 3: The study committee found that civic engagement is an important determinant of quality-of-life and well-being of a community. We identified the constitutive dimensions of civic engagement and the common indicators used to measure civic engagement in the City of Las Cruces and other municipalities. The review of the literature on civic engagement revealed a decline in civic engagement in the United States with the rise of consumer culture and a decline of youth electoral participation in New Mexico over the past three decades. Given these findings, the study committee recommends that the LWV-GLC take a leadership role in the local community to conceptualize, measure, and ultimately increase civic engagement in Doña Ana County, particularly related to voting participation and the protection against voter suppression.

Findings and Recommendation 4: The study committee also found that quality-of-life and well-being are place-specific, and that “places” in the United States, including Doña Ana County, are shaped and structured by race/ethnicity and class differences. Given these findings, and the fact that the LVW-GLC has long been committed to strengthening the well-being of all people, the study committee recommends that future programming and planning by the LWV-GLC take into account the racial/ethnic and class differences in the level of QOL and well-being in Doña Ana County.

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VIII. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Schedule of Committee Interviews

1. Billy Garrett, Doña Ana County Commissioner -- November 7, 2013
2. Ryan Steinmetz, Director of the Ocotillo Institute for Social Justice (at the time of the interview) -- November 7, 2013
3. Sharon Thomas, former Councilor for City of Las Cruces -- November 14, 2013
4. Mary Alice Scott, Professor of Anthropology, NMSU -- March 4, 2014
5. Jane Asche, Board Member of Ngage New Mexico -- August 15, 2014

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