Civic Engagement

In late 2012 and early 2013, the Midland Area Community Foundation with the support and endorsement of the Health and Human Services Council conducted over 20 focus groups of individuals within the community to provide an in depth and human perspective to the data from the Needs Assessment collected by Saginaw Valley State University in 2012 from publicly available information. This data also included previously collected data from various entities that are part of the Health and Human Services Council (i.e., the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, the Developmental Assets Survey, Midland County Youth Master Plan, and others).

This was used to populate the website. In the Civic Engagement Section, the summaries of the over 20 focus groups that occurred between October 2012 and January 2013 in Midland County are placed within nine subsections that encompass the broad community subgroups that serve the Midland County Areas. Based on the collected data, community needs, and previous work, these nine broad areas of prospective Midland County needs were identified: (1) Education; (2) Youth Development; (3) Physical/Social Health; (4) Safety; (5) Environment; (6) Economy; (7) Homelessness/Poverty; (8) Social Capital/Civic Engagement (including service users); and (9) Arts/Recreation. Concurrently, the Midland Area Community Foundation created a public response space on their website for the 2013 Needs Assessment that solicited responses from all Midland County residents as to where Midland County is doing a (1) Good Job; (2) Needs Work; and (3) Visions for its future. The focus groups were created to "elicit the opinions and ideas from key stakeholders," compile qualitative information to add depth to the quantitative information, comprehensively examine the community needs, ensure that data was considered, and to provide voice to all key stakeholders in Midland County; highlighted in the The Top Needs list that was compiled in consultation with various organizations and agencies throughout the community and endorsed by the Midland County Health and Human Services Council (community collaborative) and has been

Focus group participants identified for each area based on Knowledge; Experience; and Expertise. Based on the data collected for the website and their know-how, focus group participants were asked to discuss (a) what was being done well; (b) what was not being done so well; and (c) for recommendations to overcome the gaps and disconnects. Overall, respondents stated that strengths in Midland County were:

• Physical Assets/Infrastructure
• Multiple Services Available (food, shelter, clothing, transportation…)
• Inter-agency Collaboration
• Funding
• Recreation facilities/options
• Clean and safe environment
• Improving health options
• Cost of housing
• Low crime
• Facilities for Seniors
• Faith-based communities
• Good communications
• Availability of volunteers
• Community leadership—"can do" attitude
• Business partnerships
• Excellent local (city and county) government
• Education systems and outcomes (pre-school, children, adolescents, adults, seniors)

Additionally, underlying and dominant themes emerged across multiple focus groups (sometimes these were seen as community strengths and other times as weaknesses). The themes included:

- Transportation
- Agency collaboration (within and across all service arenas)
- Access to affordable housing (ownership and rentals)
- Access to affordable health care (including dental and vision)
- Access to educational choices (vocational, post-secondary, alternative)
- Access and choices in social services, healthcare, arts, and recreation between the City of Midland and Midland County
- Multiple sectors (education, business, health, social services, fundes, and governmental and community agencies) collaborating to address poverty, health, economics, and education.
- Increased education and knowledge across all sectors.
- Common community calendar and website for information about services and events.

Additionally, the Midland Department of Public Health has created a list of [Environmental Community Needs and Concerns.](#)

Education

What are we doing well?

• Five "Focus" Schools in county - good achievement comparatively in Michigan.
• Preschoolers school readiness through Great Start Collaborative, especially those at risk.
• New Tech at Meridian, Agricultural programs at Coleman, and increased parent involvement.
• 83% in Midland go on to post-secondary schooling.
• Senior center lifelong learning keeps seniors engaged.
• Community culture values and expects post-secondary education.
• Skilled trades are being encouraged to continue with education.
• Career and/or college readiness.
• Counselors becoming career advisors.
• New programming developed (Imagination Library, New Tech, etc.) including after school activities and Early childhood - universal screening and assessment for Kindergarten readiness.
• Graduation rates are high - 90% range in Midland County (all above state average).
• Alternative Ed (Windover, E.T.C.), including great programs for 20 year old or younger students who have made past mistakes.
• Recently county has helped fill gaps (communication, funding, new tech program) as organizations in county stepping up to provide support and have more collaboration and overall support.
• County programs are integrated with schools (esp. special needs programs).
• More collaboration about what happens outside classroom and effects on inside the classroom.
• Programs that transition b/w high school and universities (e.g., early college, dual-enrollment).
• Community at large recognizing value of re-training workers and post-secondary education.
• Adult education collaborating with other agencies to improve skills of low-level learners.
• Greater connection b/w business partnerships and education such as MITech.
• JCC - proactive with educating at-risk students.
• More collaboration statewide, learning practices from each other and curriculum development shared b/w Bay, Saginaw, and Midland leading to more efficient utilization.
• Changing attitude toward educating "whole person", not just academics.
• More collaboration in assessing and addressing issues while measuring income.
• Community has moved a long way in a short amount of time regarding youth development.
• Family and community centers working along with schools help to connect communities.
• Meridian partnership with Delta College - Early Middle College program - all students involved.
• School partnerships with ISDs to offer other programming.
• Boy Scouts STEM program - applied, hands-on education.

What are we not doing so well?

• Gap between high and low achievers combined with social and emotional gap in services.

