

# National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership Application

The City of Charlotte, the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, and Mecklenburg County are applying to NNIP as a partnership. The first section of the application includes a description of each partner organization and the final section summarizes our formal collaboration on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study, a neighborhood-level indicators project for Mecklenburg County.

## Contact Information for Applicant Organizations:

Organization	Main Contact
City of Charlotte	Rebecca Hefner <i>Community Research Manager</i> Neighborhood & Business Services, Community Engagement Division 704-336-2237 <a href="mailto:rhefner@charlottenc.gov">rhefner@charlottenc.gov</a>
UNC Charlotte Urban Institute	Laura Simmons <i>Social Research Specialist</i> UNC Charlotte Urban Institute 704-687-1207 <a href="mailto:Lsimmo19@uncc.edu">Lsimmo19@uncc.edu</a>
Mecklenburg County	Timothy Tibbs <i>Assistant to the County Manager</i> County Manager's Office 704-432-2163 <a href="mailto:Timothy.tibbs@mecklenburgcountync.gov">Timothy.tibbs@mecklenburgcountync.gov</a>

## Partner Detail: City of Charlotte

### Organization Websites:

[www.charmeck.org](http://www.charmeck.org) (main website)

<http://maps.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/qoldashboard/> (online dashboard for the Quality of Life Study)

<http://charmeckquth.ci.charlotte.nc.us/QOL/Pages/default.aspx> (landing page for the Quality of Life Study)

### Organizational Structure:

Local government – City of Charlotte, Neighborhood & Business Services, Community Engagement Division

### Geographic Focus:

City of Charlotte

### Current Staffing:

Total size: 13 FTE within the Community Engagement Division, with support from staff in Code Enforcement, Technology and Communications.

Key staff members involved in indicators work:

**Rebecca Hefner**, Community Research Manager: Assists with Project Management for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life (QOL) Study Steering Committee, coordinates City role in the QOL Study, and responsible for facilitating the use of the QOL Study data by internal and external partners to inform planning, program development, policy, and resident action.

**Andrew Bowen**, Community Research Specialist: Provides general support to the QOL Study, manages the QOL Tech Team, and coordinates integration of data from QOL Study into the City and County consolidated Speakers Bureau.

**Tom Warshauer**, Division Manager, Community Engagement Division: Provides strategic oversight through QOL Steering Committee and serves as liaison to Community Cabinet.

### **Current Funding:**

All funding for the indicators work, including contracts and staffing, comes from the City of Charlotte General Fund.

### **Board/Advisory Board Composition:**

As a division of local government, we do not have an independent Board of Directors or Advisory Board. The Quality of Life Study is an initiative within the Charlotte City Council's Housing & Neighborhood Development Focus Area Plan, and as such is guided by the Community Cabinet, which includes department heads of City and County departments, representatives from the City Manager's Office, and representatives from key community agencies/organizations.

### **Organizational Mission:**

The mission of City of Charlotte Neighborhood & Business Services is to strengthen and grow Charlotte's neighborhoods and businesses. The goal of the Community Engagement Division is that residents, businesses and youth will be informed, engaged, and empowered to take action that improves quality of life in their neighborhoods and across the community.

### **History of Organization:**

The City of Charlotte has been engaged in the collection, analysis and use of neighborhood-level indicators since 1993 when the initial City Within A City Neighborhood Assessment was conducted to describe neighborhood-level conditions in Charlotte's primarily low-income, inner-city neighborhoods. The purpose of the assessment was to better understand needs for City programs and services, and to demonstrate that there were ripe opportunities within these neighborhoods for community and economic development. Over the past twenty years, what is now known as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study has grown from 73 neighborhood areas in Charlotte's urban core to 464 neighborhood areas covering the whole of Mecklenburg County. As of 2012, the Quality of Life Study contains over 80 variables compiled from administrative records, the American Community Survey, and private sources and is available for view or download in an interactive, web-based dashboard. The study has also been enriched with links that allow users to learn more or discover ways to take action on topics of interest.

In 2013, the City of Charlotte shifted the focus of its indicators work from providing information to facilitating the use of that information by government departments, community partners, residents, neighborhoods and businesses. To support this shift, a Community Research Manager was hired in October 2013 and a Community Research Specialist was hired in February 2014.

### **Mission Alignment:**

The City of Charlotte believes in good information for good decisions. In order to make policy decisions and investments that strengthen neighborhoods and businesses, and to promote the safety, health and quality of life of residents, we must understand current conditions and historical trends. The key component of this understanding is the neighborhood-level data in the Quality of Life Study. The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County contract with the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute to collect and maintain the data for the Quality of Life Study on a biennial basis.

Although the Quality of Life Study has been utilized by the City and the community in many ways over the years, the City of Charlotte has only recently begun to play a lead role in facilitating and promoting its direct practical use. With the expansion of the study in 2012, and the recent hire of two dedicated staff members, the City now has the capacity necessary to provide training and technical assistance to internal and external partners, as well as focus more explicitly on relationship-building throughout the community. Specific examples of projects and activities are provided in response to questions that follow.

The City of Charlotte promotes the use of data and information by all residents and neighborhoods across the community. However, in alignment with our grants programs and neighborhood outreach strategies, we give emphasis to building capacities of organizations and residents in distressed neighborhoods. Specific examples of this are provided in response to the questions that follow. The City of Charlotte uses median household income to determine eligibility for financial assistance, but technical assistance is available to all neighborhoods.

