

SOCIAL WEATHER

CREATING A CLIMATE WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES





WHY THE BARNES FAMILY FOUNDATION AND UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON POPULATION HEALTH INITIATIVE?

The Barnes Family Foundation has a strong and proven track record in the field of health and well-being. The Foundation also has a network of collaborators. Additionally, the Foundation is committed to improving community well-being through the Social Weather initiative and other well-being promotion projects.

The UW Population Health Initiative team has expertise convening interdisciplinary stakeholders to conduct population health research and to develop tools that make understanding and leveraging population health data easier. Also, as a leading research institution, the University of Washington is well positioned to identify relevant data needed to accurately measure social determinants and community health and then translate the data into usable formats for community use.

There is a growing trend across the world where countries are beginning to create policies and allocate resources based on how their communities are faring, rather than considering solely economic growth. Yet, there has been little progress in the availability and quality of population health data to support decision-making and priority-setting to improve well-being.

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO MEASURING AND ASSESSING POPULATION HEALTH AND WELL-BEING – THE SOCIAL WEATHER INITIATIVE

The Barnes Family Foundation (“Foundation”) partnered with the University of Washington’s Population Health Initiative (UW PHI) team to develop the Social Weather initiative. The vision is to create a novel approach to measuring and assessing community well-being to support informed decision-making by communities and policymakers and guide their investment in and interventions to improve well-being outcomes. For public and non-profit organizations and agencies, policy makers and elected officials, Social Weather will be an online data platform and tool to assess comparative community well-being and to measure and identify specific areas of disparity. To date, the Foundation and UW PHI team have made progress in achieving the vision of providing communities with easy-to-use well-being data that supports informed decision-making.



Specific activities undertaken by the Foundation and UW PHI team include:

COMPLETED A DATA SOURCES LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

The team researched existing well-being measurement and assessment projects to identify the many factors that influence well-being and what readily available relevant data already exists.

DEVELOPED A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

The research and analysis effort revealed that few projects aimed at understanding and improving well-being included an underlying guiding framework which can make it difficult to distinguish the difference between well-being outcomes and the variables that impact well-being. Armed with this knowledge, the UW PHI team set out to develop a conceptual model for assessing community well-being, which prioritizes community strengths, social connections and social justice. This model provides a structure for selecting and categorizing indicators that are important to community well-being.

Once the UW PHI team established a framework for assessing community well-being, it operationalized the model into four domains of data categories and each category included subdomains and indicators. The UW PHI team developed each domain as a discrete category to help Social Weather users understand the types of factors that impact community well-being.

DOMAINS OF DATA CATEGORIES

Community Resources – This domain considers the tangible assets and characteristics of a community. Its subdomains include: physical and mental healthcare; housing and banking; education and extracurriculars; built environment and transportation; food and nutrition; and environment.

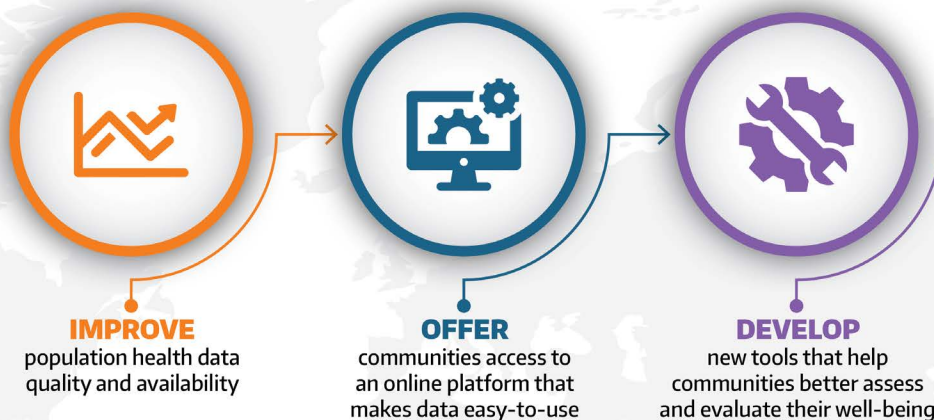
Opportunity – This domain considers an individual or household capacity to achieve goals. Its subdomains include: access to healthcare; economic opportunity; leisure and recreation.

Connection – This domain considers the characteristics of social and civic connection within a community. Its subdomains include: social connection; civic engagement and trust in institutions; and sense of belonging.