• Changes to curriculum can threaten some learners.

• Growth in jobs for health care are predominantly low skill, while high skill are needed for other industries and students/parents may not be aware.

• Career re-training needed for many, and education agencies need leadership about funding and programs available.

• Access to after school activities for low-income families.

• Funds for Great Start go to 4-year-olds first (gap for 3 year olds) and number of daycare providers is dropping.

• Each age group working in "silos" - could use more collaboration

• Lack of family support because parent groups tough to connect with, not reaching out to families enough, and alienating parents with separate meetings for low income families, etc.

• Transportation an issue for all families - no matter the provisions, transport is necessary for many.

• Programs being cut and policy changes such as federal definitions of poverty, school and community agencies having to pick up costs causing duplication.

• Literacy in Midland County still issue at adult and student level (e.g., funding for literacy programs beyond what schools can do and finding adults who are willing to learn).

• Public becoming comfortable with data leading to just a focus on "good data" ignoring issues such as poverty and funding for education.

• Identifying those (esp. adults) needing education (e.g., 16 - 24 year-olds not showing up in education data).

• Not taking time to learn alternatives, such as students who want to learn skilled trades have poor literacy/math skills and should be starting earlier (example: math skills for welding/construction).

• Gap b/w data and real stories (23.4% of kids qualify for free/reduced lunch in Midland or difference between passing assessment and actual function in classroom or that data show picture that may not be accurate (both qualitative and quantitative.)

• Transportation (impacting all learners in accessing services and programs).

• Poverty level negatively impacting access to programs (need more school and agency collaboration).

• Growing number of developmental education students.

• Misunderstanding of educational standards because organizations use different measures, which become confusing for clients and organizations.

• Lack of skilled trades classes and programs caused by issues such as graduation requirements in Michigan Merit Curriculum that leave fewer choices.

• Public attitude on education assumes we are doing great and have mixed perspectives on poverty.

• Lack of funding and uncertain future of funding caused by proposed legislation could become a problem.

• Lack of respect for educators. Parents and students starting to question need/value of post high school education with data on employment.

What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?

• Better engagement of parents; change how they are approached; and bring programs to parents who struggle with transportation.
• School is limited by the community's perception of it. Schools need to engage community, go to places of work; take education initiatives to parents; speak with key community leaders; seek community commitment, education is much different today than it was traditionally; and demonstrate there is a reason to change education.
• P - 20 Education should also include prenatal.
• Give choices to students.
• Organizations should be more than just referral services (ed., health, social service, family support); finding a way to collaborate; explore lobbying to change policy.
• Look at communities who collaborate better to find a model and adapt to mechanisms we have for collaboration.
• Get access to internet/computers especially in the out county areas.
• Engage major corporations in area who already have a large impact.
• Utilize school buses for public transportation; and determine transportation needs, also explore how individual agencies can purchase buses (West Midland Family Center).
• Explore more new programs/collaboration.
• Focus media/legislation on positives instead of negative.
• Develop broadened relationships and break down barriers.
• Look at SPARKS program.

Public Input

Health

What are we doing well?

• Data collection and agency collaboration.
• Community Mental Health (good patient/client relationship, has been great resource).
• Community Center with reduced fees.
• Improvement trend serving adjudicated youth (Juvenile care center) in collaboration with probation department.
• Youth master plan with common language, measurement and goals.
• Seasons program has been great asset.
• Quality of life for seniors (including programs at Senior Services) and patient centered medical homes.
• Neighboring program.
• Many Recreational (more so in city of Midland) and physical health opportunities (rail trail, tennis, gyms, etc.).
• Teen pregnancy rates are low.
• Excellent medical center (staff, practitioners), Primary care physician to patient ratio, good facilities (beyond national average) and Hospital health plans.
• Recovering Youth's Future program.
• Good prenatal care, access for pediatric care (unless hospitalization is needed)
• EMR records providing good access.
• Employment rate for those with disabilities (ARC, Arnold Center, etc.).
• Inter-agency coordination along with public Health engagement
• Many social opportunities (not typical for community of this size) (Nature Center, MCFTA, etc.).

What are we not doing so well?

• Central depository for data collected.
• Offices not consistently entering data in MCIR (state system for recording vaccinations). Many opt-out for primarily religious reasons (small portion fear of autism despite research discrediting).
• Gap in serving mild to moderate mental health issues (w/o Medicaid can be difficult to be seen).
• Same individuals at every meeting - need more people invested and different voices.
• Seniors w/o family ties reluctant to ask for help when needed, driver safety programs may not be doing enough for seniors.
• Physical health memberships expensive; pay to play programs at schools and centers, and Obesity rates are high (slightly better than state average).
• Primary care medical staff funding/lack of students student loans and hospital limited in Midland on student loan payback.
• Not enough spent on prevention (nationwide) because lack financial incentives, including education on breastfeeding, exercise (obesity rates), and prenatal care.
• Difficult marketplace to recruit to, finding primary care physician for low income/Medicaid because of coverage for family practice.

• Neighborhood clinic was not sustainable
• Transportation and Substance abuse issues not addressed as broadly.
• Coverage/care for under and un-insured, Access to care, and Transportation to care facilities is one of the many reasons leading to avoidable ER visits (using ER as primary care - toothache, etc.).
• Very large number of fast food restaurants
• Due to Michigan Merit Curriculum and other funding factors there is reduced PE, Art, other electives in effort to raise test scores.