### **Selected past and current projects on indicators/neighborhoods:**

#### **Program Planning and Service Delivery:**

The City of Charlotte has used the Quality of Life Study in a number of ways over the years to inform program planning and service delivery, particularly within Neighborhood and Business Services (includes Housing Services, Economic Development, Code Enforcement, and Community Engagement). For example, Housing Services relies on the study to create program criteria for housing and neighborhood stability programs such as the House Charlotte loan program and the Housing Locational Policy that guides development of affordable housing in the City. The study was also used to identify neighborhoods of greatest need for local implementation of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program following the foreclosure crisis. Outside the Neighborhood and Business Services Department, the Quality of Life Study has been used to design and prioritize projects and infrastructure investments as part of the City's Neighborhood Improvement Program. Going forward, we plan to build upon the internal use of the Quality of Life Study for program planning and policy development (see Plans for Future for specific examples).

### Neighborhood Outreach:

The field operations of Charlotte's Neighborhood and Business Services Department, including outreach to neighborhoods and businesses, are delivered by four teams in geographical service areas. Each service area team includes a Community Engagement Specialist (CES) who works directly and regularly with neighborhood leaders and neighborhood-based organizations, with a particular focus on distressed neighborhoods. Each CES is trained in use of the Quality of Life Study and utilizes the data in working with neighborhoods. In addition, the Community Research Manager meets regularly with the CES team to provide support and assistance, and makes presentations to neighborhood groups as needed.

Often, this direct neighborhood support results in a project plan and an application for grant funding through the City's Neighborhood Matching Grants (NMG) program, which is administered through the Community Engagement Division. NMG projects are funded in the following categories: Neighborhood Organization & Capacity-Building; Crime & Public Safety; Neighborhood Improvement; Cultural, Recreational & Educational Activities; Energy & Environmental Sustainability; and Neighborhood-School Partnerships. To be eligible for NMG, the median household income of the neighborhood must be below 90% of Area Median Income in Charlotte.

An example of how QOL data has been used to inform and shape a successful NMG project is the Drive to Save Lives project in Charlotte's Farm Pond neighborhood. Median household income in the Farm Pond neighborhood is approximately \$40,000, less than 60% of AMI. The residents of Farm Pond perceived a problem with crime and safety in their neighborhood. In reviewing data from the QOL Study, they found that their measures in the Safety dimension, including violent crime, property crime, juvenile crime, and fire calls for service, were higher than surrounding neighborhoods, and their measures of community engagement and nuisance calls for service were lower than surrounding neighborhoods. The data suggested a relationship between community engagement and community safety and order. Making this argument, the Farm Pond neighborhood successfully applied for a NMG to host the Drive to Save Lives, a project to increase the safety, awareness and engagement of Farm Pond residents through educational trainings (CPR) and safety demonstrations at a community-wide event. While research certainly supports the connection between engagement and safety, it was empowering for the neighborhood to explore the data and discover this connection in their own community.

Another important use of the Quality of Life Study data in neighborhood outreach work is the bi-annual Neighborhood Board Retreat hosted by the Community Engagement Division of Neighborhood and Business Services. The retreat is a half-day, facilitated session designed to build capacity of neighborhood-based organizations and help them develop a vision and strategic plan for the coming year. Often, ideas conceived at the Neighborhood Board Retreat are developed into NMG projects. At the retreat, the boards are introduced to the Quality of Life Study at a presentation during the morning full-group session. The presentation uses study data to provide a snapshot of the participating neighborhoods and

to highlight successes and areas for celebration. Then, each board is provided with a customized report about their neighborhood from the Quality of Life Study, and time is given to review and discuss this information during the individual facilitated sessions. The facilitators are trained to help the neighborhood board members understand and use the study data to inform their strategic planning work. Following the retreat, the Community Research Manager provides ongoing support to neighborhood organizations in using data to track progress towards neighborhood goals.

In the past, the City of Charlotte has also supported community organizing in distressed neighborhoods through a partnership with the Charlotte Action Research Project (CHARP), a project that forges relationships between UNC Charlotte and marginalized neighborhoods in Charlotte to address spatial inequality. Through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, the City contracted with CHARP to work with residents in neighborhoods most deeply impacted by the foreclosure crisis to create sustainable neighborhood coalitions and empower neighborhoods to advocate for themselves and create structural community change.

### **Presentations:**

Community Engagement staff members give a great number of talks and presentations to introduce the community to the Quality of Life Study and encourage its use. In addition, we are developing a number of customized presentations about community issues utilizing data from the Quality of Life Study and other sources. These presentations, on issues such as Neighborhood Biases, Neighborhood Poverty, and Youth Development as Neighborhood Development, are designed to highlight issues critical to our City, challenge some of the biases and negative perceptions about distressed neighborhoods, and inspire community action towards positive change.

As an example, we recently developed a presentation for the nonprofit organization Community Building Initiative (CBI) as part of their Leadership Development Institute. The presentation challenged the “single story” we often hear about neighborhoods in Charlotte – that higher income neighborhoods are “good” and lower income neighborhoods are “bad.” While recognizing that there are significant needs in distressed neighborhoods as well as issues of equity and inclusion that must be addressed, we also encourage a fuller examination of the community’s biases and assumptions about lower income neighborhoods in Charlotte. Utilizing variables and indices created from the Quality of Life Study, we highlight some of the many other stories to tell – that many lower income neighborhoods are convenient to jobs, transportation, public facilities and outdoor recreation; that many are highly walkable and bikeable; that many have a lower environmental impact; and that many have had stable or increasing property values even during the economic downturn and foreclosure crisis.

