

LASSEN HEALTHY COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Final Evaluation Report on the
California Endowment Grant to the

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ADVISORY COUNCIL (ComPAC)

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November 15, 1999

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Project Background

On 1 March 1997, Northeastern Rural Health Clinics, Inc. (NRHC) received a two-year grant of \$225,000 from the California Endowment¹ to fund the Lassen Healthy Community Projects. The general purpose of the grant was to support the health and well-being of Lassen County by sponsoring Healthy Community Initiative (HCI) projects. Originally designed to run through February 28, 1999, the grant period was extended on a no-cost basis to August 31, 1999. The following report describes the project, traces its history, and provides an evaluation of its performance as required by grant stipulations.

Context

Lassen County is located in the mountains and high desert of northeastern California, bordering Nevada on the east, Modoc and Plumas Counties to the north and south, and Shasta County to the west. It is a beautiful county with its high mountains, deep forests, and the second largest natural lake in California, and is prized for outdoor sports and activities. Its native sons and daughters are independent people, proud to live “on the frontier,” as they call it.

Among the largest California counties in area (4,547 square miles), it is one of the smallest in population (34,000 people, a quarter of whom are prison inmates). Susanville (population 12,500 is the only incorporated city in this rural county and, as the county seat, provides the majority of the public services available to Lassen County residents. Those who live in the outlying areas have difficulty accessing these services--particularly during the harsh winters--due in part to the rugged terrain and in part to the lack of public transportation. Many Lassen County residents, especially those who have come here to work in the prison system, feel cut off from California proper. In fact, Reno, NV, is the closest large city.

Lassen County has undergone dramatic changes in the past two decades due primarily to the expansion of prison facilities in the county: at present there is an expanded county prison and two large state prisons, with at least one federal prison expected to be built in the next few years. It would be difficult to exaggerate the impact that the prisons have had on Lassen County in terms of population growth, demographic changes, influx of new retail businesses, and strain on the existing infrastructure. To take population growth as an example: in 1990, according to the California Department of Finance, Lassen County's population was 27,515, of which 23,252 represented the “household

¹ The California Endowment is a large, private grant-making foundation with approximately \$1 billion in assets, having been created as part of the conversion of Blue Cross to for-profit status in 1996. Its mission is “to improve access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians.” The Endowment has adopted a community-based orientation to its work, and has been particularly concerned to promote the concept of a healthy community in rural California.

population” and 4,263 people lived in “group quarters” (prisons and government barracks). Estimated county population in January of 1999 was 34,925 (25,124 and 8,935, respectively).

At one time, Lassen County made most of its money through timber harvesting and farming. Now government is the largest employer in Lassen County, accounting for over 50 percent of all jobs. The good salaries paid by the prison system are welcomed, but many local officials disappear of providing adequate infrastructure and public services with the limited tax base associated with such heavy dependence on government jobs. Despite the social and economic changes that have been forced on the community in recent years, many public services are severely limited.

NRHC’s proposal cited the “social upheaval” associated with the recent socioeconomic changes as one reason the grant was considered crucial to the community. Another was the desire to form a “collaborative of collaboratives” so that a variety of community initiatives could be discussed and coordinated in a single forum in order to reduce overlap and duplication of programs, to conserve community leaders’ time and energy, and to channel community resources most effectively.

Project Leadership and Personnel

NRHC served as the fiscal agent for the project, a role it continued to play even after ComPAC successfully incorporated as a 501c(3) non-profit organization. Founded in 1977, NRHC has grown from a small local practice to become a major health care provider serving northeastern California. It provides comprehensive primary medical, dental, and preventative care to medically underinsured and uninsured residents.

Though NRHC Planning Director Karol Merten was instrumental in obtaining the grant and involved throughout the project as a ComPAC board member, the grant was administered and implemented by ComPAC itself, not by NRHC. Final responsibility for project activities rested with the ComPAC Board of Directors. Although there was considerable turnover of membership on the Board over the course of the grant, the Board’s composition has represented a significant range of community sectors, and has also been balanced in terms of gender and longevity in the community. For example, at the time of our initial site visit in April, 1998 the Board members included a member of the Board of Supervisors, the Director of the County Health and Human Services Department, the Director of Nursing at the Community Hospital, and the Director of Planning at Northeastern Rural Health. Other segments of the community represented included the Lassen Career Network (formerly GAIN), BRIDGES (a multi-agency resource team providing services to families in need), a health education consultant, a representative of private business, and a newcomer to the community.

ComPAC had three different executive directors over the course of the grant period. Nancy Cavanaugh served from the summer of 1997 through her resignation in March 1998. Flo Bengard served from the summer of 1998 through her resignation in late winter 1999. Since April 1999, Susie McNally has served as Executive Director.

Turnover in this position, and tensions between the initial two Executive Directors and the Board, significantly impacted the project, slowing the achievement of some objectives and complicating others.

Relationship to Lassen Fitness Project

Just subsequent to receiving the ComPAC grant, NRHC served as the fiscal agent for a separate project proposal that received funding from the James Irvine Foundation. That project, called the Lassen Fitness Project, sought to promote community wellness by increasing the physical activity and fitness of Lassen County residents. The Irvine award of \$220,000 covered roughly the same two-year period as the Fitness Grant, and was administered through the Lassen Wellness Center, a component of NRHC.

Although each was a separate project, ComPAC and the Fitness Project collaborated on a number of initiatives. Early on, they agreed to pool their funds to hire a single evaluation team to work with the two projects. They also joined forces to produce a series of newspaper inserts under the “Healthy Lassen” heading. In addition, Fitness Project leaders participated in ComPAC’s holistic health initiative, one of 6 healthy community initiative (HCI) groups organized under the ComPAC umbrella, which served the project in an advisory capacity. Fitness Project activities were thus seen both as the result of the Irvine grant and as contributing to the overall goals of the ComPAC grant.

An effort by Fitness Project leaders to obtain the agreement of the ComPAC Board of Directors to “house” and support ongoing fitness activities after the Irvine grant ended was not successful. That action followed a period of time in which tension had developed between leaders of the two projects. For perspectives on the collaboration and conflict between ComPAC and the Fitness Project, see the interview report attached to our Fitness Project evaluation.

Evaluation

Evaluation Team

The UC Davis team that agreed in December, 1997, to perform the evaluation on both the Lassen Fitness and ComPAC projects comprises David Campbell, Director of the California Communities Program, and Joan Wright, a Cooperative Extension Education Research Specialist, both in the Human and Community Development Department at UC Davis. Over the years, both members of the team have taken part in numerous studies of a broad spectrum of socioeconomic programs in California. We often work together in designing, implementing, evaluating, and reporting these studies

Evaluation Approach

At the outset of our work, we recognized the long-term significance the California Endowment's and ComPAC's landmark mission. Few rural communities in California have long-standing institutions that serve as a "collaborative of collaboratives": a coordinating body representing a wide range of community-based organizations and other agencies involved in service planning and delivery. The presence of such institutions in urban areas is associated with an increased ability to respond quickly and effectively to rapid change (e.g., welfare reform and growth influx). Building such institutions in rural areas represents a critical community development investment. It doesn't happen overnight; collaboration takes time to develop and new organizations can typically spend five or more years establishing themselves. Along with stable funding, patience and a strong commitment to reflection and adaptation are required.

We were also aware of the role that evaluation can play in supporting such a mission. A recent Aspen Institute newsletter noted:

One of the key predictors of whether or not a town can sustain a long-term development agenda is its ability to collect and analyze information about itself. Community-led evaluations can reinforce a local discipline of continuous learning, and as well can promote a sense of ownership of development programs by local residents. In addition, we at the Rural Economic Policy Program are noticing an emerging trend (an encouraging trickle) among some foundations that are treating evaluations less as an audit and more as an opportunity to build the capacity of grantees to assess their own organizations' operations.

In consulting with ComPAC leaders, we understood that the purpose of the evaluation was to engage participants in a process of continuous learning related to project activities and goals. The evaluation was intended to help ComPAC focus its goals, reflect on the actions taken to reach goals, assess progress, chart direction, and retain the flexibility to change as needed to meet challenges effectively. The key test of this type of evaluation is its validity and usefulness to the project leaders, building their capacity for undertaking new initiatives.

We shared with ComPAC participants a method for doing “outcomes assessment” that adapts the vocabulary and “program logic model” approach outlined in a 1996 United Way publication, *“Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach.”* We also discussed ideas for data collection drawn from a 1997 publication of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, *“Working Toward Community Goals: Helping Communities Succeed.”* The point of this was to enable all participants to use a common vocabulary and approach to clarifying program outcomes and collecting evidence of success.

Evaluation Activities

After an initial visit to consult with ComPAC leaders in December 1997--prior to signing the evaluation contract--we began work in April 1998. In effect, we joined the project midstream, about a year after it had begun. Our major activities included observing ComPAC’s meetings, consulting by phone and in person, conducting interviews, and facilitating strategic planning meetings. These activities were scheduled in conjunction with four formal site visits scheduled intermittently throughout the course of the project, as follows:

1. April 22-24, 1998

Prior to the visit, the team interviewed members of the ComPAC Board of Directors (by phone) and reviewed documents pertaining to ComPAC, the Fitness Project, and the 13 mini-grants funded by ComPAC (see more on the mini-grants below). The documents included ComPAC’s by-laws and strategic plan, progress reports to the California Endowment, meeting minutes, newsletters, the RFP soliciting mini-grant proposals, and copies of the 13 funded mini-grant proposals.

During the site visit, the team observed a regular meeting of ComPAC Board of Directors, met twice each with the ComPAC Board of Directors and the Fitness Project leaders, and once each with representatives of the 13 mini-grants. The purposes of these meetings were to:

- develop a clear understanding of the purpose of this evaluation and of the roles of various players;
- develop a common vocabulary to use in pursuing the evaluation;
- seek greater clarity and specificity about program mission and intended outcomes;
- begin clarifying feasible, useful strategies for collecting evidence of accomplishment;
- create lines of communication for problem-solving and troubleshooting.

