EXPLORING OPTIONS: COMMUNICATING EDUCATION METRICS







About FSG Social Impact Advisors

FSG Social Impact Advisors is a nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating social progress by advancing the practice of philanthropy and corporate social responsibility. Our services include:

- Advice: Advising foundations, corporations, and nonprofits on strategy development and evaluation
- Ideas: Publishing original research and innovative ideas
- Action: Incubating and launching long-term initiatives in collaboration with our clients, funders, and partners

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W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

Our Children. Our Mission. Our Future.

About the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is a private foundation committed to supporting "children, families, and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society." The foundation works in the US and internationally to address four dimensions of family and community life that it sees as essential for children's success:

- Family income and assets
- Education and learning
- Food, health, and well-being
- · Civic and philanthropic engagement

For more information, please visit www.wkkf.org.

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Foreword

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has long understood the need to track and communicate education metrics in a clear and compelling way. Determining how to best use and convey these metrics has become essential, especially in a world in which information has become so abundant.

With that in mind, we commissioned FSG Social Impact Advisors to scan the landscape for interesting and effective ways in which organizations use education metrics in their communications. This research has resulted in the production of this portfolio, which consists of a family of tools that demonstrate how a variety of stakeholders might communicate these metrics in their work. Our hope in publishing this portfolio is that it will help the philanthropic and social sectors communicate the outcomes of their work more effectively to a variety of audiences.

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Introduction

For each tool in this portfolio, FSG Social Impact Advisors has provided a description of its purpose along with one or two examples. This array of tools is not meant to represent an exhaustive list of options for communicating education metrics. However, those included provide viable options for anyone wishing to understand the range of choices that are available to communicate metrics about a particular educational issue. All of the examples provided within this portfolio are publicly available; there is a complete list of sources in the appendix with URLs for each of the examples so that anyone can easily find them.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation's mission is to "support children, families, and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society", and as such, the communication options compiled in this portfolio focus on children's outcome data, with a particular focus on education metrics. However, each of these tools can easily be used by others to communicate other types of social metrics.

There are many other tools beyond those included here which are more oriented to assist program development and monitoring, such as logic models and performance monitoring frameworks. Given that the focus of this portfolio is on communicating metrics, these other approaches are only briefly described in the appendix.

The philanthropic sector as a whole must become better at communicating social metrics. In program work, evaluations, advocacy, and strategy development, communicating outcomes is essential to effectively carrying out its aspirations for social change. Hopefully, this portfolio will help the sector improve in this area by presenting options for communicating social impact.



Organizing Framework

In conducting research for this portfolio, we at FSG Social Impact Advisors, discovered a wide variety of tools that present outcome data to various audiences for different purposes. As we investigated each option more thoroughly, we found that there were many criteria that could be used to organize them (e.g., depth of the data, target audience). However, in the end, we decided that organizing them around their primary use was the most logical and relevant.

These tools serve purposes that range from informing about an issue, to taking action on an issue. To some extent, all of the options fundamentally serve the purpose of informing an audience. However, some focus more on informing while others place more emphasis on taking action. Based on our experience, we have arranged the tools along a spectrum from informing to taking action, according to their primary purpose (see Figure 1).

There are many things to consider when deciding how to most appropriately communicate education metrics. Different audiences have different information needs and effective communication depends on understanding these needs. When determining how to present metrics, we have found it useful to ask three questions:

- 1. Who is the audience?
- 2. What do we want them to learn from the information?
- 3. What do we want them to do with the information?

Answering these three questions can help determine which tool might be most appropriate given where on the spectrum from informing, to taking action, the situation falls.

Given our desire for the philanthropic sector to improve its ability to communicate outcomes, we hope this organizing framework will encourage others to think more strategically about how to communicate education metrics most effectively.

Use

Tools Communicating
Education Metrics

Fast Fact
Fact Sheet
Profile
Story
Issue Brief
Map
Diagram of
Forces

Figure 1: Organizing Framework for Tools Communicating Education Metrics

Dashboards

Exploring Options: Communicating Education Metrics

One of the main challenges we came across when compiling this portfolio was the myriad names for similar tools and the variety of definitions for a given tool. Often times, there was no technical definition in the field for what we were trying to describe. In order to include all of the options in this portfolio, we developed our own definitions.