### Training & Technical Assistance:

When the expanded, online Quality of Life Study rolled out in early 2013, a series of trainings were conducted with City departments and with the public. Currently, training and technical assistance for use of the Quality of Life Study is conducted on an ad-hoc basis by the Community Engagement Specialists and the Community Research Manager. We respond to e-mails and phone calls from neighborhood users, nonprofit organizations, police officers, city staff, elected officials, student researchers, real estate agents, and others. In addition to trouble-shooting access to the data and use of the online dashboard, we have developed several templates for customized reports and presentations that can be provided upon request. With the recent hire of a Community Research Specialist, we have increased our capacity to provide more structured and ongoing training and technical assistance. Additional information is provided in the next section on plans for the future.

### Community Use:

Although the City of Charlotte has not played a significant role to date in training and technical assistance, the Quality of Life Study has still been used in many valuable ways by community organizations throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Some examples of organizations utilizing the Quality of Life Study to attract resources and impact public policy are described below.

1. For the child advocacy organization Council for Children's Rights (CFCR), having access to neighborhood-level indicators has been critical in attracting resources to Mecklenburg County. When looking at County-level data, Mecklenburg County often compares favorably to the State of North Carolina. However, looking at individual neighborhoods reveals significantly distressed communities within the County. Through a neighborhood-level analysis of childhood poverty, birth outcomes, child maltreatment and academic achievement, CFCR successfully demonstrated need and attracted State grant funding to implement the evidence-based Triple P Positive Parenting Program in our community.
2. Neighborhood-level indicators have also been critical in mobilizing community support to impact policy decisions. In 2010, the local school system proposed to cut their Pre-Kindergarten program, Bright Beginnings, by over 2,600 students. A local coalition of advocacy organizations was successful in defeating that proposal, in part by using neighborhood-level data from the Quality of Life Study to identify and mobilize neighborhoods that would be most adversely impacted by the closings.

3. Many community organizations use the data in the Quality of Life Study for program planning and developing service delivery strategies. Some examples include: the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library used the study data to identify three locations for a pilot program addressing early literacy skills; the YWCA uses the study data to inform the work they do at their nonprofit after school programs in nine sites around the County; and McClintock Partners in Education, a partnership between school and community leaders in the feeder zones for McClintock Middle School, used the study data to understand the diverse neighborhoods in the feeder zone and inform their strategic plan.

In the next section, we describe plans to build on these successes by increasing outreach to community organizations to facilitate broader use of the Quality of Life Study.

### Plans for Future:

With the recent hire of a Community Research Manager and Specialist, the City of Charlotte is shifting from a passive to an active role in its work around data and information. The community research team is charged with facilitating the use of the Quality of Life Study, and other City and community data, to engage residents, inform planning and decision-making, and inspire action. A selection of ideas and plans for the future is provided below. Over the next six to twelve months, these ideas and others will be developed into a more structured work plan. It is our hope that the experience and expertise of the NNIP Partners will serve as a resource and source of inspiration as the plan is developed.

**Continued development of the Quality of Life Study.** The next release of the Quality of Life Study is scheduled for late 2014. We are working with City departments and community partners to open more data and enhance the data accessible through the study by refining variables, adding links to additional data resources, and creating interactive maps addressing topics of interest. This work is being done in response to community feedback from a series of focus groups consisting of community practitioners, subject matter experts, and data analysts in the study's eight dimensions (Character, Economy, Education, Engagement, Environment, Health, Housing, and Safety). Some examples include: working with the Fire Department to post online a neighborhood-level analysis of fire calls for service; working with data partner Child Care Resources, Inc. to create a series of maps related to child care availability and accessibility in our community; and working with new data partners to add variables on library usage (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library) and arts and culture facilities (Arts & Science Council).



**Informing public policy.** The Community Research Manager sits on a City-wide team of analysts and GIS specialists who provide data support and analysis to the City Manager's office and City Council. This team provides general information and responds to inquiries, and also provides analysis to support development of the City's Community Investment Plan (CIP), formerly the Capital Improvement Plan. We are also working with several City departments, including Neighborhood & Business Services, Engineering & Property Management, and Charlotte Department of Transportation, to look at ways that the Quality of Life Study can be used to inform our City's new, more holistic approach to neighborhood improvement and infrastructure investment in distressed neighborhoods, the Comprehensive Neighborhood Improvement Program. In the future, we will engage County departments in this strategy as well, including the Department of Social Services and the Health Department.

Another opportunity to inform public policy is to leverage the research that is conducted at area universities utilizing the Quality of Life Study. We are looking at ways to work more closely with university faculty and student researchers to explore public policy questions, and to transfer findings from that research out of the classroom to decision-makers within city government. While not fully formed, the community research team believes we have a role to play in shaping a research agenda, working with faculty, convening students, and communicating findings to the appropriate government departments.

**Outreach, training, and technical assistance.** We are looking at ways to provide more structured outreach, training and technical assistance. This will include a regular schedule of presentations to neighborhood and community groups, conducting routine outreach to community organizations, and developing additional report templates and presentations. The next release of the study's online dashboard will include a place to ask data and research questions, submit ideas for research projects (What do you want to know about quality of life?), and showcase work that has been done in the community utilizing data from the Quality of Life Study. In addition, we are working with UNC Charlotte to develop neighborhood- and issue-specific dashboards with the study data.

**Need A Speaker?** The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County are launching a combined speaker's bureau called Need A Speaker? (NAS). NAS includes staff members from every department within the City and the County. One component of NAS is training speakers to weave data, from the Quality of Life Study and from their own work, into talks and presentations in a way that is meaningful, memorable, and actionable. Internally, NAS will provide opportunities for more City and County staff to increase data literacy and comfort with the Quality of Life Study, and to open additional data from various departments to the community. Externally, NAS will provide a way to reach more audiences and community groups with data and information, and to engage a broader audience in taking action for positive change.

