

COMPASS NOW 2015 Overview

COMPASS NOW 2015 is a joint effort of Great Rivers United Way, area healthcare organizations, area foundations, and county health departments to assess community needs, identify community resources, and encourage action to improve the quality of life for everyone in the community. The COMPASS NOW Report has been a resource in the Great Rivers Region since the first needs assessment in 1995. The United Way initiated this strategic endeavor as an agency transition from resource distribution to community solutions. This has resulted in focused United Way funding to the programs that answer the greatest needs. In addition, many community organizations use the COMPASS NOW Report findings to shape their own priorities and support grant applications.

The wide reaching efforts of the global economic crisis coupled with federal mandates to the healthcare organizations to conduct community needs assessments, was the impetus to implement COMPASS NOW in 2012. The need to keep this report current and fulfill the partners' needs have led to an ongoing 3-year process in which the Great Rivers United Way works with a committed team of area experts to complete an assessment that can be adopted by its healthcare partners. The partnership operates in synergy, promoting greater collaboration among organizations working towards improving the health and well-being of the population.

The COMPASS NOW 2015 process used a variety of data collection methods to create an overall depiction of the issues facing our communities. These methods included a random household survey, convenience survey, community conversations, and an extensive review of socio-economic indicators, which provides an inventory of community resources. The data collected during COMPASS NOW 2012 guided the development of four-pillar profiles. These are referred to as pillars because they create the building blocks for a better life. The pillars of the COMPASS NOW Report are Health, Income/Economic, Education, and Community issues. The profiles describe our community with regards to the key issues of each area. Each profile pulls key indicator data, and COMPASS survey results into a narrative format that is intended to provide a context to the data found in the indicator report, making the data easy to navigate. Additional reports on the household survey are included in the Report Appendix. The website www.compassnow.org has additional indicator reports with county level data wherever possible.

COMPASS Councils were advisory groups of local experts in the fields of education, income, health, and a variety of community issues. These members collected and reviewed data, analyzed the survey results, and offered professional insights about topic-specific issues in the Great Rivers Region. After significant review of the data and survey results, priority issues were identified by the COMPASS Councils. These issues were then ranked by Council members using the criteria below:

1. How widespread is the issue in our community?
2. How serious are the effects of the issue in our community?
3. How important is the issue to the community?

The COMPASS NOW Steering Committee then applied their own knowledge of the issues. The combination of COMPASS Council recommendations and the insights from the COMPASS NOW Steering Committee resulted in the identification of three top areas of need for each of the four Great Rivers United Way pillars.

The COMPASS NOW Report provides guidance and should provide a foundation for action plans that solve problems long-term. Great Rivers United Way uses the COMPASS NOW Report to inform their grant allocation process and develop their strategic plan. Healthcare organizations and county health departments use the COMPASS NOW Report to develop their own community health improvement plan (CHIPs).

The COMPASS NOW 2015 partnership is made up of the Great Rivers United Way, Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, Mayo Clinic Health System-La Crosse, Mayo Clinic Health System-Sparta, Otto Bremer Foundation, Gundersen St. Joseph's Hospital, Tomah Memorial Hospital, Gundersen Tri-County Hospital, Vernon Memorial Healthcare, La Crosse Community Foundation, La Crosse County Health Department, Monroe County Health Department, Trempealeau County Health Department, Vernon County Health Department, and Houston County Health Department.