2. October 13, 1998

Evaluation activities associated with this site visit included:

- interviewing ComPAC leaders and observing a community meeting on August 11, 1998;
- holding a conference call with the chair and vice-chair of the ComPAC board on

September 16, 1998;

- conducting phone interviews with more than 10 leaders of the Healthy Community Initiative groups during late September and early October 1998;
- conducting a community meeting to elicit input on future ComPAC directions and developing a report for the ComPAC board;
- meeting with the ComPAC board during a site visit on Oct. 13-14, 1998;
- reading program documents and communicating regularly with the ComPAC Executive Director.

3. February 25, 1999

Evaluation activities associated with this site visit included:

- holding a series of calls with the chair and vice-chair of the ComPAC board and the Executive Director between December and the site visit in February;
- reviewing and advising the ComPAC director on community indicators being developed;
- attending the ComPAC community meeting on February 25, 1999;
- reviewing board minutes from the past year;
- reviewing successful and unsuccessful applications to the mini-grants for 1999.
- framing and conducting a strategic planning session with the ComPAC board aimed at developing a consensus around a common vision for ComPAC's future (February 25, 1999).

The strategic planning session built on previous interviews and results of the October site visit. After that visit, we framed a set of strategic choices for ComPAC, including their pros and cons (see attached report). The choices were reviewed by the Board Executive Committee in advance of the February site visit. We then designed a meeting format in consultation with the Executive Committee.

4. October 26, 1999

Evaluation activities conducted prior to and during this site visit included:

- consulting with the ComPAC Board President on a strategy for conducting interviews related to ComPAC's healthy community work;
- receiving phone updates on the "close of grant" activities from the ComPAC Executive Director;
- conducting and analyzing 69 open-ended phone interviews with a sample of ComPAC participants (35) as well as community leaders (34) with no known previous affiliation with ComPAC [see attached report];
- meeting with the ComPAC Board to summarize findings from the interviews and discuss the status of ComPAC current and future activities.

Project Activities and Achievements

Intended Outcomes

As specified in the grant award to NRHC, the objectives of the project over the two-year grant period were as follows:

- ComPAC will develop an evaluation plan for its healthy community collaborative.
- Measurable indicators in the areas of health, environment, education, and the economy, and benchmarks to evaluate the project's impact will be established.
- Within the first year ComPAC will have a legal structure, a well-defined organization and management structure, and a strategic action plan, and will become a visible catalyst for community action.
- At least seven special projects will be initiated and put in place through its working committees.

These statements reflect the specific expectations of the California Endowment related to the grant. Our initial interviews with ComPAC Board members revealed shared enthusiasm for the organization, but a diverse range of ideas about what its specific purpose and mission should be. Their comments described ComPAC alternatively as an “information clearinghouse,” a “generator of community participation,” an “educator about what a Healthy Community means,” a “resource that supports community projects and creates measurable outcomes,” and a “place for town meeting style dialogue that brings newcomers and old-timers together to redefine the community for the next century.” While these visions had much in common, they implied different priorities and development paths for ComPAC's future.

At least three specific outcomes of the collaboration, reflective of the original motivations for writing the grant, seemed to have been broadly shared among ComPAC participants. These include the goals of:

1. strengthening relationships and communication by promoting effective networking among key partnerships, organizations and leaders (e.g., serving as a “collaborative of collaboratives”);
2. articulating a vision of a “healthy community” by building consensus around achievable goals that are understood by the community in a way that sparks energetic and imaginative initiatives;
3. expanding the pool of skilled and motivated community leaders who are taking responsibility for community projects and/or for community organizations.

In developing our evaluation, we have looked both at evidence that the specific requirements of the California Endowment have been met, as well as for evidence that these three outcomes of the collaboration were accomplished.

ComPAC Activities

The following sections summarize key activities in four areas: infrastructure and organizational development, mini-grants, collaboration and coordination, and benchmarking/indicators.

Infrastructure and Organizational Development. Much of the focus during the first year of the grant was on building a working non-profit organization. Key activities included establishing a mailing list; recruiting and training Board members; filing for non-profit status; and developing bylaws, a logo, brochure, mission statement and fiscal policies. These activities enabled ComPAC to achieve one of its critical year-one goals by obtaining 501c(3) status with the State of California. Other important infrastructure outcomes during the first year included a trained Board more aware of its various responsibilities, and growing awareness of ComPAC in the community.

Rapid staff and Board turnover and difficulties in staff-Board relationships characterize many non-profit organizations. ComPAC experienced both problems throughout its two-year grant. Resignation of Board members before their terms of service are completed became a fairly regular occurrence. Some resignations were for unavoidable personal reasons, while some have reflected dwindling interest in the organization, or a sense of burnout brought on by time commitments perceived as too onerous. A core group of Board members has remained in place throughout the project, and these individuals in particular felt the strain of having carried much of the load.

ComPAC experienced fairly persistent tension over the appropriate roles of staff and Board in determining and implementing organizational policies and priorities. Board members expressed concern that some programmatic tasks were not being completed in a quick and effective fashion, necessitating their intervention. Staff sometimes perceived a tendency of the Board to “micromanage” their activities. All agreed that the time spent resolving these difficulties was an impediment to organizational success and morale.

Persons involved in the germination of ComPAC believed that a great deal of meeting time on the Boards and advisory committees of community programs could be saved if there were one forum where many programs could be discussed. But over time, some ComPAC participants became concerned that the time and energy devoted to establishing and sustaining ComPAC as a separate organization was costing more time than it saved. Bringing new Board members up to speed quickly was one particularly difficult challenge for the organization. Another was the level of time the Board had to invest in recruiting and supervising the first two Executive Directors. (Relations between the current Board and Executive Director appear to be much smoother, and one can only speculate on how the project would have fared had this been the case earlier.)

Some of our interviews suggest that the work of creating and sustaining an organization—including renting office space, dealing with personnel policies, writing grants to sustain the organization, etc.—took focus and energy away from the core task of promoting community collaboration. More than a few wondered if the money spent on

office infrastructure might have been better spent on community projects. Some even questioned whether receiving such a large grant was actually as much a curse as a blessing, creating proportional expectations for a group that was still in search of a clear sense of its mission.

At a minimum, there was a clear tension between ComPAC's need for ongoing financial support and its avowed purpose of supporting others. For many persons with whom we talked, the purpose of ComPAC is to support community efforts to work toward a vision of a healthy community. While folks perceived this support as taking many forms—e.g., encouragement of good ideas, recognition of individual and group accomplishments, sharing of in-kind resources, coordination of activities for mutual benefits—they also recognized that funding support (seed money and/or budget supplement) is usually required. Yet ComPAC itself required all of these supports (especially continued adequate and secure funding) if it was to function as an entity that could offer support to others.

Mini-grants. ComPAC's award from the California Endowment specified the objective of funding at least seven "special projects" related to the Healthy Community Initiatives. During the fall of 1997, ComPAC distributed an RFP soliciting projects. A total of 13 proposals were received by the December 15th deadline. After reviewing the proposals and meeting with applicants, the Board decided to fund (to some extent) all 13 proposals. Total funding was \$12,866.

In early January 1999, the Board decided to allocate \$10,000 for a second round of mini-grants. Despite a very quick turnaround of a few weeks between announcing the RFP and the due date, 19 proposals were received. Of the 19, seven were funded.

In all, 20 mini-grants were funded, for a total of 22,894. Most grants were for approximately \$1,000, with the smallest for \$251 and the largest for \$3,000.

The 20 funded projects, and their intended outcomes/description, are listed on the following page. Both Board members and grantees reported general satisfaction with the application and review process. Indeed, our community interviews revealed that the mini-grant program won top reviews in all quarters. Among the various ComPAC activities, it was arguably the most visible and effective means of improving the community, supporting the praiseworthy efforts of groups and organizations, and advertising the existence and purpose of ComPAC.

Funded Mini-Grant Projects

Project/Program	Outcomes/Description	Amount
Rolling Readers	Improve children's reading skills Involve adult volunteers in child's nurture	\$1000.00
Film Commission Photo Library	Attract filmmakers to Lassen County Generate \$ for local economy	\$1000.00
Mural Book	Sense of community heightened Tourism generated	\$1200.00
Open Space Conservation	Conservation plan and map drafted Priority open space areas preserved	\$1350.00
Safe Ride	Raise awareness of drinking and driving issue Reduce accidents and injuries	\$944.00
Sesquicentennial Chatauqua	Students receive quality educational experience Awareness of heritage/Sense of community	\$500.00
Kids Activities Program	Increase sports/club participation for at-risk youth Increase family awareness of community resources	\$750.00
Yoga Classes	Classes available regardless of ability to pay Improved health and lifestyle changes	\$500.00
Uptown Lighting	Make uptown more attractive Increase commerce and tourism	\$1000.00
Watershed Education	Students learn math and science in fun setting Watershed enhanced Increase community commitment to stewardship	\$1000.00
Library Health Info Center	Increase youth/parent use of up-to-date materials Decrease in tobacco/alcohol/drug use, teen pregnancy, etc.	\$2000.00
Senior Nutrition	Stress reduction by providing information quickly Better health for seniors	\$1401.00
Yellow Ribbon	Reduce number of teen suicides/attempts Raise awareness of suicide warning signs	\$251.00
Centerwheelers Club	Hearing enhancement for square dancers Improve access to fitness activities	\$380.00
Historic Uptown Susanville	Trash receptacles in place Improve business climate	\$2318.00
Lassen County Arts Council	Historic Mural Project Increase tourism	\$2000.00
Susanville District Library	Health and Education Library Materials Improve community health indicators	\$2000.00
Soroptimist of Susanville	Baby Think It Over teen pregnancy prevention	\$3000.00
Lassen County Historical Society	History Alive Chautauqua Increase sense of community	\$500.00
Lassen Land and Trails Trust	Native Garden Interpretation Project Increase environmental awareness	\$800.00

Collaboration and Coordination. A key challenge facing ComPAC was determining how to structure itself to facilitate collaboration, and what specific forms of community collaboration to pursue. Initially, the key coordination mechanism was a monthly community meeting, which typically had an average attendance of about 25 and was held late in the afternoon (but during work hours). During the latter part of each meeting, Healthy Community Initiative (HCI) groups focused on particular concerns would break out to meet separately. These groups, patterned after the work of a healthy community project in Yamapa Valley, Michigan, included Strong Families, Quality Education, Holistic Health, Quality Environment, Economic Opportunity, and Sense of Community. Some of these HCI groups met one more time each month on a separate occasion.