**Community storytelling.** Data by itself does not necessarily connect with people, but data-rich stories can be powerful drivers of change. We are looking at ways to help neighborhoods use data from the Quality of Life Study and their experiences to tell their stories, catalogue their assets, and learn from each other's successes. We currently have a partnership with the Knight School of Communication at Queens University to increase digital literacy for neighborhood groups, and we are exploring ways to further this partnership by providing training on digital storytelling as well. We are also exploring a variety of platforms and ideas for sharing these stories online.

**New tools for engagement.** Charlotte is a 2014 host city for the Code for America Fellowship Program, a service-year where developers, designers and product managers create small startup teams and partner with a local government to build applications and foster new approaches to problem-solving. As part of a February residency, the Charlotte Fellows identified a range of ideas to build upon the Quality of Life Study and engage neighborhood residents, including:

1. Community asset map. A crowd-sourced map for people to add places that highlight the strengths of the neighborhood.
2. Neighborhood Goals. A tool to help neighborhoods set goals for areas identified in the Quality of Life Study they'd like to improve.
3. Storymaps. Sharing the lesser-known stories of neighborhood landmarks.
4. Where Should I Live? A neighborhood comparison tool to help people decide where to live.

# Partner Detail: UNC Charlotte Urban Institute

## Organization Websites:

<http://ui.uncc.edu> (main website)

<http://ui.uncc.edu/data> (Charlotte Regional Indicators)

<http://ui.uncc.edu/programs/isc> (Institute for Social Capital)

## Organizational Structure:

The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute (Institute) is a nonpartisan, applied research and community outreach center at UNC Charlotte. The Institute is part of UNC Charlotte's Metropolitan Studies and Extended Academic Programs, which includes a number of the university's community engagement initiatives.

Within the Institute is the Institute for Social Capital, Inc. (ISC), a 501(c)3 created through the UNC Charlotte Foundation. ISC is an integrated data system of individual level administrative data from local agencies. ISC operates as a research program of the Institute, with a nonprofit subsidiary of the Foundation of UNC Charlotte continuing to operate as the fiscal and legal steward of the ISC database for security reasons.

## Geographic Focus:

The geographic focus of the Institute is the 14-county region surrounding Charlotte, which includes 11 counties in North Carolina (Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg Rowan, Stanly, Union) and 3 in South Carolina (Chester, Lancaster, and York).

## Current Staffing:

Total organization size: 25 full-time employees and 9 part-time students

Key staff members involved in indicator work:

**Dr. Owen J. Furuseth**, Associate Provost for Metropolitan Studies and Extended Academic Programs: Principal Investigator for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study since 1997, responsible for research design and analytical elements.

**Katie Zager**, Research Assistant: Provides data collection, analysis, and mapping support for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study.

**Dr. Amy Hawn Nelson**, Director of Research, UNC Charlotte Urban Institute and Director of the Institute for Social Capital Inc.: Oversees all Institute research projects and serves as director of ISC.

**Ashley Williams**, ISC Data & Research Coordinator: Coordinates all ISC data requests and deposits.

**Dr. David Hill**, ISC Database Administrator: Manages the ISC Community Database, integrates new data deposits, and pulls data requests.

**Laura Simmons**, Social Research Specialist: Director of the Charlotte Regional Indicators Project; data manager for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study.

**Wes Lawing**, Web Developer: Created and manages the Charlotte Regional Indicators webpages (as well as the other Institute websites).

**Zach Szczepaniak**, Research Assistant: Responsible for interactive charts on the Charlotte Regional Indicators; provides mapping and data collection support.

**John Chesser**, Senior Analyst; **Claire Apaliski**, Social Research Specialist; **Eric Caratao**, Social Research Specialist; **Dr. Jonathan Kozar**, Social Research Specialist: Serve as the point person for one or more of the Indicator Data Partners, which includes working with the partner organization to identify a set of indicators, overseeing the initial collection and continued updating of the data set, and handling data or technical assistance requests from their partner(s).

### **Current Major Funding:**

The Institute currently operates with an annual budget of \$1.8 million. About three-quarters of this funding comes from state appropriations, and the remaining quarter from external grants and contracts.

### **Board/Advisory Board Composition:**

#### **UNCC Urban Institute**

The Institute does not currently have an advisory board but has plans to create one, following a recommendation of the Institute's recently completed strategic plan.

### **Institute for Social Capital**

While technically a program within the Institute, ISC is a separate 501(c)3 through the UNC Charlotte Foundation and maintains a board of directors. The board of directors is composed of UNC Charlotte leadership as well as leadership from ISC data depositors, local agencies and universities.

#### **Members of the ISC Board of Directors 2013-2014:**

- Frank Barnes, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Diane Bowles, Johnson C. Smith University
- Elisa Chinn-Gary, 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court
- Cheryl Courtlandt, Carolinas HealthCare System
- Allison Frank, Mecklenburg County Sherriff's Office
- Jesh Humphrey, UNC Charlotte Legal Affairs Office
- Jane Johansen, UNC Charlotte Treasury Services
- Don Jonas, Care Ring
- Michelle Lancaster, Mecklenburg County Manager's Office
- Joan Lorden, UNC Charlotte Provost's Office
- Jane McIntyre, United Way of Central Carolinas
- Carol Morris, Foundation For The Carolinas
- Tom Warshauer, City of Charlotte
- Laura Clark, Renaissance West Community Initiative
- Stephen Smith, Charlotte Family Housing

In addition to the board of directors, ISC has a Scholar's Advisory Council (SAC), which guides research priorities for ISC, fosters multidiscipline collaboration, establishes networks to apply for grants, and fosters inter-institutional collaboration. SAC is comprised of scholars from area universities who represent a variety of disciplines.