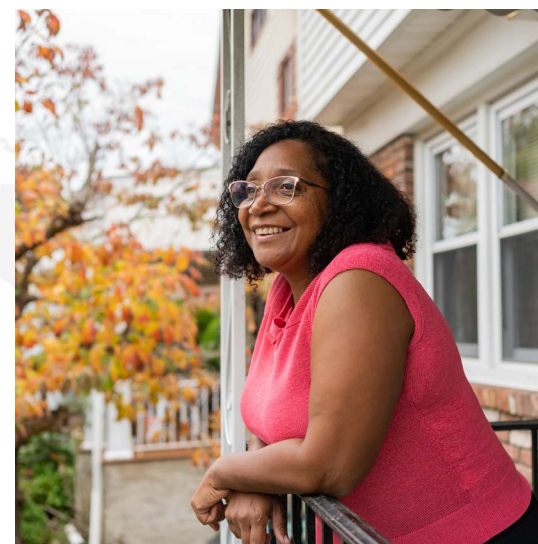
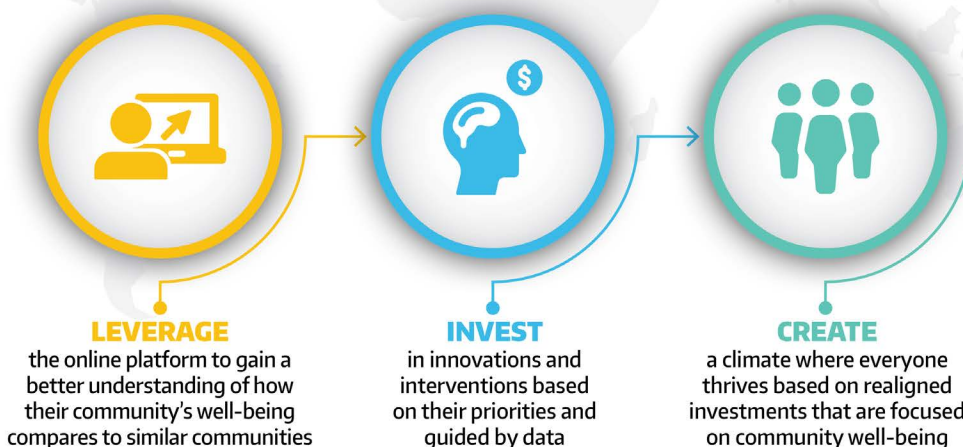
Structural Equity – This domain is an overarching one and considers the extent to which a community's systems and institutions are inequitable. Factors considered in this domain include: income inequality; incarceration rates; diversity in local government; racial residential segregation; laws and policies.

SOCIAL WEATHER AT A GLANCE

Goals for the Social Weather Initiative



Once Social Weather is launched, **COMMUNITIES** will be in a better position to:





CONDUCTED RESEARCH WITH COMMUNITIES

The UW PHI team recognized that many well-being measures are designed without input from community stakeholders and input from marginalized communities is particularly absent from academic research. To determine how different communities define and conceptualize well-being, the UW PHI team conducted qualitative research with several key communities to understand what concepts are most important to the well-being of their communities. The UW PHI team recruited participants primarily from marginalized, high-risk groups whose experiences are often not reflected in well-being measurement and assessment projects. In addition to research with key communities, the UW PHI team conducted qualitative research to obtain feedback and input from potential end-users of the Social Weather initiative, including local policymakers, non-profit staff and community leaders. Based on input from key communities and end-users, the UW PHI team revised its well-being model to better reflect the priorities and needs of communities.

DEVELOPED A PROTOTYPE DATA DASHBOARD AND WEBSITE TO TEST WITH COMMUNITIES

The UW PHI team developed a prototype Social Weather community well-being data dashboard and website, which we plan to test with communities and organizations to discern what information, tools and resources would be useful to support them in improving their communities' well-being. End-users of the Social Weather dashboard and website include local policymakers, non-profits and the public sector. These groups are likely to access well-being data and use it to implement interventions that will lead to improving the well-being of their communities.

Throughout the work described above, the UW PHI team has convened meetings with diverse stakeholders from different sectors and communities to gain their on-going input on the initiative.





NEXT STEPS IN LAUNCHING AND IMPLEMENTING THE SOCIAL WEATHER INITIATIVE

The Foundation and UW PHI team are excited to continue developing the Social Weather initiative in the coming years. The next steps of the initiative include:

1. Improving the quality and availability of well-being data for communities by identifying sources of untapped data and improving the granularity and timeliness of data to better measure well-being.
2. Creating an interactive platform that will make well-being data more accessible through interactive data visualizations and additional tools and resources to support communities in making data-driven decisions.
3. Incorporating novel tools that allow counties to compare their data to similar counties to develop a more nuanced assessment of where they are doing well and where they can most improve their well-being outcomes.

The Social Weather team knows that if this project is to achieve maximum success, it is imperative to collaborate with communities, academic partners and decision-makers. We look forward to working together as we embark on these next steps of the initiative.





POPULATION HEALTH INITIATIVE
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