

Introduction

On July 1, 2009, Forsyth Futures began its fourth year of operation. I want to thank all of you, board and staff, for the commitment and accomplishments that have made this past year a huge success. The following report is designed to give you a comprehensive look at what has been accomplished and a projection into next year and beyond. The work is addressed in the following four (4) Divisions:

- *Administrative*—provides the infrastructure and support for the programmatic work of Forsyth Futures by supporting resource development and ensuring efficient and effective organizational management.
- *Research*—conducting research, inclusive of data warehousing, that will contribute to the cross-community use of the indicators for information sharing, decision-making, priority-setting, and collaborative planning and action.
- *Collaborative*—leading, supporting or monitoring activities that develop and advance shared visions for Forsyth County's future.
- *Public Information*—informing the general community and specific populations within the community about issues related to the Forsyth Futures' Results Areas and the Indicators that define them.

Overview

Forsyth Futures began this work with a certain guiding expectation, that we would intentionally be proactive in assisting the community in achieving the results of having a place where our residents are: 1) economically self-sufficient; 2) engaged in their community; 3) achieving educational success; 4) mentally and physically healthy; and 5) safe where they live, work, and play. During our history, these expectations and promises have been consistent and our work has been directed to those results. The tools we have employed and deployed have been: community engagement activities, networking events with the professional community related to our Results Areas, Results Teams, Action Teams, Making Progress Reports, and more recently Initiascapes, Project Management and White Papers. Now as we prepare to begin our fifth year of operation we want to present the evolution of our work and the exciting possibilities for us in FY 2010-2011 and beyond.

2009 – 2010 Highlights

I. Making Progress Report

Produced Making Progress Report 2009: Catalyst for Change, a second community report which was released in December 2009. The report included reliable primary data with sustainable data sources on the 11 missing Indicators. It was produced at 50% less cost, increased approximately double in size, included more local data and a glossary.

This publication along with the original one has many audiences (organizations, institutions, and all residents): it has helped to build community will around important community problems; it produced data that assists community groups in planning; it informed community leaders and funders; and the data within the Report helps to begin important and needed conversations that lead to community action, both within Forsyth Futures and in the broader community.

II. Data & Research

Data and research is one of the core programs provided by Forsyth Futures. It includes data management, Initiastape work, and publications. We have provided assistance to the following groups: Youth Substance Use, Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care, Behavioral/Mental Health, Early Childhood Education/Kindergarten Readiness, Homelessness and other community organizations.

III. New Interactive Website

Launched the new interactive website (www.forsythfutures.org) in February 2010. It will be updated quarterly and tutorials will be added (print and streamline video).

IV. Initiastapes

Developed the concept of Initiastapes which can assist Forsyth Futures and community collaborative efforts in visualizing all of those working in a specific area and the connections between those groups. The copyright was granted in April 2010. These depictions are helping many in the community with improved planning and understanding of an issue and providing direction to solutions.

To date, a total of 42 initial Initiastapes drafts have been completed. Forsyth Futures is in the process of developing the software to support the next phase of Initiastape work. During the summer of 2010, a full demonstration of 25 comprehensive Initiastapes which are inclusive of the original 42 will be completed.

V. Action Teams

Actions Teams worked to address specific strategies and activities. The activities are described in terms of the relevant indicators, goals, objectives, lead communication partners, deliverables, status, evaluation. The following Action Teams met during 2009 – 2010: Healthcare Access, Kindergarten Readiness, Data Consortium, Communications, Visually Impaired/Blind Services, Skilled Citizens, and Older Adult and Livable Community. Additional work includes Forsyth Futures' support of other Action Teams such as: Youth Aging Out of Foster Care and Wake Forest University's Institute for Public Engagement (IPE).

The definition of Lead, Support, and Monitor is listed below:

In assessing our role, Forsyth Futures will lead, support or monitor community efforts:

- Definitions of Lead: Forsyth Futures will put considerable time and effort to assess and organize efforts to address an Indicator. This DOES NOT mean that we will operate services or for the long-term serve (be) in a leadership role. The objective would always be to transition the leadership role naturally to other entities and move toward work in other areas.
- Definition of Support: Forsyth Futures will offer assistance and respond to request for data and research from organizations that are leading efforts with our Indicators. We will make these requests a priority when possible but will not subvert work on lead Indicators.

- Definition of Monitor: Forsyth Futures will track data on these Indicators and will respond to request only as a third priority except when a community event or crisis demands the attention of community resources.

VI. Training/Education

Training and Education opportunities were provided on the access and usage of the new interactive website, Making Progress Report, etc. Information was presented to the following groups: individual citizens, NC Grant Makers Association Webinar, WS/FC Schools AP Statistics Students, Hands on Northwest NC session, Lion's Club, Medical Society, Adolescent Health Collaborative, and the Center for Design Innovation.

VII. Public Policy Committee

The Public Policy Process was approved by the Board of Directors in December 2009 and the committee was established in February 2010. The committee is meeting and working to establish a process that will structure:

- A. The way issues come to the committee from Action Teams, board members, and other community groups
- B. Criteria for decision making around moving issues forward
- C. Taking issues to the board for discussion and endorsement
- D. Moving board endorsed decisions to Public Policy action in the community

VIII. Operating Budget

Forsyth Futures raised \$493,905 (88%) of the original operating budget. In November, the staff and Executive Committee revisited the budget in light of the continued economic situation. The discussion resulted in a revised budget of \$493,905 which reflects overall reductions in revenue and expenses. Forsyth Futures has raised 100% of the revised budget (\$493,905).