#### **Members of the ISC Scholar's Advisory Council 2014:**

- Deana F. Morrow, Winthrop University, Dept. of Social Work
- Marguerite Doman, Winthrop University, Dept. of Computer Science
- Judith Richards McDonald, Belmont Abbey College, Dept. of Education
- Shelley J. Listwan, UNC Charlotte, Dept. of Criminal Justice and Criminology
- Ellen McIntyre, UNC Charlotte, College of Education
- Jeremiah Wills, Queens University of Charlotte, Dept. of Sociology
- Bruce Taylor, UNC Charlotte, Center for Adolescent Literacies
- Jeff Shears, UNC Greensboro, Dept. of Social Work
- Kristie Long Foley, Davidson College, Dept. of Medical Humanities
- Terri Manning, Central Piedmont Community College, Center for Applied Research
- Bobbie Frye, Central Piedmont Community College, Institutional Research

- Ruth Greene, Johnson C. Smith University, Dept. of Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Carol Turowski, Charlotte School of Law
- Jean Veilleux, Charlotte School of Law
- Lori Thomas, UNC Charlotte, Dept. of Social Work
- Mason Haber, UNC Charlotte Dept. of Psychology
- Christine Elnitsky, UNC Charlotte, School of Nursing
- Laura Simmons, UNC Charlotte, Urban Institute
- Laura Clark, Renaissance West Community Initiative

### **Organizational Mission:**

The mission of the UNCC Urban Institute is to seek solutions to the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing our communities.

### **Brief History:**

The Institute was founded in 1969 by Legislative Act of the North Carolina General Assembly as an urban counterpart to the agriculture extension model. The Institute's continuing focus has been a multidisciplinary social sciences approach to research, outreach, and training to support informed decision-making in the region.

Over its 40 plus year history, the Institute has had five directors. The current director, Jeff Michael, was hired in 2004.

Major recent milestones include the merging of two other UNC Charlotte centers under the Institute. The Center for Transportation Policy Studies (CTPS) was merged under the Institute in 2008, and the Institute for Social Capital (ISC) became part of the Institute in 2012. Both now operate as research programs within the Institute.

### **Mission Alignment**

The mission of the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute is to seek solutions to the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing our communities. This mission is evidenced and ingrained in the diversity of our projects, as well as in our efforts to democratize information through the Regional Indicators database. We carry out our mission through a range of services including research and analysis around economic, environmental, and social issues affecting the Charlotte region; public opinion surveys; and technical assistance and training in operations and data management.

As an applied research and community outreach center, the Institute serves as an important bridge between the University and the larger Charlotte community. The

Institute exists to serve the research needs of the community. One way we are increasingly doing this is by being the trusted source for data on the Charlotte region. The Institute operates or contributes to several information systems of recurrently updated data that are enormous resources for the community. The Charlotte Regional Indicators Project provides data at the county and metropolitan level. The ISC Community Database is an integrated data system of individual level administrative data that can be aggregated to many geographic levels. The Institute also plays a key role in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study, which tracks quality of life data at the neighborhood level.

With our Regional Indicators Partners Program, the Institute promotes the use of data in community building and policy making. In this program, the Institute works with local non-profit organizations to increase their understanding and use of data in their work. We work with each organization to create a set of indicators pertinent to their focus and help them incorporate these indicators and others into their decision making processes. Specific examples are provided in responses to subsequent questions.

The Institute also facilitates and promotes the use of data in community building and policy making through its annual Data Day event. The first event was held in the spring of 2013 and focused on using data for community development. We are currently planning the second event for June 2014.

### **Selected past and current projects on indicators/neighborhoods:**

#### **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study:**

The Quality of Life Study is an ongoing neighborhood indicator project and is a joint effort of the Institute, City of Charlotte, and Mecklenburg County. The Institute's primary role in this project is around the collection, analysis, and management of the indicator data. Institute staff also use data from the study in our own research and research projects for clients. We have also played a role in building awareness of the study through articles on the Institute's websites, use of the data in presentations, and trainings on how to use the online dashboard.

#### **Charlotte Regional Indicators Project:**

The Charlotte Regional Indicators Project is an ongoing benchmarking initiative for the 14-county Charlotte region. Funded by a combination of grants from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Foundation, and Advantage Carolina, this ongoing project provides objective, reliable, and relevant data on a wide range of indicators impacting the region's quality of life. Data are available at the county and MSA level as well as aggregated to the 14-county region wherever possible.

The Charlotte Regional Indicators Project was publicly launched in November, 2007, marking the culmination of more than three years of work by the Institute staff and more than 100 task force volunteers from around the region. The Indicators Project made available for the first time a comprehensive collection of quantitative measures of the region's quality of life, showing current and historic trend data for more than 50 indicators in the form of an Indicators Project Report, which was available both online and in printed format.

In 2011, the Institute redesigned the project website, turning what was essentially an electronic version of the printed 2007 Indicators Report into an interactive data portal that provided users with direct access to the data and continuous rather than periodic updating of the data.

In April 2014, the web presence for the Regional Indicators was moved under the Institute's main website with improved form and function. The data available remained the same, but they became easier to find and use, with fewer pages to navigate and more interactive features on the charts and maps.

### **Indicators Partners:**

To complement the Charlotte Regional Indicators, in 2010, the Institute launched the Indicator Partners Program, an initiative to form long-term, strategic data partnerships between the Institute and community organizations. This program expands the range of indicator data housed on the Institute's website and partially funds the maintenance of the larger Regional Indicators project.