What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?

• Facilitate better way to get data input for MCIR.
• Pool resources regarding youth health
• Outreach to access vulnerable/isolated seniors
• Look into FQHC-type free clinic with small staff, volunteers (retirees or students).
• Identify underlying issue with lack of funds, especially for transportation that can include: 1) brokered taxi service (liability issues); 2) community smart cars (4-5 in area) - qualify & get card to access; 3) purchased buses, 1 bus in each quadrant (businesses could provide funding to sustain); 4) engage repair shops, dealers to offer cheap/free vehicles for low income families (insurance, gas a concern); and 5) awareness to donate cars
• Donate old computers and technology for users.
• Move forward with evidence-based treatments, including sharing a centralized list of mental health providers, programs for high-risk moms – NFP, and a coordinated effort in fight on obesity that should start with parents.
• School lunches should be nutritionally sound
• Senior "playground," such as a community garden for seniors.
• Senior emergency room.
• Address bridge card issue (used for fast food?)
• Obtain concussion data from schools
• Emphasis social/environmental health in regards to funding
• Increase developmental assets, funding on prevention, change measurements - (example: fitness levels).
• Increase focus on family/community and not just schools and Increased agency/community member collaboration by focusing on Mother as core of family.
• Increase "Catch them where they are" opportunities at churches, work, school, etc. with same message at each place, and utilize more social media messaging.
• Smoking eradication, awareness of negative aspects.
• Create Standardized poverty rating
• Instill sense of ownership/commitment in positive health programs/opportunities on community by making a common, focused goal to tackle with focused specific needs at one time.

Public Input

Safety

What are we doing well?

• Juvenile programs are working. There is a lower rate of delinquency and younger siblings offense rate is under 5%.
• Much lower percentage of parolees re-offending and if re-offending, not committing same level of crime (< 14% re-offense rate) as parole agents are more active, and community advocates are helping meet basic life needs (faith community, Open Door, State funding, community assistance, etc.).
• Proactive law enforcement
• Nights of Safety growth at Shelterhouse. Higher number of people seeking help (Shelterhouse)
• People are finding shelters. There is more awareness.
• More coordination between law enforcement and local agencies.
• Collaboration between churches (inter-agency, community assistance) in Midland.
• Developed protocols with law enforcement, prosecutor and Safe & Sound.
• Community Center programs for child abuse/neglect are letting people know where to find resources and increased outreach workers w/ WMFC.
• SANE program helps address safety for victim.
• Police proactive against gangs/drugs.
• Highly trained police departments with excellent candidate pool, fully staffed, and not lacking equipment.
• Regional partnerships with other law enforcement and agencies.
• Good communication b/w courts and law enforcement.
• Jail programs - PA 511 (substance abuse), GED program, Literacy, Drug court, school resource officer (could use expansion), and contact w/ students, solving more crimes based on interaction.
• More involvement with social media/community interaction.
• Sex offender registration/compliance is better.
• School cooperation (CSC in 8th grade, etc.)
• Maps (recording where/when prescriptions are coming).

What are we not doing so well?

• School resource officer in other schools besides MPS.
• Synthetic drugs such as Bath salts: don't have good field test - uncomfortable arrest (officer perspective: bath salts more dangerous than other drugs, may see 10 cases a month); and Opiates: larger issue than bath salts.
• Computer forensics specialist/equipment.
• Increased crash rate (specifically in city); where people learn about light delays, focus on pedestrian countdown.
• Low manpower in jail/road for county sheriff office due to lack of funds.
• Personal property tax potentially being removed - will further lower available funds.
• Difficulty with transitional housing (specifically those in drug court) leading to offenders going back

into the same environment.

- Scams and frauds – especially with elderly falling victim (lottery, grandson scam).
- Pawnshop networking.
- Opiate prescriptions where too much being given with certain doctors.
- Drugs brought in from Flint area; such as users going to Flint/Saginaw to obtain drugs.
- Emergency operations center is outdated (flood/fire/tornado, etc) and not able to monitor multiple locations at once.
- Access to critical info "NIXLE" - educating users on access.
- False sense of security in Midland where citizens are leaving doors unlocked, etc. and teaching potential victims to call early, not wait until it's too late.
- Lack of neighbor interaction
- Retail fraud as stores are downsizing and have less asset protection.
- Radio system will be out of date by 2017.
- Change Perception from community that our parole programs attract parolees from other cities.
- Shelterhouse: Need greater awareness for community prevention (programs like "Girls on the Run") and lack of funding/programming (Boys on the Run?).
- Lack of reporting for CSC; reporting rate higher for children; drops for teen/adult years; rapes from strangers reported much more but are rare; and victims embarrassed to report.
- Open Door = 60 days: long term shelter is needed; because even after 2 year housing, many are homeless after (criminal record, unemployable); also after long-term incarceration capacity to learn new skills goes down; and it is not just an issue for parolees - also young (18-24) who lack skills.
- County Sheriff lack of funding/patrol.
- Do not have MODE house for young men.
- Those that need programs the most do not have means to access them.
- Cuts in counseling for students.