2010 – 2011 Evolution of Work

I. Action/Results Teams

As our work has progressed, we have found that Action Teams are where the majority of our work is focused. Looking to next year, we will be focusing our limited staff resources on supporting current and future Action Teams.

Results Teams and their members will transition to a bank of advisers who we will periodically call on to:

- A. Enrich our Thinking for the Future conversations,
- B. Join Action Teams when appropriate,
- C. Provide feedback on Initiatives and other proposed action by Action Teams or the board (when deemed advisable), and
- D. Forsyth Futures will be ready and receptive to input and feedback from these community experts.

Many Results Team members are currently serving on Action Teams. Board members currently serving as Results Team Chairs will continue to be Forsyth Futures' leads in their area of expertise and interest. The staff and board will use these individuals to advise

our strategies and will depend on them to keep the staff and board updated on community issues in their area.

II. Thinking for the Future Conversations

We introduced this year, "Thinking for the Future" conversations where we use our data and information, analysis, best practice research, and other tools to encourage and initiate community dialogues designed to lead to action. These conversations will take many different formats; community forums, small learning groups, focus groups, broad community surveys, and various other ways to cause and catalogue community input. Three of our board meetings next fiscal year will be on Thinking for the Future conversations and those dates are listed as follows: October 6, 2010; January 5, 2011; and April 6, 2011.

III. Pubic Policy

The Committee's work will be expanded. They will work to hold two (2) meetings with Forsyth Futures' board members and the Forsyth County delegation to the NC General Assembly:

- A. First meeting following the end of the Short Session
- B. Second meeting prior to the 2011 Long Session

IV. Project Management

As Forsyth Futures has responded to the many requests for data, Initiascapes, trainings, education, etc. it became apparent that we needed to develop a system whereby we could optimize staff resources. Some or all of the following activities will be part of this role: managing collaborative initiatives, assembling individuals/organizations, gathering information/data, assisting with Initiascapes, thinking strategically, setting timelines, clarifying objectives, handing off projects to managing partner, monitoring action implementation, and offering evaluation of progress.

V. Data and Research

Data and Research continues to be one of the core services provided by Forsyth Futures. In this role, we will continue to provide assistance to the community through creating more Green/White Papers, supporting grant writers, working with the Data Consortium, and completing the Initiascape software. In November 2010, Forsyth Futures will provide data updates in the form of "Are We Making Progress" briefs.

VI. 2010 – 2011 Operating Budget

As we look to addressing the 2010-2011 budget needs, we do so in an environment that is still challenging. The Board of Directors has approved what staff believes to be a realistic budget and at this time have raised \$275,000 (54%) of that budget. The staff and Executive Committee continue to research new and different sources of support. We are looking to move towards a contract-for-fee service model, as well as continue to strengthen our relationships with our current funding partners.

VII. Resource Development

Forsyth Futures is an organization whose collaborative mission will always need ongoing support from a group of community partners who see the sustainable value of an unbiased approach to producing data and research products, hosting community conversations that include all viewpoints, supporting ongoing community efforts and when necessary leading efforts.

While a significant part of Forsyth Futures' work will always depend on community funding partnerships, this year the organization will begin to explore a civic entrepreneurial approach for some part of its work. Any civic entrepreneurial work will always be connected to Forsyth Futures' five (5) Results Areas and the accompanying Indicators. In fact, we have our first contract which will produce work for Wake Forest University.

Acknowledging Forsyth Futures growing role in the community's collaborative work and data research capacity, in March of 2010, Wake Forest University's Institute for Public Engagement (IPE) selected Forsyth Futures as a contractually funded community partner. Through this partnership, Forsyth Futures will provide the IPE with specifically designed Initiatives that will be used to enhance Wake Forest's community outreach strategies in three (3) WS/FC Schools.

Summary (from the Executive Director)

As we jump in to the fifth year of our work, I am, not only excited about the work ahead of us, but extraordinary thankful for the support we have received, as together we have built this idea from an extemporaneous conversation at a board meeting of the Forsyth Council for Children and Families in 2004 to the organization just described in these pages. It has been with your (board) support that this journey has progressed successfully. My thanks goes to you individually and collectively as we have explored ways that together we can best serve our community and have also struggled together with some difficult issues. Your commitment of time and resources, your counsel and advice, and your ability to see the long term benefit of this work, has made the difference. Equally, the team that is our staff has been the other essential element of success. Their individual skills and their collective ability to always work as a team is the key to how this small staff is able to produce the quality and sheer volume of work that is reflected in this report. I have the utmost respect for each of them and am extremely grateful for their unselfish work ethic. Thank you Camille, Doris, and Tonya!!

I look to 2010-2011 as a year where our work moves quickly to actions that truly impact the lives of the residents of our community. I believe it is time to CELEBRATE as we continue to be a CATALYST FOR CHANGE.

Supporting Documentation

For more detailed information, the Annual Report notebook is available upon request.