For each partner, the Institute develops and maintains a set of indicators and presents the data through an individualized, interactive web portal on the Institute's website. The Institute also provides technical assistance in using the data, on-demand support for presentations and events, and analytical expertise. In addition to the set of indicators, the Institute also conducts smaller one-time projects and analyses to support the work of the partner organizations. Current partners include Council for Children's Rights, United Way of Central Carolinas, Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont, the Women + Girls Research Alliance, MeckEd, and Gaston Together.

The indicator data are used in a variety of ways, including the following examples.

- Council for Children's Rights recently used data from their indicators to inform the development of a community plan around out-of-school time. Representatives from 45 service providers, funders, and institutional partners participated in a 6-month planning process to develop a framework for an out-of-school time system for the entire Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. An important piece of this process was



creating a common understanding, through data, of the state of out-of-school time in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and the larger community context of children and youth in Charlotte-Mecklenburg- who they are, how they're doing, what they need, and how the out-of-school time sector can best support them. This data included many of their partner indicators as well as maps showing the locations of all out-of-school time programs in the county overlaid on areas of greatest need for these programs.

- United Way of Central Carolinas has used its indicators to identify community needs and make funding decisions that align with those needs. The Institute conducted a community needs assessment for United Way and keeps the secondary data up to date through the partnership. For the past two years, United Way has tied these data to its funding applications, requiring agencies to demonstrate need based on the data. Prior to the beginning of each funding cycle, the institute conducts several trainings on how to find the data on our website and how to use it properly in these applications.
- MeckEd, a local public education advocacy organization, has used their indicators to raise district and community awareness about issues critical to public schools. Where our other partners are focused on county level data, we maintain school level data for MeckEd and present the data through interactive maps. We have received feedback from MeckEd that these maps have been powerful tools for them. They have used them at public forums to enlighten the public about inequities within Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. They have also used a series of charter school maps to make the district administration aware of the growing waiting lists for charter schools in the northern and southern suburbs, which informed the district's planning for new or different programs and schools in those areas.

### **Centralina Council of Governments CONNECT:**

In 2012, the Institute began working with the Centralina Council of Governments' (COG) CONNECT Consortium on a HUD-funded collaborative project to develop a regional sustainable development plan. The Institute's role in this project is the design, development, collection, and reporting of regional sustainability indicators, which will be housed with other indicator data on the Institute's website. This 3-year grant program focuses on the 14-county metropolitan region around Charlotte, with emphasis on economic, environmental, and social topics.

### **Charlotte Housing Data Mart:**

This project, funded by the Catalyst Fund of the Foundation For The Carolinas, will further the development of a community integrated data repository at the Institute by adding a more comprehensive range of data associated with homelessness and

affordable housing to the ISC Community Database. The Charlotte Housing Data Mart will function like a research collaboration to address the gap in community knowledge concerning homelessness and affordable housing. In addition to the ISC database, the Housing Data Mart will make use of the Charlotte Regional Indicators database and the Institute's research infrastructure to provide contextualized, comprehensive community reporting.

### **Charlotte Data Day:**

The Institute partnered with the Federal Reserve, City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to host the inaugural Charlotte Data Day in March 2013. The event focused on using data for community development, and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study and Charlotte Regional Indicators were featured prominently with hands-on training workshops for both resources. Nearly 200 people attended the event from a wide range of sectors including non-profit organizations, local governments, researchers, neighborhood leaders, and financial institutions. We are in the midst of planning the 2014 event, which will be held June 17 and focus on a theme of housing.

### **A Transdisciplinary Approach to the Evaluation of Social Determinants of Health:**

This is a project of the Mecklenburg Area Partnership for Primary Care Research (MAPPR) that the Institute is currently involved in. MAPPR is a practice-based research network that studies barriers to healthcare access for the underserved and vulnerable populations in Charlotte. This study is funded by a 5-year grant from the National Institutes of Health and has three aims: 1) to identify multiple social and spatial determinants contributing to health outcomes and disparities at the neighborhood level; 2) to identify neighborhoods in Charlotte with large proportions of Hispanics at risk for poor health outcomes and health disparities; and 3) to develop and implement interventions to improve utilization of preventative services for Hispanic community members living within the high-risk neighborhoods.

This study uses a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) framework. CBPR is a collaborative research approach that empowers community members and researchers to work as equals in identifying research topics of importance to the community and developing effective research plans and implementation strategies that combine and build upon the unique strengths of all partners. Using the CBPR model, this project helped build the capacities of institutions and residents in the distressed neighborhoods through the research process. Community members provided input in identifying important neighborhood factors affecting their health and played an integral part in the selection of the intervention, a series of health and social service fairs at the neighborhood school.

## Plans for Future:

**More emphasis on direct community engagement.** Historically, a major role of the Institute has been facilitating community engagement. In recent years, many of our community engagement efforts have been focused on our online communications. However, in our recent strategic planning process, it became clear that we need to expand our engagement efforts to reach a broader audience. We have embraced this recommendation and are working to put it into action.

One element we are looking to build this effort upon is Data Day. After the great success of the first event, we are planning a 2014 event for June and intend to make it an annual event. In addition to the big annual event, we would like to host smaller, more focused events throughout the year that inform people about data sources and tools, increase data literacy, and facilitate the use of data.

**Partnership with Foundation For The Carolinas.** The Institute is in the process of developing a formal data partnership with the Foundation For The Carolinas, a regional community foundation based in Charlotte, to support their Robinson Center for Civic Engagement. This partnership will likely include developing a set of indicators to inform the funding decisions of the Robinson Center as well as ongoing support for data and research needs as they arise. Ultimately, we hope this partnership will result in a web resource for Charlotte data that brings together the many existing projects into a single interface, making the data easier to find and use.