Beginning in the summer of 1998, ComPAC adjusted its regular meeting schedule to hold quarterly community meetings, thus freeing time and energy to be spent further developing the activities of the HCI groups. The feeling was that these smaller groups seemed to be better at focusing energy and inviting participation. In late September and early October of 1998, we interviewed about a dozen participants and leaders in the six Healthy Community Initiative (HCI) groups. Given ComPAC's decision to place more emphasis on these groups, the intent of our interviews was to ascertain the current status of the six groups, their relationship to ComPAC as a whole, specific actions taken or planned, and whether the group had identified specific goals and outcomes along with related indicators of success.

At that time, three of the HCI groups had been meeting regularly with approximately 4-8 participants in each meeting (Holistic Health, Strong Families, and Quality Education). While these groups were clearly distinct, we noted some overlap in their priorities and action focus (not a problem as long as effort is coordinated). A fourth initiative group, Quality Environment, was re-forming at the time of our call and seemed to have a sense of energy and direction. Members of this group were particularly adept at thinking about how environmental goals could be interwoven with the other initiatives (e.g., exposing students to resources-related careers contributes to economic opportunity and quality education; environmental service learning projects contribute to education and sense of community), something that was not characteristic of most groups. The remaining two initiatives, Sense of Community and Economic Opportunity, were dormant, though their importance was still recognized.

The interviews revealed substantial uncertainty and persistent tensions as to the roles of and relationships between the initiative groups and ComPAC as a whole. For many persons, the initiative groups became a welcome opportunity for concerned individuals to devise targeted actions that tackle a fairly well-defined challenge to community health (e.g., "Baby Think It Over" as a response to teen pregnancy). Unlike the earlier ComPAC community meetings that they perceived as unfocused, these folks saw the initiative group meetings as more focused and effective. Given this, some wondered if they needed ComPAC. If so, for what?

Throughout the project, we encountered a variety of perspectives on ComPAC's mission vis-a-vis the healthy community concept. Some persons believed ComPAC should focus

its activity on advancing a holistic concept of community health and well-being, singling out those HCIs that were significant for Lassen County, and making a concerted effort to educate the larger community to increase awareness and commitment. Others preferred to see ComPAC undertaking direct-action projects on its own that would tangibly improve community health. This was not simply a tension between talking and doing; the tension involved *what* to do.

Another tension underlying the decisions about collaboration involved the scope of what was meant by community health. Given that the healthy community ideal is multi-faceted and interrelated, should ComPAC have pursued with equal vigor all aspects of community health—or at least those identified as one of the 6 Lassen County Healthy Community Initiatives? Was it essential that attention be given, for example, to those initiatives for which there was not an active group fired up to move? This was partly a concern about the limits of organizational capacity and resources, and partly a matter of organizational integrity.

In our final interviews with ComPAC participants and community leaders, we sought their perspectives on how valuable ComPAC’s “networking” or collaborative activities had been (the complete interview report is attached). Opinions of ComPAC’s success in fostering networking among community groups appear to be divided into two camps: many people who work in formally constituted entities—e.g., county agencies—found ComPAC’s “umbrella” to be extremely effective, while many people who attempted to join ComPAC either as self-motivated citizens or as unsponsored members of non-agency organizations were disappointed in ComPAC’s perceived inattention to their needs and points of view.

Agency members’ reasons for satisfaction included the following:

- ComPAC gave all agencies the chance to meet in person, exchange information, and avoid duplication of services.
- Agency members could take advantage of their time together to organize and articulate new ideas, bouncing them off people with like interests and interlocking responsibilities.
- Individuals new to the community or to their positions could use ComPAC meetings to inform themselves about existing programs and resources and could make important contacts.
- ComPAC meetings afforded an excellent forum for acquainting other agencies with new programs that might affect their areas of interest.
- Above all, ComPAC forged a true community of service providers, putting faces to names and enabling vital networks to develop and branch throughout the county.

A measure of dissatisfaction was expressed by a number of community members who did not enjoy agency sponsorship:

- People whose workplaces didn’t pay them to attend ComPAC meetings often could not get away during work hours and so were forced to miss most meetings.
- Individuals who lacked agency training and endurance were unable to tolerate long meetings that appeared to accomplish few tangible results.

- Those unaccustomed to the techniques of commanding attention in meetings often felt ignored and ineffectual; many stopped attending for this reason.
- People from outlying areas observed that ComPAC's focus and attention seemed to center almost exclusively on the Susanville area.

It should be noted that ComPAC made some efforts to reach out to existing community groups and organizations; for example, by making presentations at regularly scheduled meetings. In general, while these groups saw value in ComPAC having received the grant, and especially appreciated the mini-grants, they seemed to feel that ComPAC was not particularly successful in building support from, or partnerships with, established community organizations. In some cases, ComPAC overtures were met with indifference or even skepticism. In at least one important case, the overlap between ComPAC's mission and that of an existing economic development organization caused confusion and tension.

One concrete and tangible outcome of ComPAC's effort to promote community collaboration is the *Lassen County Healthy Community Resource Directory*, published in October of 1999. The directory, over 70 pages in length, is a comprehensive listing of community resources and organizations listed by topical areas, such as child care, counseling, food, financial assistance, housing, legal services, recreation, etc. The document was distributed free to the public as a newspaper insert and will also be available on ComPAC's new website: www.healthylassen.org. Early indications suggest that the directory is being warmly and appreciatively received throughout the community.

Community Indicators and Benchmarking. Of the three specific objectives specified in the California Endowment grant award, the task of developing measurable indicators of community health proved to be the most challenging and met with the least success. Specifically, benchmarks were to be established for evaluating ComPAC's impact in the areas of health, environment, education and the economy. Early on, this task was set aside in order to concentrate upon the more pressing tasks of establishing organizational infrastructure. During our first evaluation site visit in April 1998, we suggested a process by which ComPAC could begin "engaging the community in a process that develops a consensus around intended outcomes, indicators and benchmarks." The idea was to educate the community, energize the HCI groups (who would play a role in developing indicators in their own areas of concern), and establish ComPAC as a visible catalyst in the community. During the site visit, ideas for moving this benchmarking process forward were tentatively embraced by the Board.

By the time of our next site visit in October of 1998, it was clear that progress toward identifying indicators was moving very slowly. There appeared to be a number of reasons. One was confusion over different levels of outcomes and indicators related to ComPAC's work, which included the mini-grants, the HCI groups, ComPAC as a whole, and community-wide indicators. Another reason was the lack of indicator experience of many ComPAC participants and/or their reluctance to spend time on something so abstract (as opposed to a concrete action project). This became clear when each HCI group was charged with developing a short list of 3-4 goals and related indicators in its

own area of interest—and none of the groups succeeded. A final reason was the lack of a skilled person in the project with the time and energy to shepherd an indicator process, a situation exacerbated by the turnover in the Executive Director position. Even after we spent time advising and consulting on a tentative list of indicators developed by ComPAC early in 1999, the subsequent iterations were still less than satisfying.

By early spring of 1999, ComPAC's energies became consumed with preparing for the end of the grant. The indicator work did not completely disappear, however. An effort was made to incorporate a number of indicators, or indicator-like statements, into the community resource directory ComPAC published. These are interspersed throughout that document in sidebar boxes. While not systematic, comprehensive, or of consistent quality, they at least convey a sense of the indications of community health Lassen citizens might profitably ponder.

Continuity beyond the California Endowment Grant

Well aware that the California Endowment grant was nearing its conclusion, ComPAC leaders spent a good deal of time during the second year of the grant planning for the future. One form this took was the obvious matter of finding additional grants for which to apply. To date, those efforts have been unsuccessful. As a result, the organization has now moved out of its rented office space into two donated spaces, one at a private business owned by a member of the Board of Directors, and one at the Susanville Public Library. The latter has agreed to host the new Healthy Lassen website, which was also supported by grant funds originally dispersed to the Lassen Fitness Project. In addition, ComPAC is soliciting donations from local businesses to help construct informational kiosks at one or more locations. The current plan calls for Susie McNally to continue to serve as half-time Executive Director until the remaining California Endowment funds run out at the end of February 2000.

Currently, ComPAC is exploring the possibility of developing a clothes closet for Welfare-to-Work participants in partnership with Lassen Works, and also offering to facilitate public input meetings related to Proposition 10. Other ideas that have been explored include working to promote volunteerism in the community and sponsoring community forums on topical issues.

Of course, many of the important legacies of ComPAC may be more difficult to trace precisely. For example, a member of the Board of Supervisors who was involved with ComPAC noted that he believes ComPAC helped “plant the seeds” for community action groups in outlying areas of the county with which he now is working. And the personal and organizational connections spawned at ComPAC meetings will no doubt bear fruit in new ideas and projects over the years ahead.

There is strong sentiment among the current Board of Directors to continue ComPAC, building on what has been accomplished over the past two years, recognizing that building a new community institution can take many years to accomplish. At the same

time, there is no clear sense of what direction ComPAC may take in the future or how it will manage if funding for the current staff cannot be continued.

Conclusions and Discussion

Summary of Achievements

ComPAC's achievements can be measured against two sets of standards. One is discrete and limited: the objectives specified by the California Endowment; the other is expansive and open-ended: the expressed hopes and expectations of the individuals who created ComPAC and invested their energies in its quest to fill a vital niche as a community planning institution.

Three required objectives. With respect to the California Endowment's stipulated goal of creating an organizational structure, ComPAC did succeed in establishing itself as a duly constituted non-profit organization with legal and managerial structures in place. This work was not easy, however, and is never completely finished due to the ongoing evolution that is essential to any organization.