What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?

- Education, prevention and enforcement to prevent crashes; and get traffic enforcement team back.
- Multi-unit facility with supervision for transitional housing.
- More presentations to local organizations on safety information with someone to coordinate meeting as well.
- Get on state radio system by 2017 (can be expensive, may need funding).
- More county sheriff deputies; since patrolling is all reactive at this point
- Special funding for enforcement opportunities (esp. traffic), drug/alcohol interdiction.
- Obtain better drug abuse data.
- Education on domestic violence, increased awareness.
- Engage parents and schools in prevention.
- Increase funding for Friend of Court and DHS services (investigations on child abuse, custody, behaviors).
- Further outreach especially in Northern Midland County.
- Transportation improvements that can address access to programs for youth; additionally intervention

for younger children, focus more on early prevention instead of punishment, and more organized, creative activities and programs (esp. middle school & younger).
• Get MPD resource officers in all schools to expand community relations (DARE, team training, etc.). Get parents to model positive behavior for kids esp. 0-5, also middle school age (85% of those incarcerated had parents who offended).

Public Input

Poverty

What are we doing well?

• Broad variety of simple supports.
• County is very good at keeping organizations updated (2-1-1) through centralized information.
• Cooperation b/w agencies including Governmental entities.
• People with resources who want to give.
• Help from churches that have undesignated money that fills in gaps, focus long-term on relationships with people who have strong needs, more intentional with giving (assessing needs), MEFC - focusing on Grove park area/North Midland, and St. John's moving food pantry into storefront.
• Small businesses who support nonprofits (e.g., Ayre-Reinhardt taking $5 each closing to donate)
• State and township level tools that provide poverty exemptions/deferments.
• Jobs for Life (Our Redeemer) that provides job training/life skills.
• 1016 Sober Housing focusing on employment after treatment.
• Transportation by Messiah Lutheran that assists with car repairs for low-income residents, and creation of an Auto Repair shop to supplement - hire Delta college auto repair grads.
• Great Start Collaborative focusing on issues with poverty for children under-5; increased .vocational programs for 16 - 24 year olds; and Special education programs: food services
• Foundations & United Way supportive of nonprofits.
• Family Centers providing comprehensive services - early childhood.
• Homeless resource center (HARA) provide a single point of entry for homelessness (may be underutilized due to lack of understanding).
• Numerous county resources compared to other Michigan counties shared at community assistance meetings.
• Churches and agencies working together.
• Shelters available.
• Agency partnerships with Diaper Bank that helps with distribution.
• Community collaboration through continuum of care that allow clients generally to know who to call for what issue.
• Community & Law Enforcement are quick to address homelessness issues (varies in how it is addressed).
• Newspaper willing to print press releases regarding poverty/homelessness.
• Large amount of food coming into area (need a better way to distribute).

What are we not doing so well?

• HUD definition on homelessness changed and needs to be communicated better to those in need. New definition: living in an area not meant for human habitation (must be truly homeless).
• Countywide issues not being addressed are: 1) Homeless being moved out of community; 2) Lack of affordable housing; 3) Many in community don't admit we have a need; and 4) Poverty issue much larger outside city of Midland.

• More affordable housing exists outside of city making transportation more difficult to services in the city of Midland.

• Gap in data, there is no way to track a person all the way through system (schools track data separately).

• Transportation is an issue. Understanding rules/programs for transportation assistance and some have multiple vehicles, using non-running to keep 1 vehicle going

• Many transition services not able to start until senior year (5 years are needed).

• Skill set of unemployed not matching available jobs.

• Shelter availability for those with children and those with disabilities; additionally there is discrimination against those with disabilities seeking low-income housing.

• Lack of data on discrimination/health/poverty.

• No backup for those who do not qualify for programs; who can't get funding because it's seen as duplication of services from funders.

• Some misinformation from contacts going to individuals and some also are attempting to scam system (small percentage).

• WIC, with transportation to services could be 2x the size.

• "Not in my backyard" attitude

• Help with utilities and rent for those on fixed income cannot fix vehicles, etc. who almost have to seek help at some point on minimum wage income.

• Lack of data on underemployment and understanding of underemployed vs. unemployed.

• Diaper bank to outlying areas (Coleman) not utilizing services.

• Limited number of clients (e.g., food bank) that can be served because space is an issue.

• Reluctance of volunteers to interact with clients; as many consumers complain of poor attitude from volunteers.

• No family shelter. Open door faced with sending families away or breaking them up

• General population doesn't understand seriousness of poverty/homelessness/domestic violence in Midland County.

• Cheap apartments don't exist anymore - those in poverty are more spread out than before, with families sharing leases.

• Lack of programming for employment services and training.

• Those in poverty may not have access to information for support, who can apply for deferment/extension on property tax but don't realize it.

• Stereotypes/judgments can be part of the problem and "lack of choices" and general abuse of safety net system leads to uneducated perceptions and choices.

• Lack of mass transit: Dial a Ride, County Connection are not adequate.

• Lack of interaction/works between nonprofit and for profit industries such as issues from Messiah Lutheran Auto service push-back by auto repair shops.

• Affordable Care Act - underemployment, small businesses hit hard ACA will cover less than Midland County Health Plan.