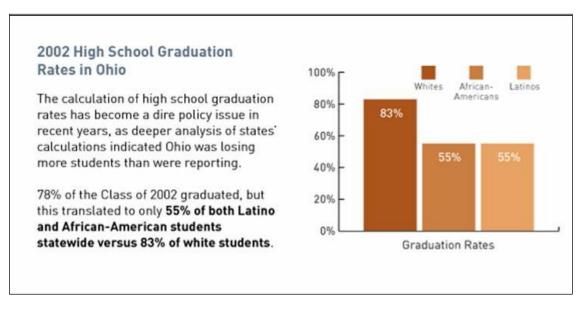
Figure 2 presents a brief overview of each tool that includes the general purpose for using the tool, a description of what is included, and the various ways data are presented. In addition, we have included a tagline for each to convey its use.

In the following sections, we provide a longer description of each of the tools, information on where to find out more about them, and examples from the field.

Figure 2: Tools that Communicate Education Metrics

Use	Tool	Tagline	Purpose	Description	Data Form
Informing	Fast Fact	Get Stats	Convey one piece of information in a simple, direct way	Very brief Includes one outcome metric	Text, tables, graphs
	Fact Sheet	Get Smart	Provide a brief education or talking points about a particular issue	 1-4 pages long Provides a focused, high-level overview on one issue Supporting outcome data 	Text, tables, graphs
Taking Action to	Profile	Get Smarter	Provide more granular detail and data about an issue in a subset of a larger group (e.g., region, program)	 1-4 pages long Focused on an issue in a particular subset of a larger grouping (e.g., education in a state or a district) Often developed as a series 	Text, tables, graphs
	Story	Get Emotional	Bring the issue to life by portraying the experience behind the numbers and connecting with the audience	Up to a few pages long (if written)Narrative account of an experience with an issue	Text, pictures, audio, video
	Issue Brief	Become Involved	Educate the reader about an issue and encourage them to become advocates by providing ways of getting involved	Up to 8 pages longFocused on one issueOverview of topicEncourages active engagement	Text, tables, graphs, pictures, maps
	Мар	Make Comparisons	Assess relative performance or status across geographies; indicate target areas for more focused intervention	 Comparison of geographies on one or several indicators Color-coded regions show differences 	Maps
	Diagram of Forces	Make Connections	Make the connection between many themes and trends affecting a certain overarching issue	 2-dimensional chart plotting a variety of outcome and trend data All data influence one overall issue 	Text, tables, graphs, pictures, maps
	Dashboard	Make Progress	Track progress against goals and assess overall performance or improvement of selected outcomes	 Focused on one theme but can include many pieces of data Mostly graphics, charts, and data Includes targets and goals 	Text, tables, graphs, pictures, maps





Providing statistics on graduation rates in Ohio

Fast facts are used to convey a piece of information in a simple and direct way.

Description

Also called "quick facts", *fast facts* are the simplest tool to convey education metrics. They typically include one outcome metric and display that data in text, a table, or a simple graph. They are usually aimed at the public in order to raise awareness about a particular issue. The statistic provided should be compelling enough to stand on its own.

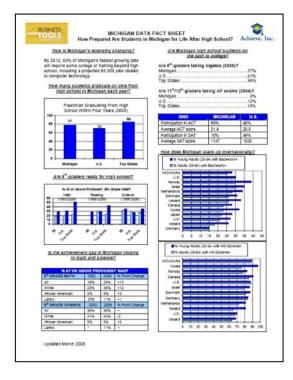
Some organizations will compile multiple fast facts together in one page. If these fast facts focus on a central theme, then they become what we call a fact sheet (see next section on fact sheets).