With respect to the goal of initiating at least seven special projects, ComPAC leaders point to the 20 mini-grants as evidence of meeting and then exceeding this objective. As we have discussed, the mini-grants were certainly among the most popular and visible of ComPAC's achievements. They set in motion, or augmented, a wide range of community activities that related to one or more elements of a healthy community. Although we were originally skeptical of spreading the grant funds relatively thinly over many projects, the strategy appears to have worked. Indeed, as ComPAC's Board of Directors has pondered its future directions, the idea of becoming a "community foundation" to disperse funds to local projects has been among the ideas considered.

One drawback to the mini-grants is that they did not establish ComPAC's unique identity in quite the same way that a community project that ComPAC itself designed and initiated would have done. Instead, they put ComPAC in the role of sponsor (essentially a pass-through for the Endowment funds), but not the initiator.

With respect to the third goal involving the development of measurable indicators and benchmarks, ComPAC was not very successful, despite some good intentions and some sporadic but not well-sustained efforts.

Three participant objectives. ComPAC founders hoped to strengthen relationships and communication by promoting effective networking among key partnerships, organizations, and leaders--serving as a "collaborative of collaboratives." The evidence points to mixed results with respect to this goal. Our observations and the reflections of those we interviewed suggest that ComPAC never really functioned as a collaborative of *collaboratives*, nor did it save time by allowing key participants in local collaboratives to substitute one meeting for many.

ComPAC did, however, succeed in bringing together *individuals* committed to healthy community goals and in providing an occasion for these individuals to share information and ideas, garner support for particular projects, and ponder together over community issues. In short, it served as a community forum, providing a unifying central locus for many of the community service programs of Lassen County. For the reasons cited earlier, it did a better job serving individuals whose jobs were in agencies than those who showed up as interested members of the community but without an agency connection. In the main, the former group expressed satisfaction and even praise for ComPAC's assistance in establishing channels for networking. Many of the latter group voiced considerable frustration with the process, even though a number of them continued to attend. Both responses indicate not only ComPAC's success, but the deep hunger for a community institution that provides a forum for education, planning, and social contacts.

Another major goal of ComPAC was to articulate a vision of a healthy community in ways that made sense in Lassen County. The major achievement here was obtaining the grant itself and using it as an occasion to promote discussion about the elements of a healthy community. The HCI groups as defined by ComPAC gave a form of concrete expression to the vision, as did the effort to require the mini-grants to link their work to one or more of the HCI goals. Our interviews reveal that the whole idea of a healthy community had never been raised in the community before, and now many key players from different segments of the community are able to articulate the concept.

On the other hand, the failure to engage the community in some form of indicators or benchmarking process (as has become common in many communities around the nation) was a missed opportunity. And while there was overlap in membership and some overlap in projects among the various HCI groups, there was little overt evidence that ComPAC was helping people come to grips at a more substantive conceptual level with the interconnections between the different elements of a healthy community.

Finally, with respect to the goal of expanding the pool of skilled and motivated community leaders, ComPAC appears to have had modest success. It provided an occasion for a range of community actors not normally considered leaders to be given visible leadership roles (e.g., the mini-grant leaders and the chairs of HCI groups). It also gave mid-level agency representatives a new prominence in their home organizations. Finally, not only did it help to educate a range of potential community leaders about community issues and concerns, it also gave them some practical experience in how to go tackling them.

Still, as in many communities, there remains the sense that the major burdens of leadership continue to fall upon a fairly small number of individuals. Among those most active in developing the original idea for ComPAC, many have expressed varying degrees of disappointment or discouragement with the process of implementing the grant. Clearly, not all of the original hopes and expectations have been met, even though many accomplishments of value have been achieved.

Overall, and despite encountering many obstacles along the way, ComPAC achieved a measure of success in the difficult and complicated task of educating Lassen County citizens, old-timers and newcomers alike, about the meaning and desirability of having a healthy community. The people we talked to during the series of interviews agreed without reservation that a healthy community program is worth pursuing and gave ComPAC's founders, directors, and members high marks for their hard work on behalf of Lassen County.

At the same time, all our respondents agreed that there was a great deal more work to be done. Daunting problems remain, presenting Lassen County with a challenge as unique as the county itself. An organization that can bring the whole community together to work out sound, practical solutions to these problems has never been needed more than it is today and in the foreseeable future.

Lessons learned

During the two-year grant period, ComPAC experienced many of the problems typical in new non-profit organizations. Rather than provide a comprehensive view of these, the comments below highlight a few of the most important lessons that were learned along the way. Our list is tilted toward those lessons that would provide helpful insight to another community interested in starting a healthy community collaborative.

Work to bridge the agency-community divide. The world of “agencies and clients” and the world of “citizens and neighbors” overlap, but they coexist uneasily. Part of the challenge of building a more robust civic life is bridging the cultural and organizational divides between these two worlds. As we have noted earlier in this report, ComPAC worked better as a forum for agency personnel than it did for unaffiliated community members.

If community forums that are truly inclusive are to be developed, great care must be taken to insure that everyone is made to feel valuable and welcome. In part, this is as simple as extending hospitality by welcoming each person, making introductions, and so on. In part, it is a matter of good meeting facilitation in which input is sought from the quieter participants and no one is allowed to dominate the conversation. More difficult still is making sure the conversation is deliberately slowed down at certain points to make sure all members understand what more sophisticated participants have been talking. For example, at one ComPAC meeting, an agency representative made some great comments on how ComPAC could support a Salvation Army youth center proposal. But many in the room about did not understand the planning processes he was talking about, nor were they given a chance to comment one way or another.

Be all-inclusive. If a project bills itself as community-based and announces its intention to define and work toward creating a healthy community, it must be especially careful to be deliberately inclusive. A number of those interviewed maintained that ComPAC should have invited representatives of every group in the community to take part in *creating* the healthy community vision (which instead was adapted from a community

vision from another rural area). They felt that it is not sufficient to include certain groups only after the project's mission has already been defined. Although no one we talked with argued with ComPAC's vision for a healthy community, some people suggested that community buy-in would be enhanced if the whole community felt a sense of ownership toward the project. In addition, we heard that some community members were concerned about ComPAC's apparent omission of important segments of the community, including churches, Native Americans, agriculture, the elderly, traditional law enforcement, and members of the Correctional Officers' families. While no group can be all things to all people, ComPAC struggled with the issue of who really belonged and had a right to participate in key decisions—those who had invested the most time in building the organization, or any member of the community?

Set project boundaries and guidelines early on. Providing a clear focus is difficult in a complex community development initiative such as ComPAC pursued. If firm, official parameters are not set up to define the areas and types of endeavors the project can embark upon, members who have made assumptions in good faith may get offended, frustrated, and discouraged. Likewise, many people felt that working groups like the HCIs could lose membership if they are not given some general direction and goals. One of the complaints heard most frequently in our interviews was that community meetings dragged, that nothing seemed to get done, that people wondered why they were there—until some firm guidance was provided. Several HCI members reported a surge of satisfaction and efficiency that galvanized the group once they had a tangible project to work on.

Community indicator projects need a champion with the skills to keep the project on track. In our work with community groups, we have found it very difficult to get a close-knit set of actors, or even a single project leader, to focus successfully on developing outcomes and indicators for their projects. ComPAC's experience suggests that this is even harder, much harder, to do with a large and relatively uncohesive group. Most of the community indicator projects around the country have come out of large urban areas. They are typically sponsored by an established public or non-profit agency, and rely either on designated staff or paid consultants to provide leadership and technical support. By contrast, ComPAC's difficulties show how hard it can be to develop an indicators project where it is just one of many projects for which staff are responsible, and where technical skill and support are lacking.

Find a descriptive, distinctive name. A community organization needs to name itself so that people can clearly identify it, we were told over and over in our interviews. ComPAC members laughed about having to explain that they were not talking about a computer company, and the majority of the community interviewees pronounced the word as though it were spelled C-o-m-p-a-c-t. Several people suggested finding a name that is brief but self-descriptive so that it could become easily recognized in the community. One person remarked tartly that everything doesn't have to be an acronym; he would just like to understand what it meant. In this regard, it is interesting that ComPAC has chosen the name "Healthy Lassen" for the web site, which seems to resonate more clearly with the public.

Select staff with great care. Some members of ComPAC were more inconvenienced than others by “having to start all over” each time an executive director was replaced, but nearly all the ones we interviewed mentioned some degree of frustration at least once during our conversation. Most people liked all the executive directors and thought they were all highly skilled professionals. Some people felt that there were personality and communication problems between the Board and the administrative staff; few understood the problems, and all felt that the situation should have been handled better. A number of respondents thought that the problems might have been prevented through more careful selection.

Broader Considerations

For foundations interested in investing in rural communities, ComPAC’s experience poses a number of issues for reflection. On the one hand, the fact that \$225,000 was invested in Lassen County for this project represented a major boon to the community, especially against the backdrop of the serious neglect of rural settings by most foundations. A testament to this neglect is the fact that a number of Lassen community leaders we interviewed presumed without question that the money to fund ComPAC came from government sources. These few tended to lump ComPAC with other questionable uses of “taxpayer money.” We should note that this occurred even though ComPAC was quite diligent in its written materials and oral presentations about ensuring that the California Endowment was credited with the grant.

Likewise, the idea of using foundation funding to help rural areas build community planning institutions is quite laudable. As we noted earlier in this report, such institutions are critical to community health but tend to be concentrated in urban areas.

At issue is just what the best way of building such institutions is, and what roles are to be played by both funding and technical support. Key ComPAC leaders have wondered audibly in retrospect if “being landed on by all that money was really such a good thing.” Organizational development experts talk about “acquired incapacity”—as you grow you do more things less well. In a sense, the grant set ComPAC on this course from its outset.

The most important considerations seem to be the timing of funding and the length of the grant. Some leaders feel that the same amount of money spread out over a longer grant cycle might have given ComPAC more time to develop organically, rather than rushing to meet grant objectives and scramble for renewal funding at the same time. Others simply feel the organization wasn’t clear enough about its plans before receiving the funds, so that the two years were spent building a basic organizational mission and framework that only now is ready to function more smoothly. The irony here is that, now that somewhat greater clarity about mission exists, the funding has dried up.