• Nonprofits tend to support select agencies and only taking on selected programs.

• Lack of collaboration on data collection between agencies (esp. poverty & health).

• Lack of services for homeless youth (17 and under). Shelterhouse turned away 400+ last year (not

enough shelter overall).

• Dental care, where people leave the county for care. Helping Hands only helps those with Medicaid.

• Community doesn't understand the need to have to wait for assistance (until shutoff notice, etc.); that assistance is fragmented and can be difficult to access; that duplication of services are a problem-people go to many different agencies for same services; and that government services for some but not others (mental health).

What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?

• Programming for employment services - training, life skills, etc.

• Program to assist with water assessment in townships for low-income persons.

• Coordinate efforts to make systems easier to access.

• Program coming to reimburse for dental care (United Way).

• Provide assistance prior to crisis point.

• Transportation: Senior Services-like "van pool".

• More moderate cost housing ($450 - $600 a month, 30% of income); Community housing plan; and Integrate low-income housing more into community (scattered side housing).

• Change mindset on poverty through better education (school and family), life skills added to school curriculum, educate public about community needs and success stories, and engage people who are struggling to help develop solutions such as those in emergency poverty situations (job loss, etc.) are waiting longer to seek help.

• Better distribution of available food - facility that can accept/distribute more food.

• Need for case management for supplemental services for those "falling through cracks" - working poor, just over income requirement for services, etc.

• Cross county connection transportation service with extended service hours.

• Communicate better to those in need of housing and those living in area of the benefit.

• Clients should not have to continually re-qualify for numerous agencies.

• More food pantries become self-select instead of users being given food baskets with items they don't eat/use.

• Salvation Army: more personnel to allow for self-select services.

• Nonprofits sharing payroll & other administration functions to become less territorial with other agencies such as Habitat & Disability Network share building (uncharted territory), also Sams, Diaper Bank and Food Bank who share occupancy and volunteer labor and collaborate with childhood agencies.

Public Input

Arts, Recreation and Entertainment

What are we doing well?

• Providing a variety of opportunities in recreation and arts (for all age groups) with good strong family programing.
• Good Collaboration between agencies
• Facilities are in great shape (soccer complex, tennis center, Dow Diamond, MCTFA, Gardens, BC Auditorium, and Rail Trails, CNC) and well maintained.
• Quality of programs is high in both the public and private sectors. Strengths and Variety are good (Creative 360, Space Studios, gardens, MCTFA, Alden B Dow Creativity Center, Chippewa Nature Center, North Midland, West Midland, Railway centers are assets
•). Schools have Marching Bands, Musicals, and Library offerings.
• Community Center provides indoor opportunities/ City – outdoor opportunities.
• MCTFA – took over MPS summer camp program, visual/theatrical arts at Middle schools, MCFTA summer camps.
• Sports are very important aspects of children growth and are part of affordable opportunities in arts and recreation in Midland – scholarship programs available
• Senior Centers and senior activities in Midland.
• Human Capital – strengths of individuals in Midland to make it a better place. Giving community. Philanthropic ethic support and volunteer support.
• Recreational assets - numerous offerings and options
• Support from key stakeholders (foundations, Dow, hospital).
• Music community groups - orchestra, band for student through retirement ages.
• Special events (Riverdays, Midnight on Main, Fair, etc.) that have an Economic impact (Mother's Day soccer tournament).
• Expansion of hotels speaks to numerous events.
• Ease of access to team sports and activities that strive to include all students who wish to play, inclusive with many free and low cost options, such as Boy Scout organization thriving in area.
• Teenage Musical - entertainment options and Professional symphony orchestra
• Aware of areas of weaknesses.

What are we not doing so well?

• Those outside city may be intimidated from using assets because of varied perceptions of community - difficult to reach consensus on priorities; Outlying areas not being reached (lack of transportation) and it will be difficult for outlying schools to meet needs with tighter budgets.
• College age and single professionals may be under-served in entertainment.
• We used to "invent" new things all the time, seem to be content now.
• Lack of personal philanthropy.
• Shrinking opportunities from school system because of pay to play, policy restrictions, shorter PE

classes, and lack of communication to parents of school children (no longer allowed to give flyers to schools, pay to play notifications).
• Lack of collaboration between schools and other recreation providers and many students unable to access opportunities (transportation, cost).
• Under-utilized parks, community unaware of a lot of great events/sports/arts, and perception that arts not worthy of funding (despite economic impact data).
• Income gap of community negatively impacts access to recreation.
• Personal contact missing in outlying schools
• Low Income family opportunities for arts/recreation.
• Breaking down stereotypes between clientele who uses facilities and resources and perception in the rest of community.
• Summer focused on events/activities – nothing in winter; Need to invest more in winter activities – like Midnight on Main NYE event. Need more festivals during the winter in Midland
• City Forest has great opportunity with a little more capital expenditure improvements – more activities and possible restaurant on site. More marketing.
• Downtown needs to improve on giving community experiences and a full night of entertainment
• Need to create density of events (combining arts/recreation) – park your car and be able to enjoy all aspects.
• Public golf courses are challenged with finances.
• Community sense of entitlement – things should be offered free or reduced price.

What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?