Our partnership with the Foundation will also increase our ability to facilitate the use of data. For example, the Institute will soon be supporting a county-wide taskforce on poverty, which will make policy recommendations on how to alleviate poverty in our community. The Institute will be providing data and research to this group to inform them about what poverty in Mecklenburg County looks like, including the neighborhood level. The Institute will also provide ongoing support for this group as it meets over the course of the year, with additional data and research to inform their decisions and policy recommendations.

**Increase the use and accessibility of the ISC Community Database.** Currently, researchers requesting data from the ISC Community Database must go through a lengthy and costly process to gain access to the data. This complex interface inhibits the use of the database by the broader community. We are pursuing several avenues to make the data more accessible.

First, we are developing an online codebook and interface for researchers. This interface will make it easier for researchers to know which agencies are included in the database and to search through the available variables.

We are also looking to aggregate the individual-level data to create indicators and make them publicly accessible online. These indicators could be at many levels

from an individual agency to neighborhood to the whole county. These would provide unique indicators not previously available but would also provide a reliable local source for some indicators that are already tracked. These indicators would enrich both the Charlotte Regional Indicators Project and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study and contribute to numerous other initiatives.

We are also continually exploring ways to expand the data held within the ISC Community Database in response to community research needs. For example, we are in the process of increasing the education-related data to include data from several surrounding school districts as well as smaller non-profit agencies serving children and youth. As part of the Charlotte Housing Data Mart, we are also working to expand the range of housing related data.

**Data visualization and stories.** We currently utilize a number of data visualization techniques to present data on the web or in reports and are continually improving our capabilities in this area. We hope to soon be able to create interactive reports and data stories, which could include both Regional Indicator and ISC data.

## Partner Detail: Mecklenburg County

### Organization Websites:

[www.charmeck.org](http://www.charmeck.org) (main website)

<http://charmeck.org/mecklenburg/county/Pages/default.aspx> (main website)

### Organizational Structure:

Local government – Mecklenburg County, County Manager’s Office

### Geographic Focus:

Mecklenburg County

### Current Staffing:

Total size: Mecklenburg County has three primary staff members who work on the Quality of Life Study, with additional support from staff in Geospatial Information Systems and the Public Information Office.

Key staff members involved in indicators work:

**Timothy M. Tibbs**, Assistant to the County Manager: Responsible for Project Management, including the Quality of Life Study Project Plan, Schedule, and meetings of the Steering Committee, and engagement with Towns in Mecklenburg County and County departments.

**Dr. Leslie Johnson**, Assistant County Manager for Sustainable Communities: Provides strategic oversight through the Quality of Life Steering Committee and serves as liaison to County departments and the Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan.

**Tobin Bradley**, GIS Senior Systems Analyst: Responsible for design and development of the Quality of Life Study online dashboard.

### **Current Funding:**

All funding for the indicators work, including contracts and staffing, comes from the Mecklenburg County General Fund.

### **Board/Advisory Board Composition:**

As a division of local government, we do not have an independent Board of Directors or Advisory Board.

### **Organizational Mission:**

The mission of Mecklenburg County is to serve County residents by helping improve their lives and community.

### **History of Organization:**

Mecklenburg County Departments of Health and Social Services began participation in the Quality of Life Study by providing local data beginning in 1997. The County provided modest funding each year since that time to assist with the study.

During the 2012 Quality of Life Study iteration, Mecklenburg County joined as a full partner as a result of recommendations from the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge (SCC), which focused on the issue of Joint Master Capital Planning in Mecklenburg County. The SCC final report concluded that:

- Local governments in Mecklenburg County all share a common mission: to advance the quality of life of the residents of the county,
- Capital planning should be coordinated across the local government units to ensure the most efficient and effective allocation of resources,
- Since quality of life is largely experienced at the neighborhood level, neighborhoods should be the “unit of analysis” employed in determining how resources should be allocated
- Existing resources like the Quality of Life Study should be utilized and expanded to the entire geography of the county

The first step recommended by the IBM Team was establishing formal support for joint capital master planning among various stakeholders, largely the towns within the County. From February through August of 2011, the Mecklenburg County Manager’s Office staff spent considerable time meeting with local officials and staff from all local government entities within the County to share the IBM recommendations, while building consensus and support for the concept of comprehensive capital planning, data sharing and collaboration.

In order to support implementing a Joint Master Capital Planning process, Mecklenburg County joined the Quality of Life Study in 2012 and has been instrumental in coordinating with the Towns within the County. The successful Study now encompasses all of Mecklenburg County, including the City of Charlotte and the Towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill and Pineville. In short, there is full buy-in from all the jurisdictions in Mecklenburg County and a pledge to work collaboratively in developing the study and providing data that benefits the entire community.

### **Mission Alignment:**

Mecklenburg County is committed to making data driven decisions. The expansion of the Quality of Life Study presented an opportunity for data sharing across the County with all local government entities, allowing jurisdictions to observe and identify neighborhood-level drivers, trends and other factors that are indicators of neighborhood health. The City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and other community partners are working towards using the Quality of Life Study data to pilot enhanced collaboration in providing operational services at the neighborhood level.

The Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners' strategic goals are articulated using a balanced scorecard that is based on the Board's long-term vision for the community. One of the Board's focus areas on its balanced scorecard is "Sustainable Community." Strategic goals in this focus area address Environmental, Economic, and Social factors affecting the County and its residents. As part of the Board's long-term vision update, the Board approved additional recommended goals that have incorporated Quality of Life Study components that are now measured at the neighborhood level.