ComPAC used its funds to draw on a number of sources of support for legal advice, strategic planning, and evaluation with varying degrees of success. While the California

Endowment helped encourage this by making grant funds specifically available for evaluation, the foundation's "hands off" role during the grant (at times they were months behind in responding to simple questions for ComPAC) fed an atmosphere of confusion and fear among ComPAC's staff and Board. Speaking from our standpoint as evaluators, it is clear in retrospect that the effort to attach outcomes assessment expectations onto small grants should be approached with greater caution and more deliberate communication than is typically the case. Unless expectations are clearly specified, many grant recipients are tempted to read unrealistic demands into grant language, promise more than can be delivered, and then end up delivering less than they might if the expectations had been more realistic.

It would be particularly helpful for funders, evaluators, and project leaders to discuss these issues jointly at the inception of projects, carefully balancing concerns for utility, feasibility, and cost, and targeting resources wisely. In addition to discussing the "upward accountability" of grantees to funders, these conversations should also discuss the "downward accountability" of funders to grantees. At a minimum, it would help to create an atmosphere of less fear and a greater sense of flexibility and experimentation toward achieving grant objectives.

Finally, it should be noted that the soil in which healthy community initiatives are planted is not equally fertile in all counties or regions. Our interviews suggest that ComPAC faced many obstacles not of its own making, including an entrenched and sometimes unsupportive political establishment, an identity and future that will be strongly influenced by correctional institutions, and a limited communications infrastructure. These very conditions are of course the reason foundation funds are critically needed, but change comes very slowly. More attention is needed to the ways in which local grantees can be supported and celebrated for the important and difficult tasks at which they have been set.

APPENDIX. Evaluators' Assessment of ComPAC Strategic Choices (originally appended to the second site visit evaluation report, October, 1998).

Framing and Discussing Options

“To be comfortable with the (Healthy Community) model, one must be tolerant of ambiguity and comfortable with chaos.”

From our conversations with individuals and the responses of participants in the October 13 ComPAC/HCI leadership meeting it appears that the question to be answered is not whether ComPAC should continue after the end of California Endowment funding, but in what direction. A number of auxiliary questions—e.g., who should decide? what form should ComPAC take?—have been suggested above. The following are three different perspectives on this issue based on what we have heard from Lassen County informants. We suggest that each be the subject of thorough deliberation, with adequate opportunity for expressing and listening to what folks see as the positives and negatives of that option, before moving to consider the next.² Only after all three are discussed should there be any attempt to identify common ground—the things that folks value and/or are willing to live with, recognizing that nothing is perfect.

The three options presented below seem to us to cover the range of alternatives we have heard expressed by ComPAC participants. They also mirror different approaches identified in a recent review of healthy community projects from around the U.S. and abroad.³ Your discussion may uncover new ideas, or ways of combining the best elements of these options in new ways. Needless to say, we espouse none of the three but believe they may be useful in identifying features that the group as a whole wishes to incorporate.

The Choices

Option 1. Reinventing Citizenship

“A traditional locality views citizens as consumers of services...A Healthy City has a different view of the citizen; it sees him or her as a partner with the community.”

Background: Basic to all the Healthy Community Initiatives is a renewal of civic activism that is evidenced by widespread interest and involvement in community efforts to improve the health and well-being of its residents. Without a resurgence of citizen

² The Kettering Foundation's model for conducting “public issue forums” might be a useful approach to conducting this type of discussion. Whether any particular model is used or not, the key is to approach the options in a way that grants legitimacy (“OK”-ness) to alternative points of view.

³ Doug Clark, “Healthy Cities: A Model for Community Improvement,” *Public Management*, November 1998, 4-8. The italicized quotes are derived from Clark's article.

interest, none of the HCIs will adequately capture the dreams of the population; without broad participation, no HCI-initiated activity can achieve its full potential.

Proposed Action: Concentrate ComPAC's efforts in the next year on organizing informal neighborhood discussions to consider the status and implications of Lassen County as a healthy community. From these discussions create a 'healthy community agenda.' Develop an education/fact-finding strategy for neighborhoods to use to validate suggestions for improved community well-being. Share results among neighborhoods. Encourage neighborhood ideas on how to achieve the desired results; organize projects on which neighborhoods work together to build their dreams. Celebrate as success whatever stage of progress is achieved.

Pros: Currently the burden of defining and promoting healthy community goals falls on the shoulders of a relatively small number of persons who are already involved in many Lassen County organizations and programs. By garnering grassroots participation from neighborhoods outside as well as within Susanville a county-wide perspective can be gained, reflecting additional stakeholders other than the community leaders currently involved. While some neighborhoods may have existing mechanisms for gathering community inputs, in others the staging of informal discussions may set a precedent for continuing public talk. Further, the involvement of local citizens in fact-finding to 'validate' the need for suggested improvements is a learning-by-doing mechanism for developing life and leadership skills. The tasks could be shared among many segments of the population, from school children to retirees, creating greater sense of place and community. Achieving a sense of accomplishment from even one success is likely to engender enthusiasm for subsequent activism.

Cons: Sounds great, but no one will come. Residents don't get involved now in familiar activities; they're not likely to show up for something 'different.' Even if local folks did develop a healthy community agenda, the powers that be won't pay it any attention. And local communities can't do much without support from the local power structure and the funding sources to which they provide access. At best, this is likely to be one more instance of talking about, not doing.

Option 2. **Community Planning**

“Healthy Cities are more focused on identifying community resources rather than on dwelling on community needs.”

Background: ComPAC was formed to serve the whole community as a planning and advisory council, bridging existing and emerging programs, directing community attention to the nature and importance of a healthy community. It was not intended to be just another agency, with its own program competing for community resources. Its abiding mission is to promote community well-being; advising staff of any programs, directing attention to what other programs are doing, and finding synergies between individuals and among collective efforts.

Proposed Action: ComPAC should become a forum in which one community program or planning effort is showcased each month, with opportunity for community learning about what is happening currently and what is planned. The discussion should point out ways in which other efforts might provide mutual support and benefits. The thrust of each showcase would be up to the staff of the effort being presented that month, with suggestions from the ComPAC program committee. Surrounding the showcase would be a short sharing session (with printed matter available for those interested in details) and opportunity for networking over coffee and dessert. Holding the forum in the evening would make it more accessible to persons whose jobs do not allow them to participate in the daytime. It should be billed as a 'fun' learning activity, not just another meeting, with emphasis on meeting and socializing with fellow members of the community. Minimal structure would be required; a program committee with members serving a limited term would schedule the showcases and arrange the sessions. Other than tasks performed by the program committee, ComPAC would have no decision-making responsibilities; its budget requirements would be very small, perhaps met by voluntary 'coffee cup' contributions of meeting participants.

Pros: A healthy community is one in which interaction among contributors, beneficiaries, movers, shapers, and interested bystanders occurs frequently in a friendly, expanding, positive, and constructive atmosphere. A continuing theme (such as “How can each program and each member of the community enhance the health and well-being of Lassen County?”) will be an organizing principle, enlarging perspectives on what a healthy community can mean. By holding the monthly forums in different locations throughout the year attention will be drawn to the diversity of Lassen's people and programs--an education in itself. Serving a short term on the program committee is an opportunity for new faces and fresh ideas, avoiding burnout and developing new leadership. This is not a high-budget or high time commitment endeavor, so folks could afford to be involved. While the forums may provide access to local officials, and are an opportunity for citizens to articulate their preferences, they are not viewed as occasions for politicians to attempt to influence the public.

Cons: This is just one more talk session. There is no assurance that this will generate coordinated action, or that the current view of agencies (or citizens, for that matter) will be expanded, or that this will engage citizen interest. How does this contribute to community planning, other than fulfilling a requirement for public hearing? Who will hear? Will anyone listen? Would there be a promise of opportunity for greater citizen involvement in any of the program or planning efforts showcased? Is there any accountability for folks who talk about resource sharing or coordinated efforts to show real attempts to make it happen--and if it gets that far, to examine results?

Option 3. Focus on Action Projects

“For those communities that have bogged down in circular ‘planning to plan’ efforts, direct action in the form of an early win-win solution for multiple parties can be the first step.”

Background: ComPAC's Healthy Community Initiatives identify and encourage a broad array of possible action projects. ComPAC needs to provide participants with a sense that their contributed energy is creating a valuable return on their investment. Where there is high energy to pursue a particular healthy community direction, it currently is not clear which initiative group's goals/indicators it addresses, or what advantage there is in undertaking a project under the aegis of ComPAC. For some who have applied for and received ComPAC mini-grants, ComPAC requirements seem over-zealous. Furthermore, how the goals of the projects fit within the HCI structure is ambiguous. For example, the "Baby, Think It Over" project is claimed as a major effort by the Strong Families initiative, and is equally supported as a thrust under the Quality Education initiative. Purchase of the baby simulators is a Soroptimist project. All agree that it is worthwhile, yet ComPAC's relationship to the project is ambiguous.

Proposed Action: ComPAC should function as an incubator of healthy community projects. With a small staff and elected Board, it would seek foundation funding to support its office facilities and information access (Internet, other current information sources) and to assist new projects with technical assistance, start-up office space, and small planning grants. The ComPAC staff would be available to suggest resources for help to persons interested in starting up new programs, and would maintain a resource file for start-up programs. In addition, ComPAC would convene a semi-annual community forum (with broad public participation) to review proposals for a healthy community planning grant, offer suggestions for program enhancement and support, and endorse worthy ideas; and discuss progress reports of previous awards, with emphasis on lessons learned, challenges and opportunities encountered, and plans for next steps.

ComPAC should support one or two new multi-initiative proposals each year with small planning grants, news coverage and promotion, technical assistance in project development, and access to information on funding sources and similar programs in other communities. A proposal for ComPAC support would include a brief statement of the problem to be addressed; description of its potential contribution to the current goals of the Healthy Community Initiatives; desired outcomes and indicators that would be used to assess progress toward those outcomes; its intended directions and activities; and the time period that would be required to demonstrate its viability and accomplishments.