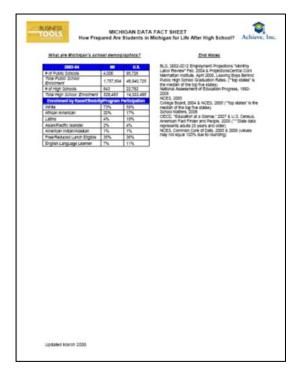
Example

See the Knowledge Works Foundation website for examples: www.kwfdn.org

- 2002 High School Graduation Rates in Ohio
- Ohio's Elementary Reading and Middle School Mathematics Success Ratings







Providing data on Michigan student readiness for life after high school

Fact sheets provide a brief education or talking points about a particular issue.

Description

Fact sheets are short documents, usually one to four pages in length, which communicate basic metrics about a particular issue. Brevity is emphasized in order to focus the reader on the most relevant pieces of information. Often times, they will include several pieces of data to provide sufficient background and education for the audience to understand the issue.

The data are usually presented simply in text or a table. *Fact sheets* can also be called "data sheets".

Example

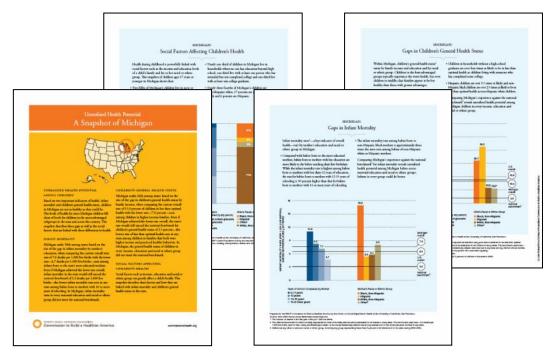
See Business Tools for Better Schools for examples: www.biztools4schools.org

Michigan Data Fact Sheet

See the Pennsylvania Partnership for Children for examples: www.papartnerships.org

Life as a Teenager in Pennsylvania – Graduation Gap





Providing data on social factors and disparities affecting children's health in Michigan

Purpose

Profiles provide more granular detail and data about an issue in subsets of a larger group (e.g., regions, programs).

Description

Profiles, also known as "snapshots", are short, one to four page documents which communicate detailed metrics about a particular issue. *Profiles* differ from fact sheets in that they provide a more detailed set of data because they focus on an issue in a particular subset of a larger grouping (e.g., education in a state or district). The data are usually presented in text, tables, or graphs.

Profiles are often developed as a series. Taking education in a state as an example, an organization might show education-related outcomes for each state in a set of profiles. Alternatively, a different organization might develop three different *profiles* showing outcome data for public, private, and charter schools.

Example

See Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for examples: www.rwjf.org

Unrealized Health Potential: A Snapshot of Michigan

See National Alliance for Public Charter Schools for examples: www.publiccharters.org

Michigan State Profile





Providing a close look at the experience of a woman's struggle to get an education

Purpose

Stories bring the issue to life by portraying the experience behind the numbers and connecting with people.

Description

Stories are short narratives that provide a real life account of a person or group experiencing a particular issue. They are a powerful way to convey the reality of the metrics because they bring the data alive. In addition, they are a very accessible way to communicate the reality of social issues. As *stories* can be used to portray challenges and successes concerning a particular issue or triumphs over an issue, they are very effective at encouraging an emotional reaction which may translate into taking action on the issue.

Stories can come in many forms, including written text, pictures, audio, or video. They can also be called "narratives."

Example

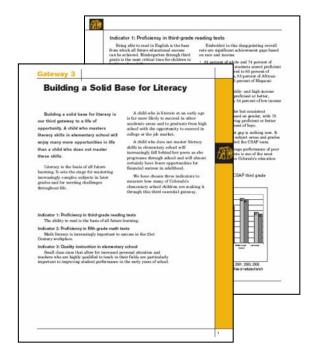
See Children International for examples: www.children.org

Children Internatinal: Education Paves the Way

See YouTube for examples: www.youtube.com

• Camfed: Yacinta's Story: "The Lengths I went to Get and Education"







Providing data and a case for improving child literacy in Colorado

Issue briefs educate people about an issue and encourage them to become advocates by providing ways of getting involved.