• City Forest/fairground opportunities; Promote City Forest and give it facelift.
• Critical Mass – utilize our current assets to make better.
• Community Calendar – couple of them out there already – need just a "one stop" website; and Promotions to all Midland County school districts.
• Push information out to public on activities and events(weekly) – can't be passive.
• Promoting summer activities during the winter by utilizing indoor spaces in Midland (Civic Arena, MCC, MPS).
• Downtown Master plan with an eye toward recreation/entertainment.
• Increase restaurant offerings downtown; Combining membership activities into one card; Gift Card for downtown; Co promoting between organizations
• Build an entertainment arena in Midland; Utilize the rail trail more – has a lot of potential to be utilized more.
• Discovery Square in Midland – can't park your car to visit all parts of square; should be connected to downtown.
• Increase river usage downtown – bring the rapids back?
• Lead and educate from a young age (regarding health, recreation)
• Create visual excitement or "focal points"; make it visible, ongoing, accessible
• Midland County Recreation/Arts "CEO" that creates collaborations, partnerships, tackles communication problems.

- Market to specific interest groups (example: soccer tournament) for recreation.
- Transportation and Break down the barrier of multiple rules for multiple systems.
- Focus on quality after-school program that are competitive (quality instructors, etc.).
- Ambassadors to go into outlying communities to make students/parents aware of opportunities.

Public Input

Youth

What are we doing well?

• Mix of activities for all age groups.
• Communication efforts between groups that work with youth.
• Duplication of services (organizations work well with/each other) crossover
• Emphasis of leadership skills such as asset building and parent support.
• Measurement of outcomes (still growing) but is better.
• Youth services connected to area employers.
• Funder involvement beyond dollars.
• Community ability to adapt/change (example: middle school athletics) and flexibility and creativity to make changes when needed.
• Midland Public Schools leadership opportunities.
• Abundance of facilities.
• Large decrease in juvenile delinquency.
• Youth Leadership programs (Youth Action Council, Northwood)
• Resources from funders and faith-based community to support youth development.
• Community culture expects youth success
• Emphasis on education seen in high graduation rate, and percentage with post-secondary degree.
• Safe environment
• Staff training/development of individuals working with youth.

What are we not doing so well?

• Many of the same youth using school leadership services (MPS in particular) and exclusivity of access to programs.
• Facilities are aging.
• Too much emphasis on GPA as apposed to learning process.
• Transportation (esp. outlying community/family centers) is not good (e.g., cost of transportation and timeliness).
• Affordability of programs.
• Discrimination from other students based on economic circumstances/location.
• Parent attitude/discrimination.
• Not many alternatives to college.
• Poverty impact on obesity.
• Access into MPS to distribute information on programs (community center), and a good Internet connection required to get info from MPS website.
• Very few young people are celebrated for successes.
• Programming is mainly inside City of Midland.
• Some school districts do not value bringing programs into schools.
• Funding sources for programming for children 6 and under (from all sources) including rules and

regulations that are not congruent and overall lack of funding for young 5 programming.

• State rules regarding preschool aged students and special education changes do not allow organizations to keep up/be educated.

• Supplemental education programs.

• Lack of communication between special services and school systems.

• Lack of a common calendar - no consistency.

• Dual enrolled students: paying for books/transportation/meals, etc.

What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?

• More focus on programs outside Midland city including bringing youth leadership programs to outlying areas.

• Create common community calendar (with public access).

• Funding for bus transportation for all programs.

• Using current school buses/county connection/dial-a-ride for programs (when not in use by schools).

• Make coordinated transportation group part of millage.

• Update facilities (pools, gyms, aging schools) and create a comprehensive facility plan.

• More volunteer opportunity beginning at Middle School age (must be inclusive).

• Develop communication tool with MPS that is not web-based.

• Marketing plan - message of diversity/acceptance for all parents and students.

• Celebrate youth accomplishments.

• Gather more feedback from youth (maybe as part of celebration) and give voice in community organizations.

• More focus on community-based rather than school-based activities.

• Encourage and promote opportunities for merged activities (e.g., area middle school cross country team, lacrosse).

Public Input

Environment

What are we doing well?

• Environmental projects being funded by community foundation (has a specific interest) and other foundations in Midland.
• Access to outdoor activities such as A2R, bike paths and lanes.
• Two significant functional non-profits (Nature Center, Little Forks) in community that provide protection and education.
• Access to state and park land even in suburban area.
• Better awareness of recreation opportunities in recent years.
• Improved air quality.
• Positive species composition changes (eagles, otters, mink) that have led to more diverse populations and fishing (large smallmouth bass in area, walleye). Organizations aware of invasive species, educating and working on plans to introduce more local plant and animal life.
• River cleanup process.
• Access to locally grown foods through Community supported agriculture, grocery stores also purchase from CSA, and neighborhood community gardens.
• More awareness for LEED certification, solar, alternative energy for homes and public use facilities.

What are we not doing so well?