Pros: This would give ComPAC a clear identity as a healthy community incubator, without requiring that it maintain all the initiative groups. Its appeal is to projects that are spawned outside traditional agencies, providing them with a temporary home and public visibility. It can function as a broker, finding temporary support for testing new ideas, and carry-on support for projects that complete their planning and demonstrate that program ideas are feasible. Funding for ComPAC would be sought from major foundations interested in capacity-building for self-help social planning in rural communities. Few staff would be needed, but each would have to be well qualified in terms of knowledge of local resources and of program planning and evaluation skills/tools. Board members would, as their time permits, set up resource clinics/consultation hours to aid leaders of potential projects to develop proposals and

plans. The requirements for proposals would themselves be a tool for promoting community learning.

Cons: This proposal would devote ComPAC's resources to a limited focus on projects, rather than on holistic thinking about healthy communities. Rather than encouraging a natural evolution of community initiative, supporting a few projects that meet specified criteria locks ComPAC into a narrow range of effort. Why would anyone choose to serve on the Board if they're in effect working for others' program ideas? What achievements would ComPAC promise a foundation? What would be its outcomes and indicators? And who would evaluate its work?

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ADVISORY COUNCIL (ComPAC)
Perspectives Gleaned From Interviews with
ComPAC Participants and Community Leaders

Prepared by Cathy Lemp, Research Associate

I. Introduction

Interviews provide a valuable gauge/measure of a program's effectiveness, enabling the evaluators to gather information on a broad range of issues across a broad spectrum of individuals. In-person or telephone interviews are more flexible than written surveys because they permit researchers to pursue interesting subtopics that emerge during the course of the discussion. We chose to conduct telephone interviews rather than in-person interviews for reasons of economy and efficiency. The more people we interview, the better our product, and we could talk to far more people over the phone than we could in person, given the limitations of our budget. Telephone interviews are less intrusive into people's busy lives as well. To guard against avoidable bias, a researcher who had had no previous contact with the project conducted the interviews.

Sample. We conducted 69 interviews with two sets of people: those who had taken part in some aspect of ComPAC (35) and a separate set of community leaders (34) who, to the best of our knowledge, had not. We obtained the names of the "ComPAC group" from lists of people who had served on the board, served on the Healthy Community Initiatives, received a mini-grant, or added their names to a community meeting sign-in sheet. To reduce that list (over 70 names) to a workable number, we placed the names in alphabetical order and divided it in two by taking every second name. Then we flipped a coin to determine which list to use for the interviews.

The majority of the names of the "Community group" were given to us by ComPAC administration. We asked for a selection of "movers and shakers" in the community who had had little or no known contact with ComPAC. Breakdowns of the interviews follow:

ComPAC participants (35)

Community leaders (34)

Nature of participation in ComPAC:

21	HCI group only
7	Board and HCI group
3	Staff
2	Community meeting only
2	Board only

Affiliation:

11	Public agency	8	Public Agency
8	Health	3	Health
6	Non-profit organization	2	Non-profit organization
4	Community member	4	Faith community
4	Business	10	Business
3	Education	5	Education
1	Local government	2	Local government

Residence:

22	Susanville	22	Susanville
8	Other areas of Lassen County	10	Other areas of Lassen County
5	Outside Lassen County	2	Outside Lassen County

Gender:

27	Female	14	Female
7	Male	20	Male

On average, ComPAC participants had lived in Lassen County for 14 years (range was from 1 to 48 years). Eleven of the 35 received mini-grants. For the community leaders interviewed, average number of years in Lassen was 21 (ranging from 1-62 years).

Protocols. We prepared two sets of questions: ten for the ComPAC group and six for the Community group. Three key questions were asked of everyone:

1. *What does 'a healthy community' mean to you?*
2. *How is Lassen County doing in those terms?*
3. *Is there anything about Lassen County that particularly concerns you?*

We also asked where they live in Lassen County, how long they have lived there, and what their work is. The complete protocols are attached at the end of this report.

II. Perspectives on ComPAC Efforts

Our interviews of the ComPAC group garnered both positive and negative evaluations of ComPAC's success in three areas: networking, leadership development, and promoting a vision of a healthy community. Summaries of interview results will be presented here, beginning in each case with the affirmative comments.

1. Networking: Opinions of ComPAC's success in attempting to foster networking among community groups appear to be divided into two camps: many people who work in formally constituted entities—e.g., county agencies—found ComPAC's "umbrella" to be extremely effective, while many people who attempted to join ComPAC either as self-motivated citizens or as unsponsored members of private organizations were disappointed in ComPAC's perceived inattention to their needs and points of view.

Agency members' reasons for satisfaction included the following:

- ComPAC gave all agencies the chance to meet in person, exchange information, and avoid duplication of services.
- Agency members could take advantage of their time together to organize and articulate new ideas, bouncing them off people with like interests and interlocking responsibilities.
- Individuals new to the community or to their positions could use ComPAC meetings to inform themselves about existing programs and resources and could make important contacts.
- ComPAC meetings afforded an excellent forum for acquainting other agencies with new programs that might affect their areas of interest.
- Above all, ComPAC forged a true community of service providers, putting faces to names and enabling vital networks to develop and branch throughout the county.

A measure of dissatisfaction was expressed by a number of community members who did not enjoy agency sponsorship:

- People whose workplaces didn't pay them to attend ComPAC meetings often could not get away during work hours and so were forced to miss most meetings.
- Individuals who lacked agency training and endurance were unable to tolerate long meetings that appeared to accomplish few tangible results.
- Those unaccustomed to the techniques of commanding attention in meetings often felt ignored and ineffectual; many stopped attending for this reason.
- People from outlying areas observed that ComPAC's focus and attention seemed to center almost exclusively on the Susanville area.

Respondents from both camps agreed that certain phases of ComPAC's development and operation were frustrating, citing in particular several incidents of open disagreement among Board members and the disruptive effects of serial executive directorships.

2. Leadership: Whether respondents construed our questions about leadership to mean ComPAC actively developed new leaders or enabled them to emerge,

this is an area that received high marks among agency personnel—one enthusiastic individual called ComPAC “a training ground for leadership”—and a few negative responses from other participants.

Positive observations included:

- The HCI groups with their co-leaders give twice as many people the opportunity to assume leadership roles.
- Each person in an HCI group is an expert in a different area and can thus become a leader when their specialty is called upon.
- When members of HCI groups return to their home organizations, they bring fresh information back with them, casting them into positions of new prominence in their own arenas.
- In a small community like Lassen County, it sometimes seems that all the same people do everything because no one else will; ComPAC has provided a larger group of people an opportunity to emerge and get comfortable with accepting leadership responsibilities.
- Since many agency people deployed to attend ComPAC meetings fall into the category of middle management rather than top management, the HCIs function as a way to educate these future leaders both on issues of importance to the community and on good leadership techniques.
- Also, ComPAC brought in people to talk about leadership skills and working together; a number of people thought that professional development was really helpful.

People who didn’t find ComPAC particularly effective in expanding the pool of community leaders tended in general to be tepid rather than negative in their responses.

3. Healthy community vision: Here again, ComPAC received mostly positive evaluations from participants:

- Setting up the vision was the best thing ComPAC did, several people said.
- ComPAC gets high marks for getting community discussion going about what the community wants to be.
- Few people we spoke with had ever considered what a healthy community might be before ComPAC raised the question; now many key players in disparate areas of the community are able to articulate the concept clearly to themselves and to one another.
- ComPAC has provided a means of turning abstract concepts and ideas into everyday, achievable terms.
- A result of ComPAC’s effort has been to build more community spirit and more community identification.

Several people expressed their feeling that ComPAC is really just getting ready to take off, now that the details are worked out, the structure is in place, and the programs are being developed. “They just need some more time,” one respondent said.

III. Community/Lassen County

A. Defining a healthy community: All those interviewed were asked what a healthy community meant to them. A content analysis of the responses revealed the following areas as those deemed most integral to a healthy community. The number indicates how many people mentioned each element at least once in their reply.

- 34 **sense of community** (works together/pulls together/collaborates/sense of community volunteerism/everyone's voice heard and contribution sought/sense of ownership/community pride)
- 21 **sense of personal safety** (low crime, feel safe at night, low family violence, etc.)
- 16 **quality health care**
- 16 **educational opportunities** (including K-12, higher education, lifelong learning)
- 15 **employment opportunities** (stability, diversification, career opportunities, etc.)
- 14 **mental/emotional/spiritual well-being**
- 13 **clean environment** (water and air quality, etc.)

To allow readers to get a better feel for the deep feelings evoked by this question, we have included condensed summaries from the actual transcripts in an attachment at the close of this report. Also attached are suggestions for questions that ComPAC might use if it wished to conduct a more comprehensive survey of community opinion (see *Framework for a Community Wellness Assessment*).

B. Lassen County: During our association with ComPAC and the Lassen Fitness Project, we have been learning how unique a place Lassen County really is. Almost isolated from the rest of California in many ways, it retains the proud sense of independence its original founders brought with them to the high desert. In many ways, Lassen County has not relinquished its “frontier” mentality and glories in its natural beauty and the challenges of its great outdoors and tough winters.

Yet, whether it likes it or not, Lassen County has been the recipient of two large state penitentiaries and the corresponding flood of new people to the community has brought a kind of culture shock in its wake—for both old-timers and newcomers. Change has been rudely accelerated in Lassen County, leaving many citizens alarmed and unhappy. Still, with change comes opportunity, and many community members are working to incorporate the positive aspects of the new reality into Lassen County’s way of life.

The people we interviewed look at life in Lassen County from many different perspectives, depending in part on their length of time in the county and what they do for a living. When we asked them to rate Lassen County in terms of how healthy a community it provides for its citizens, and asked what their greatest concern for the county was, we received the following responses:

- 1. Current rating:** Of those interviewed, 36 gave Lassen County positive ratings as a healthy community, 26 gave the county negative ratings, and 7 were neutral. When asked where they would put Lassen on a scale of 1-10, with one being poor and 10 great, most responses fell near

the middle of the scale. Most seemed to feel that things were generally OK, but that there was considerable room to grow.