Description

Issue briefs are short, one to eight page documents that provide a brief overview of a particular issue using data, similar to fact sheets. Where they differ from fact sheets is their intention of encouraging active engagement on the issue. Typically, after providing data and some narrative about the issue at hand, issue briefs end by providing ways for the reader to get involved in the issue or suggestions on how to advocate for the issue. They communicate metrics through a number of forms including text, tables, graphs, pictures, and maps. Issue briefs are sometimes called "policy briefs" or "policy issue briefs" if they encourage engagement on policy issues.

Example

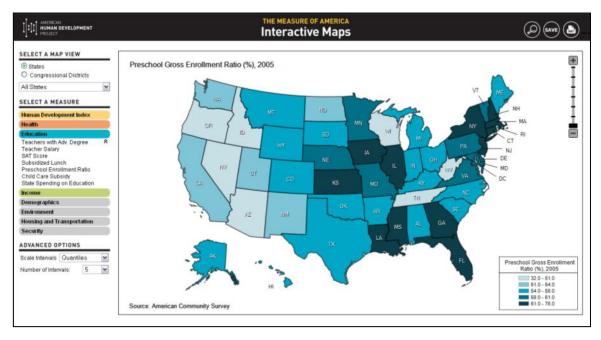
See The Bell Policy Center for examples: www.thebell.org

Building a Solid Base for Literacy

See Kids Count for examples: www.kidscount.org

Data Snapshot: One Out of Five US Children Is Living in an Immigrant Family





Providing a comparative view of preschool enrollment by state across the country

Purpose

Maps assess relative performance or status about an issue across geographies. They can also indicate target areas for more focused intervention.

Description

Maps provide a quick snapshot of the differences in outcomes across geographical areas. Usually, color coding is used to show different degrees to which an issue exists in a certain region (e.g., states with 50% graduation rates or higher will be blue and other states will be red). They can communicate differences on one or several indicators depending on their complexity. Maps allow a program to determine the areas of greatest need so that it can focus its resources where they are most needed.

Many useful and interesting *maps* can be found online in an interactive format. These online *maps* often allow the user to overlay different indicators on top of each other and some allow the user to change the ranges for each data segment (e.g., 10% intervals vs. 20% intervals) or change the geographic scope (e.g., states vs. districts).

Example

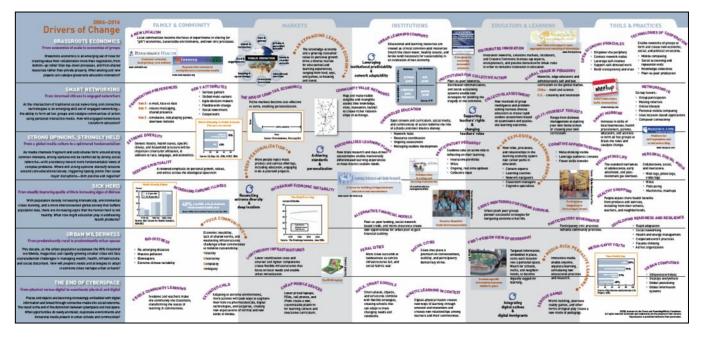
See the Measure of America for examples: http://measureofamerica.org/maps

Interactive Maps

See the MetroBoston Data Common for examples: www.metrobostondatacommon.org

Mapping Tool





Providing a comprehensive view on the multiple trends and dilemmas facing education in the next 10 years

Purpose

Diagrams of forces make the connection between many themes and trends affecting a certain overarching issue.

Description

Diagrams of forces are two dimensional charts which plot a variety of different outcome and trend data. These different outcome and trend data are placed on the chart according to their fit along the two axes. The two axes can be defined in any way that helps organize the various outcomes and trends. In the example provided, the rows describe the different categories driving all of the trends while the columns describe the key areas of activity where major trends are revealed. The data included can be shown in a wide variety of ways, including text, tables, graphs, pictures, and maps. All of the data and trends fit together in this diagram to show a powerful picture of how many disparate themes and trends affect a particular issue.

The main organization that has developed this tool calls it a "map" of forces. However, we have decided to call it a "diagram" of forces in order to avoid confusion with the map tool.