• Need expanded bike/non-motorized paths, transportation to recreation, especially outside of city, and handicap accessibility.
• Many residents still don't know of all recreation activities (even all the free options). We have the resources but a lack of action by community regarding utilization of river resources.
• Capacity for more diverse crops in local farms.
• More links between health & environmental data as Studies only done every 5 - 10 years.
• Lack of benchmark data for stream quality, etc. It is difficult to utilize other region's data as environment is different and our data not based on recreation (mostly negative industrial data).
• Volunteer data info no longer being obtained
• Saginaw Bay Area lack of positive press unlike Grand Traverse Bay.
• Michigan geology/geography courses dropped in schools - lack of local info in courses.
• Disaster preparedness, which the general public has a lack of awareness/understanding in case of disaster.
• Environmental quality of homes (especially older homes and low income housing).
• Difficult to spark interest/appreciation for environment until it needs restored, such as lack of information spread in how to manage timber cutting on property, etc.

What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?

• Utilize more park land for community gardens and have more churches establish community gardens.
• Build on people's relationship to their river, not necessarily "bay area."
• Improve utilization and access to resources.
• Gather more local data and study/literature on the value of environmental assets on economy such as farming and jobs, lack of demand on taxes due to environmental spaces, recreational areas and benefit to businesses.
• Nonprofit buildings/schools should use solar power, lower operating costs, seek green certification shouldn't be seen as "luxury" - could be criteria for funding.
• General awareness/support for programs that remind parents to give kids outdoor experiences.
• Community education on sustainability, Showcase local successes, Landowner outreach to educate, Integrate trails with public transportation and have Workplaces become more friendly to commuters (showers, etc.).

Public Input

Economy

What are we doing well?

• Outreach (Midland Tomorrow, etc.).
• Strong pro-business attitude through public/private relationships.
• Leveraging available assets.
• Collaboration between businesses, local foundations, human service agencies.
• Attention also given to communities outside Midland city (in county), Family Centers, economic investments.
• Water access for county.
• Michigan Works collaboration with Delta for "fast start" programs.
• Over 80% of job openings are filled quickly.

What are we not doing so well?

• Education, especially in technical fields as we think about local impact.
• Aging population.
• Rising cost of social and health care.
• Public sector differed investments/infrastructure.
• Electrical grid is older (50 years).
• Concern with maintaining infrastructure including roads, water, and access to airport.
• Limited amount of low income housing.
• Emphasis on Have/Have not climate.
• Work with employment agencies to fill needs of employers.
• Transition programs/academic skills for workforce to move to other careers.
• Negative perception of the City of Midland in county.
• Rising risk factors and changes in the 18-24 population including drug abuse, outmigration, and limited economic opportunity.
• Issues with attracting younger professionals because of disconnect between jobs and needs, and impact of immigrants.
• Midland's isolation as to the trends in the Tri-County areas that impact Midland such as crime.
• Educational focus on how many "college graduates we get" rather than on technical skills.
• Educated community on the importance of above—increase education on the importance of high skilled technical jobs.
• Aging workforce in technical jobs without persons to fill positions.
• Gap in the local, interconnected data available about economic trends and the population.

What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?

• Keys to attracting young people are in the arts, culture, recreation; understanding that we can't (perhaps shouldn't) try to compete with large urban areas; and highlighting the assets we do have.
• Promote more technical jobs that will need to be filled in next 10+ years, including working with the school system to promote career mindedness as well as technical jobs in addition to traditional college.
• Regional response team should also have collaboration with Saginaw/Bay counties, and increase training/integration for rural areas.
• More training for officers on mental health issues in additional to tactical training.
• More proactive stance on community issues in ways that will bring change such as better utilization of financial resources (funders) and development of career/technical center.
• More/ongoing dialogue between employers and students; specifically better collaboration between business and education overall.
• More robust adult learning system (not all jobs will be filled by young people) focused on the idea that skill requirements change quickly and place higher demands on workforce.
• Create model for improving physical assets, infrastructure by convincing others that it is a long-term investment.
• Find ways to engage residents of Midland County more and reduce dependence on foundations, etc. to fund initiatives. For example, services that were subsidized more by industry are now done by foundations.

Public Input

Social Capital/Civic Engagement
(Includes Service Users)

What are we doing well?

• Collaboration between nonprofit agencies.
• Good "safety net" of services for those in need and when need arises leadership and funding.
• Many existing and traditional resources available (i.e., 2-1-1).
• Strong collaboration through 2-1-1 referrals.
• Strong and skilled group of volunteers and network.
• Strong sense of "community" in relation to helping (e.g., local, family oriented approach). Programs such as Open Door and Shelterhouse, soup kitchen and restoration ministry at Open Door, and Messiah Lutheran restoration fellowship.
• Funders work well together by willing to collaborate and abundance of funders.
• Community members recognize and want to help change poverty issues.
• Government involvement with community (all levels: law enforcement, judges, etc.).
• New education innovation and strong investment (early through adult).
• Major employers in area engaged with community nonprofits and for profits alike (e.g., 20. Dow/Habitat Volunteers).
• Strong faith-based community assistance.
• Media is community based, including full time newspaper.
• Resources and overall vision in community around engagement.
• Scholarship funds for Railway Center services.
• Emergency food pantry, Caregiving Network, and Emergency Food Network, Churches that support for funding, food, home essentials, volunteers for food pantry (particularly Caregiving Network), Mid-Michigan Community Action and Salvation Army services.
• Midland Health Plan (Midland hospital), available through the Health Dept.
• American Red Cross for Veterans.
• Kids backpack program and Kids café program.
• Clothing pantry service, business attire available from Caregiving Network, Clothing Closet - Shelterhouse (kids clothing) and Open Door.
• Low-income housing/apartments are available.
• Ice rink/basketball courts available for recreation.
• Summer Programs (with scholarships) and Physical Therapy available at Railway Center
• Community Garden in summer months.
• Dial-A-Ride/County Connection for county users and Bay Metro that goes to Delta
• Bike trails
• West Midland Family Center
• Programs such as parenting classes, summer programs, after-school, Sharing Tree, clothing room.
• Salvation Army (rent, utilities, food, gas money, food pantry, Christmas donations).
• Diaper Bank.