2. Areas of concern: Lassen County citizens had a number of community concerns in common. Major concerns to a majority of respondents include:

- The youth (need for guidance, recreation, and jobs for them) Many people were troubled about the lack of recreational and employment opportunities for Lassen County teenagers. Although generally satisfied with the scholastic performance of the teens, they worried about the incidence of crime, abuse of alcohol and drugs, and teenage pregnancy.
- The prisons (negative repercussions of their presence) The economic advantages to the community of a stable payroll provided by the two state prisons is more than offset for many people by the influx of newcomers to the county, many of whom have little interest in or attachment to the community. The impact upon the county's infrastructure of the population increase, though worrisome, is considered less disruptive by most of the people we interviewed than the impact upon the social fabric of the community. Many people are saddened that their county is known throughout the west as a "prison county."
- The economy (lack of diversification, limited tax base) One Lassen County native pointed out that there were five lumber mills in operation when he was growing up; now there is one and the forests are effectively closed. Ranching has dwindled as well. The federal and state governments provide most of the jobs in the county now, which reduces the county's tax base to the point where services of all kinds are being stretched thin.
- Education. (overcrowded high school, college politics, underfunded library) The physical plant at the high school came in for special mention. An inability to obtain county consensus on a solution to the problem of the decaying, overcrowded high school has repeatedly crippled efforts to relocate or rebuild this facility. It is presently a major impediment to traffic in downtown Susanville and is considered unsuitable by many parents. The Community College also was mentioned frequently as a source of concern. Although its academic standing and sports program are generally considered good, the "old guard" that has been in control of administration and policy-making is resisting efforts to update and streamline curricula and teaching practices. The new administrator is said to be bringing some positive changes to the college. Another locus of education is the County Library, whose adult literacy program and adolescent health section were assisted by ComPAC mini-grants. The library's resources are quite limited, however, and it is unable to pursue special projects like these without outside assistance.
- County health care. (mental health, primary care, specialty care) Perhaps due in part to recent media interest, the Lassen County mental health department has become a

growing concern to many of the people that we talked to, particularly those with some affiliation with the health field. Programs are considered poorly designed and implemented, high staff turnover reduces continuity and effectiveness, and charges of disinterest and lack of care for clients have been made. Although primary care is available in the community, people who live at a distance from Susanville often experience real difficulties in accessing it. Many people noted that there are ongoing problems in attracting specialists to Lassen County on a permanent basis; at present, some specialties are rotated through on weekly or monthly cycles. A number of respondents regularly drove to Reno, Redding, or Sacramento for specialty care.

- Local government. (old families still control the county) A number of those interviewed expressed concerns over the narrowness of local political leaders, pointing to a “good old boy network” that held political power. A relatively small number of institutions hold most of the power in the community. Many felt that political debate is fairly narrowly constricted, with not much effort to seek out or hear new voices.

IV. Lessons Learned

We asked the people we interviewed how they thought a community could best go about designing a healthy community project. Their responses are presented in the next section. Both the ComPAC group and the Community group offered strong opinions about how a healthy community project should be approached, designed, and implemented. Although some respondents would make few changes to the course ComPAC has taken thus far, most welcomed the opportunity to propose new directions or to reemphasize points that ComPAC may have considered earlier but may not have continued to pursue.

Among the suggestions offered were the following:

Be all-inclusive. If a project bills itself as community-based and announces its intention to define and work toward creating a healthy community, a number of respondents maintained that it should invite representatives of every group in the community to take part in *creating* the community vision. They felt that it is not sufficient to include certain groups only after the project’s mission has already been defined. Although no one we talked with argued with ComPAC’s vision for a healthy community, some people suggested that community buy-in would be enhanced if the whole community felt a sense of ownership toward the project.

We learned that some community members were concerned about ComPAC’s apparent omission of important segments of the community. Particularly conspicuous by their absence in ComPAC’s roster of organizations are Lassen County’s churches. Not only does this leave unrepresented a significant element of the community’s spiritual health but also it runs directly counter to ComPAC’s own resolve to eliminate duplication of programs and services. We learned that a number of the churches are working very successfully with some of the same problems ComPAC hopes to tackle. Apparently some early misunderstandings were responsible for the established faith community’s

withdrawal from ComPAC, but a genuine effort to identify and repair any difficulties would benefit the people of the community.

Other groups that community members thought had been overlooked to a greater or lesser degree are the Native American community, agriculture, the elderly, traditional law enforcement, and members of the Correctional Officers' families.

Set project boundaries and guidelines early on. If firm, official parameters are not set up to define the areas and types of endeavors the project can embark upon, members who have made assumptions in good faith may get offended, frustrated, and discouraged. Likewise, many people felt that working groups like the HCIs can lose membership if they are not given some general direction and goals. One of the complaints heard most frequently was that community meetings dragged, that nothing seemed to get done, that people wondered why they were there -- until some firm guidance was provided. Several HCI members reported a surge of satisfaction and efficiency that galvanized the group once they had a tangible project to work on. From many quarters we heard the same advice: Focus, focus, focus.

Reach out—and then reach out again. Although many people told us they believed that ComPAC never intentionally discouraged any interested individuals who wanted to attend its community meetings, they also felt that ComPAC was so heavily agency-driven that it lost track of other components of the community. The perception of many of the Community group of respondents was that ComPAC was of and for health service professionals. Some people on the ComPAC interview list noted that non-agency members often seemed to feel out of place at HCI meetings among the professionals. When these members fell away, no particular effort was apparently made to find out why they left and to encourage them to return. One non-agency member's efforts to determine which HCI group was closest to her own interests sounded like someone trying to leap onto a moving merry-go-round. She recommended that would-be participants be assisted to find the HCI group most aligned with their interests and be given a bit of initial support and coaching until they got their bearings.

Members of the community group of interviewees often mentioned having received letters or meeting announcements—which they typically disregarded—but no one spoke of receiving any follow-up phone calls. A member of a nonprofit organization said that a healthy community project should try to reach out more to nonprofits in the community, not just to the county agencies. Several people felt that more efforts should be made to extend an organization like ComPAC well beyond the county seat, particularly in a rural county.

One of the most isolated groups in Lassen County, we learned through our interviews, may well be the spouses of Correctional Officers and other prison officials. ComPAC could perform a real service by involving these individuals in community endeavors for mutual benefit.

Replicate, replicate! Following the outreach theme, several people suggested bringing ComPAC out into the county by organizing similar groups in the smaller communities. Others proposed developing ComPAC-based projects in the schools, with

the goal of getting more youth involved with their community and fostering their leadership skills.

Make communication a primary goal. Some of the people we talked to who have been involved with ComPAC said that it would be helpful to have better lines of communication established between the board of directors, the administrative staff, and the HCIs; between the HCIs themselves; and even within the HCIs. ComPAC members often told us they didn't really know if ComPAC was holding community or HCI meetings any more or not, but they knew they hadn't been invited.

Better communication with the rest of the community was also advised quite often. People who were involved in ComPAC wanted the word spread more effectively in order to spark a broader community response; people who were not involved in ComPAC ran the gamut from never having heard of it to having extremely skewed perceptions of its nature and purpose. The quarterly newspaper insert was the best recognized and most enthusiastically received of any public relations or advertising strategy mentioned.

Select staff with great care. Some members of ComPAC were more inconvenienced than others by "having to start all over" each time an executive director was replaced, but nearly all the ones we interviewed mentioned some degree of frustration at least once during our conversation. Most people liked all the executive directors and thought they were all highly skilled professionals; some people felt that there were personality and communication problems between the board and the administrative staff; few understood the problems and all felt that the situation should have been handled better. A number of respondents thought that the problems might have been prevented through more careful selection.

Find a descriptive, distinctive name. A community organization needs to name itself something people can identify, we were told over and over. ComPAC members laughed about having to explain that they were not talking about a computer company, and the majority of the Community interviewees pronounced the word as though it were spelled C-o-m-p-a-c-t. Several people suggested finding a name that is brief but self-descriptive so that it could become easily recognized in the community. One person remarked tartly that everything doesn't have to be an acronym; he would just like to understand what it meant.

INTERVIEW FORM -- LASSEN PROJECT
ComPAC Group

INTRODUCTION

I'm Cathy Lemp and I'm working with the UC Davis Evaluation Team -- David Campbell and Joan Wright -- to provide an independent perspective for interviews with ComPAC participants. I have a few questions to ask you today about your experiences with ComPAC and your reflections upon those experiences.

Before we begin -- may I tape this conversation so that we don't lose anything you say? Only the Evaluation Team will hear your responses.

1. Could you tell me, please, the dates, nature, and tenure of your affiliation with ComPAC?
2. Where do you live in Lassen County? How long have you lived here? What is your job?
3. What, in your opinion, have been ComPAC's greatest contributions? Who has benefitted from ComPAC?
4. ComPAC was envisioned as a "collaborative of collaboratives" to promote effective networking. How successful has it been? Would you recommend this approach to other communities? What would you suggest they do differently?
5. Another ComPAC goal was to expand the pool of skilled and motivated community leaders. How successful has it been in this? Is this an important goal in this county?
6. A major thrust of ComPAC was to promote the vision of a healthy community; has it been successful in this area? Would you recommend this goal to other communities?
7. The six or seven Healthy Community Initiative groups ComPAC organized -- what were they set up to do? How well did they work out? Is that approach something you would recommend?
8. ComPAC and Lassen Fitness collaborated on funding this evaluation and other healthy community projects. How did that partnership work out?
9. With 20:20 hindsight, what advice would you give another community interested in starting a healthy community project?
10. What does "a healthy community" mean to you? Anything else?
11. How is Lassen County doing in those terms?
12. Is there anything about Lassen County that particularly concerns you?
13. If you received a mini-grant,
 - a. What were the objectives of your mini-grant? Were you able to meet your objectives (specific indicators of accomplishment, types of evidence gathered, etc.)?
 - b. How has your project contributed to the larger goals of ComPAC?