Example

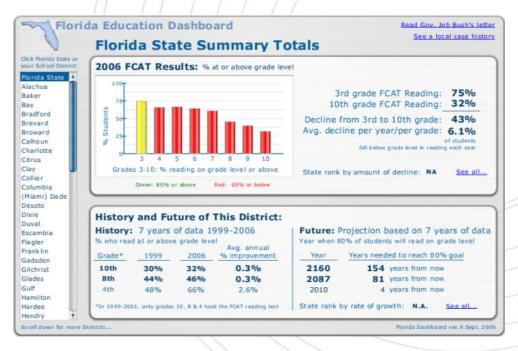
See the Institute for the Future (IFTF) for examples: www.iftf.org

"Map of Future Forces Affecting Education"

For more information on using the "Map of Future Forces Affecting Education", visit www.kwfdn.org/map/demo.aspx.







Providing a quick view of Florida's student reading performance vs. goals and future projections given current trends

Dashboards track progress against goals and assess overall performance or improvement of selected outcomes.

Description

Similar to those in cars, *dashboards* provide a simple display of the most important data regarding a particular issue. This information is shown on one (or a few) screens or pages in order to allow for a quick understanding of the issue. *Dashboards* show current metrics but can also include historic data in order to show progress. In addition, many *dashboards* include targets for each outcome metric in order to compare the current situation to the goals.

Dashboards can depict data in many forms: text, tables, graphs, pictures, or maps depending on what is most appropriate to convey the information simply. They are also sometimes called "scorecards", though they should not be confused with the Balanced Scorecard, which is a particular management tool which shows specific aspects of a company's current situation.

Example

See Florida Dashboard for example: www.floridadashboard.com

Florida Education Dashboard

See US Department of Education for examples: www.ed.gov

Mapping Michigan's Educational Progress 2008



Appendix A: Sources of the Tool Examples

Source				
Fast Fact				
http://www.kwfdn.org/fast_facts/fastfact.aspx				
http://www.kwfdn.org/fast_facts/fastfact.aspx				
http://www.biztools4schools.org/files/ MichiganDataFactSheet.pdf				
http://www.papartnerships.org/pdfs/gap/graduation_gap_factsheet.pdf				
http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/commission2008michigan.pdf				
http://www.publiccharters.org/states/mi				
Story				
http://www.children.org/successDetail.asp? id=6&sid=BDFA1508-B762-4094-99CC-39A0E0E089D1				
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kHrEjKPuhg				
Issue Brief				
http://www.thebell.org/PUBS/annual/2005/G3Literacy.pdf				
http://www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS COUNT/D/DataSnapshotImmigrantChildren/ snapshot_immigrant.pdf.pdf				
snapsnot minigrant.pur.pur				
http://measureofamerica.org/maps/				
http://www.metrobostondatacommon.org/				
http://www.kwfdn.org/map/				
Dashboard				
http://www.floridadashboard.com				
http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/progress/michigan.pdf				



Appendix B: Program Development and Monitoring Tools

During our investigation of communications tools, we came across several other types of tools, two of which we will note here. Because they do not emphasize communication as much as program development and monitoring, we have chosen not to include them within the main body of the portfolio.

Logic Models / Theories of Change

A logic model, or theory of change, is a systematic way to present your understanding of the logical relationships between your planned work and the results you hope to achieve. Figure 3 shows the outline of a logic model.

Figure 3: A Basic Logic Model

Your Planned Work

Your Intended Results

Going through the rigorous work of articulating a logic model can be very useful for any program as it forces the stakeholders to map out how its planned activities will bring about its intended results. By depicting it this way, a program can easily define the work it must accomplish and measure its results in the field.

See the W.K. Kellogg Foundation *Logic Model Development Guide* for more information on developing a logic model

Performance Monitoring Tools

Performance monitoring tools include a broad range of tools whose purpose is to communicate a program's overall execution of its intended mission. These tools are often used by senior and program management in order to quickly assess the effectiveness of a particular program.

While the purpose of these tools is distinct from the tools in this portfolio which communicate outcome data, several of the tools in this portfolio can be used to monitor performance. For





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