• Midland Area Homes.
• Caregiving Network (assistance with bus passes, gas cards, let you know all of their services and how often you can use, listening/hope provided).
• Michigan Works' schooling assistance and supplies for work.
• Weatherization Program and Land Contract Programs.
• ARC of Midland.
• 1016 Peer support group (free to public)

What are we not doing so well?

• Community turns a blind eye to poverty.
• City-focused (don't have communication with Coleman, etc.). A need for better communication b/w city and rest of county
• Funders don't always seek input of those receiving services
• Major businesses are engaged with everything - we should utilize other businesses.
• Empowering working poor through more education and planning services/resources.
• Social groups are separated, need mentors who have been in similar situation as service users.
• Unstable marriages, and single parent families that utilize a lot of community services.
• Difficult to get out of situations - many of our services are reactive instead of proactive.
• Consumer trust issues (why do you really want to help me?).
• Lack of holistic approach to getting help (call 2-1-1, get numerous numbers to call) and not knowing how often you can use services.
• There are some groups that community is not interested in serving (e.g., parolees).
• Overreliance on faith-based organizations; should let government/agencies fill gap too.
• Lack of funding for faith based agencies in Midland who are doing outreach.
• Waits for Dial-A-Ride are too long (e.g., one hour appointment turns into 3+ hours when factoring in waiting time, cost prohibitive, and okay for occasional use but not regular).
• Poor attitudes from staff/service at certain agencies and scams occurring in many programs.
• Mid-level jobs not available in Midland that provide a livable wage (Wal-Mart/McDonald's - wages not high enough to raise family).
• Lack of low-income housing: ($300 - 500/month rentals) and costs (e.g., heating costs, landlords not wanting to repair, credit checks for low-income housing (debt), and application fees
• Full time + part time + childcare (not enough time to fill out forms/wait/go through information).
• Women's shelter is difficult to get into; there is a need options for woman who need immediate shelter.
• No options for dental care in Midland, prevention education (health, poverty, etc.) and lack of childcare options/high cost.
• Wait time from point of call to when food is received.
•Garbage removal from lots and homes--no service available to help consumers.
• Assistance for cost of taking GED test.
• Some resources are only available in city of Midland – not county areas (is driving to food drives worth the cost of transportation).

• Transportation for children to and from school services for those that live in town.
• Professional mental health services needed in areas outside of city of Midland and overall difficulty finding available resources in areas outside city (lack of available information, news about agencies).
• Lack of recreation opportunities for children in Coleman (esp. free/low cost)
• More recreation opportunities for teenagers/older children that is not cost prohibitive.
• "Runaround" of clients when trying to obtain assistance with bills (multiple agencies commit only a portion and will only give when all funds are raised).
• Flyers/mailings are need for information because not everyone has email access.
• DHS caseworkers take too long – time lag in services – also difficult to get in touch with caseworker because they emails more than phone.
• Lack of communication between agencies when you need multiple services.
• Healthcare for those without insurance or not on Midland County Health Plan.
• Provide assistance prior to foreclosure scare.

What would you recommend to overcome the gaps and disconnects?

• Include users in process, and change culture by empowering population—creating a culture of change focusing on asset building and youth.
• Utilize local churches for mentoring opportunities.
• Positive marriage initiatives.
• Volunteer program.
• Identify/engage major needs to be more proactive and collaborative.
• One location for services - get qualified/needs identified (housing connect but on regular basis that is networked system where agencies can access user data (Charity Gives, Community Passport) such as a Hub that utilizes technology to better utilize services from multiple agencies
• Bring services to the needy outside Midland (Bullock Creek and Coleman) and place on community calendar and sync with transportation assistance.
• Collective Impact: focus on specific issue such as youth.
• Implement SHARE program outside of city of Midland.
• "Red flag" individuals who abuse programs.
• Bring services (counseling, etc.) to areas outside of city.
• Caseworker/DHS (full or part time) and Salvation Army for Coleman area (and smaller towns in county).
• Grocery Stores with better quality meat/produce in the county.
• In county areas, make one local agency an informational "headquarters" for news regarding assistance/volunteer opportunities.
• Line-Haul bus transportation where buses go to widely used locations.
• Discounted weekly pass for Dial-A-Ride (frequent rider).
• Food pantries should allow users to choose items (allergies, personal, etc.).
• Along with more low-income housing, also lower utility rates.
• More support for groups doing home repairs/renovations that can help save energy costs.

• More marketing for 2-1-1 and other services because some residents don't know what's available.
• More health screening - dental/optical, etc.

Public Input