Thank you for taking part in this survey. You've been very helpful.

INTERVIEW FORM -- LASSEN PROJECT
Community Group

INTRODUCTION

I'm Cathy Lemp and I work for the University of California at Davis. At present, I'm working with a UC Davis team involved in a Lassen County project to promote healthy communities. Your name came up when we began compiling a list of "movers and shakers" in the community, and I'd like to ask you a few general questions about your perception of what a "healthy community" is in general and of how Lassen County is doing in this regard. Would it be possible to make an appointment for a brief telephone interview at your convenience?

Before we begin -- may I tape this conversation so that we don't lose anything you say? Only the UCD team (two professors) will have any access to your responses.

1. Have you ever heard of ComPAC (the Community Planning and Advisory Council)? How did you happen to hear of it? What do you know about it?
2. Have you heard of the Lassen Fitness Project? How? Could you say how Lassen Fitness has contributed to the healthy community idea?
3. Where do you live in Lassen County? How long have you lived here? What is your work?
4. What does "a healthy community" mean to you? Anything else?
5. How is Lassen County doing in those terms?
6. Is there anything about Lassen County that particularly concerns you?

Thank you for taking part in this survey. You've been very helpful.

What is a “Healthy Community”?
Selected Statements from Lassen County Citizens

- One that you’re pleased in, one that you want to live in. You want to stay there, that you’re a part. That your voice can be heard and appreciated.
- One where there’s balance, where there’s an opportunity to do a wide variety of activities. A community’s self-image has a lot to do with a healthy community. So does confidence in their economic stability. Safety is important; so is a clean environment.
- It’s just not a linear thing. Kids have to be healthy, home life has to be healthy. It has to start at home with the family. Kids need to have something to do. And they all need to work together. Supporting their youth is the main thing, *and* their elderly. That’s the mainstay of a healthy community.
- A healthy community is one that isn’t just necessarily talking about medical health, it’s talking about health as it relates to the open exchange of information and ideas, and resolution to any and *all* problems, societal problems, whether they be medical health issues, mental health issues, or whether they be the wholesome environment in which we live as it relates to other asocial behavior, from domestic violence to crime to education -- everything that makes what they perceive to be a wholesome environment and everything that goes into that, not only for ourselves but for our kids, and all other members of the community from the aged to the very young. And making sure that they have an appropriate opportunity to experience life to its fullest extent.
- It means community buy-in, community involvement, parental involvement, just the involvement of *everyone* as far as positive things. More resources for adults, children; working together in a positive networking form.
- One of the things that’s really important is the word “community.” That people identify with the place that they live and that they have a willingness to give of their time and their talent to make the community a better place to live. And that can be done through a wide variety of ways -- whether you coach a soccer team or whether you work in a church or whether you volunteer at school or whether you sit on the City Council or the Sanitary District board or you go to public meetings . . . it really needs to have *that* sense of community. It needs to be a place where you have a network set up for people to get help, whether it’s spiritual or emotional or physical, and would work like a big family, where there’s good communication a sense that if you’re down and out and you’re having trouble in any area of your life that there’s someplace that you can go and get some care.
- She would start by saying a healthy community is a place where there is freedom of expression, freedom of access, and freedom from fear -- i.e., personal safety. That would be a good way to start.
- It has to start with a person, a self, a self-worth of the community that each person is valuable and has a contribution to make to society. That needs to filter into the families so that there is not only physical health but also emotional health and that their health is a complete health, filtering out to the extended families and then to the community, the schools, the work place, their recreation. A community where people would feel safe and comfortable and want to live, where they want to raise their children and continue in a comfortable, safe atmosphere.

- One where the people who live in it are proud that they live there, that their needs are met, that they're safe, that their kids are safe -- that they just feel safe and secure, and that they value their community enough that they want to take care of it. They want to take care of the land, they want to take care of the people in it, and they want to get back to it.
- A healthy community is reflective of the people who live in it. It provides for community members and takes care of their needs, assesses the need of the community and follows through with that, whether it be health care, looking at their schools, entertainment, culture, arts -- just a real well-rounded community that is educated.
- Healthy community does not just mean being physically healthy. It means that there's a whole being: you've got your mental, your spiritual, your physical -- and it means more than just health, it means working together as a community. That we're all bound together, headed in a positive direction, where we want to benefit our community, not take from it. To be a healthy community is for us to establish ownership and to be proud of our community, so that our kids can in turn follow that too. So it's not just affecting the adults, it's paving a way for our youth and our future, to be able to walk through.
- A healthy community is one that has organizations that work together to benefit the community. A healthy community is one that takes charge of the community itself and its development, and that the people as a whole have an understanding of how they want their community to develop rather than just letting outsiders come in and exploit it. And having people that work together in all aspects of the community, in the community's life, so that "we can raise healthy, happy families."
- One where people are safe, they have a safe place to live in (and safety encompasses many things such as drugs and violence, those types of things), have opportunities for a good education, optimal opportunities for health, being able to work together, good opportunities for everybody to grow to the best of their potential and everybody helping each other out, and having a good time about it, and appreciating and enjoying what they all have.
- It means a lot of things. Spreading the word of physically being healthy, emotionally healthy, spiritually healthy -- spreading that word. Also, collaboration. People volunteering and really wanting to put their time into little projects around the community.
- It means that the basics are covered. It's a safe community, it's clean -- the water's clean, the parks are clean (not only is there not trash everywhere, but they're clean of negativity). That every aspect of the community is acknowledged, valued, affirmed -- whether you're an elder or a 14-year-old or a single mom or someone dealing with depression or alcoholism or a newborn baby. That whatever it is that you're going to need to be the best human being that you can be is going to be there. And also with an environmental awareness: a respect for trees, and not polluting your community, and taking time to plan a well-thought-out transportation system and bike paths and a trail system.
- A healthy community means that there are services available to everyone who needs services, everyone who has some kind of a need, that their needs are met. And that there are structures in place and channels of communication open to support the population of the community. And that there is a focus and a feeling of good will toward people that need help, and that the

politics of the community and the pathology of the community doesn't act as a deterrent to providing services, that everyone is pulling in the same direction.

- People that are aware of the effect of their surroundings on them, people that are interested in better health and fitness. And a positive community, too, in all aspects -- mentally and physically. A community that's free of as many negative effects as possible.
- A community where every individual is recognized for their contribution to the community, and where it is a safe community, and a community with ongoing job and economic opportunities.
- He believes that a healthy community is one that understands the concept of being a family. In other words, everybody in this family may not be healthy. But everybody in the family is a relative. They're Family. And you don't get to pick your family. But you have to love them... everybody needs to be loved, to be able to love, and everyone needs to have the sense that they are a person of value and worth.

Framework for a Community Wellness Assessment

Following is a draft presentation of a multi-phase community wellness assessment. We have broken it out into an initial general survey that can be followed up at intervals with more specific questions in various categories, several of which are provided as sample areas of interest. An approach like this could serve as a lead-in to a series of community forums – circulating the survey prior to holding the forum on a given issue – or as an adjunct to a series of single-purpose newspaper articles. In any case, the local newspaper is probably the most practical and least expensive means of distributing the surveys as inserts, accompanied, ideally, by an eye-catching article introducing and explaining the purpose of a wellness assessment.

The first page of this instrument is designed to be brief, easy to answer, and non-invasive to optimize the chances that it will be completed and returned. To improve the return rate still further, the survey can be printed on one side of a sheet of heavy paper with instructions, an explanation of its purpose, and ComPAC's address printed on the other side. The respondent needs only to fold this post-paid sheet once, tape or staple it, and drop it in the mail.

Subsequent surveys can be similarly designed and distributed, focusing the community's attention on one key area of life in Lassen County at a time. Various follow-up events or activities can be planned to take advantage of the momentum produced by community interest in the ongoing surveys, especially if the results are tabulated and published as soon after the survey has been administered as possible.

In this way, a community wellness assessment can be used both to gather and to impart information, engaging the community in a study of itself and raising the consciousness of its members to their surroundings and to each other.

Short form

Quality of life in Lassen County: on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is high, how would you rate the following in your community?

- Satisfaction with life overall
- A sense of personal safety
- Employment opportunities
- Recreation: enough to do for you and your kids
- Quality of schools
- Opportunities for lifelong learning
- Feeling a part of your community
- Clean air and water
- Interest in volunteer activities
- Diversity of entertainment opportunities
- Responsiveness of local government
- Quality of roads, parking, and other services
- Availability of health-related services
- Community's ability to work together
- A sense that everyone is cared for

Where do you live in Lassen County?

How long have you lived in Lassen County?

Are you married? Do you have children?

Are you a member of any community/fellowship/support group in Lassen County?
Which one?

“My pet peeve about Lassen County is _____.

“One community project I’d like to see is _____.

If you would like to talk to someone in more depth about any of these questions, please feel free to call us at 530-257-2440.

Extended survey (topics could include, but not be limited to, the following)

Children

- What are the ages of your children?
- What schools do they attend?
- Are your children getting a good education? (1-10)
- What activities are your children involved in?
- Would your children be interested in joining supervised community groups after school and on weekends?

Recreation

- What is your favorite kind of recreation?
- Is it offered here in Lassen County?
- Do you belong to any clubs or other organizations? Which ones?
- Are you interested in art? Music? Community theater? Would you attend a showing/concert/production here in Lassen County?

Communication

- Do you read a daily paper? Which one?
- Do you listen to the radio daily? Which stations?
- Do you watch TV daily? Which channels?
- Do you read notices on bulletin boards? Where?

Health

- Do you currently have an active physical fitness program? (Walking, jogging, swimming, weight-training, yoga, martial arts, other)
- Are you overweight?
- Do you have a doctor at present?

Community action

- Do you do any kind of volunteer work? What/where?
- Would you be interested in spending a few hours a month serving your community in some capacity?
- If you thought family violence was an issue for a friend or neighbor, where would you suggest they go to seek help? (Police, doctor, pastor, community group, other)