While seeking support for Joint Capital Master Planning among all local government jurisdictions, Mecklenburg County also changed its internal methodology for prioritizing capital infrastructure funding. In January, 2011, the Board of County Commissioners adopted criteria for prioritizing capital project funding across all departments and agencies that receive capital project funding from Mecklenburg County. This includes not only departments and agencies operated by and under the authority of the Board of County Commissioners, but also those outside this direct authority, such as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Central Piedmont Community College and the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library. In July, 2011 the criteria was applied to a list of 65 capital projects for which bond funding had been approved but not yet issued. For the first time, school projects were ranked along with park and recreation projects, community college projects and more. Previously, these projects were only ranked by priority within each category (e.g.,

schools projects ranked with other schools projects; park and recreation projects ranked only with other park and recreation projects, etc.). Future efforts are being planned to continue the development of the Joint Capital Master Planning Group which will be discussed in the following question(s).

## **Selected past and current projects on indicators/neighborhoods:**

### **Livable Communities Plan**

The Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan is a joint initiative between Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte, surrounding Towns, the Foundation for the Carolinas and our community partners to develop a unified vision that incorporates community-wide goals centered on how we live, work, and play today and into the future. This collaborative effort by local governments within Mecklenburg County provides an opportunity to review existing plans and identify commonalities that encourage and support a vibrant and healthy quality of life in our community. The Plan will:

- Bring the existing numerous localized plans and programs together,
- Establish goals and performance measures that provide a beacon toward our future community, and
- Entail a robust community engagement approach to communicate between silo efforts.

The Quality of Life Study will be utilized in the process of establishing goals and performance measures for the Livable Communities Plan.

### **Chairman's Task Force on Poverty and Economic Mobility**

Recognizing the difficulty for Mecklenburg County residents to rise out of poverty, Board of County Commissioners Chairman Trevor Fuller is creating a task force on Poverty and Economic Mobility with the charge of researching and analyzing relevant data (to include assessing the affordability of the County's property tax rate), identifying policy solutions to ameliorate poverty in the County and drafting a recommended action plan. The task force should commence work by mid to late summer.

### **Plans for Future:**

Along with the expansion of the Quality of Life Study, Mecklenburg County will continue to encourage collaboration by creating a Joint Master Capital Planning Coordination Committee to bring together key decision makers from across the county to prioritize capital investments utilizing a Quality of Life Index within the criteria.



## Partnership Detail

### Partnership Structure:

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study is a formal collaboration between the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute. Each organization has a specific role in the partnership:

Core Partner	Role
City of Charlotte	Coordination, Outreach & Assistance, and Neighborhood Engagement
Mecklenburg County	Project Management and Technology (online dashboard)
UNC Charlotte Urban Institute	Data & Indicator Development, Research & Analysis, Community Engagement

Communication among core partners occurs formally via a standing bi-monthly meeting of the Quality of Life Study Steering Committee, typically attended by two representatives from each partner organization. Informal communication occurs frequently, primarily via e-mail. Each partner informs the others of any related presentation or meeting and shares the presentation and materials. All meetings and presentations by each group are tracked and shared with the Steering Committee.

In addition to the Steering Committee, the Quality of Life Study is supported by:

- *Tech Team.* The Tech Team is comprised of Data and GIS Analysts from the City, County and UNC Charlotte Urban Institute and is responsible for developing and maintaining the online dashboard for the Quality of Life Study.
- *Seven Focus Group Teams.* The Focus Group Teams meet twice a year and are a formal way for the community to shape the data and resources of the Quality of Life Study. The focus groups consist of subject matter experts, community practitioners, and data analysts in the domains of the Quality of Life Study.
- *Town representatives.* We work with a representative from each of the six towns within Mecklenburg County to solicit feedback, provide data for the study, and promote its use.

Additional teams, such as the Communication Team, are established on an ad hoc basis. Each support team is coordinated by members of the Steering Committee, and all activity of the teams is communicated to the Steering Committee at the bi-monthly meeting.

## Charlotte-Mecklenburg Partnership Dynamics:

### Interaction outside the Quality of Life Study.

In addition to the formal collaboration established for the Quality of Life Study, the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the UNCC Urban Institute work together more informally on a variety of other data-informed projects and initiatives. Given the size of the City and County, each with many departments, partnerships on other data-informed initiatives in Charlotte-Mecklenburg tend to be decentralized, and are typically around a topic of interest.

The Affordable Housing and Homelessness Data Consortium is a prime example of this, where our three organizations have come together around a certain topic—housing and homelessness. In this initiative, the Institute and City serve as conveners, bringing the many organizations involved together through the shared goal of creating a coordinated, central system for housing and homeless data. Representatives from the City’s Neighborhood and Business Services department, the County’s Community Support Services department, Institute researchers with housing expertise, UNCC faculty with expertise in homelessness, as well as other housing/homelessness focused organizations in the community are all involved in this initiative. As part of the Data Consortium, the City convened a Charlotte Mecklenburg Coalition for Housing Research and Evaluation Committee that works with the City and the Institute to identify potential areas for research using the housing and homelessness data as well as to provide suggestions on new data to add. Communication between all of these groups happens both formally and informally through meetings, idea sharing, and brainstorming. This model of university-City-County-nonprofit collaboration around a single issue was highlighted as an exemplary approach in the Institute’s recent strategic planning process, and the Institute will be working to replicate this model in other topical areas moving forward.

As in many communities, there is not one central convener on all issues. However, through our web of relationships, we work to ensure that community initiatives are data-based, research-informed, and include the appropriate voices from government, university, community-based agencies, and neighborhoods. For example, City staff from Community Engagement-Youth Programs serve on the community’s Violence Prevention Action Team, County staff from several departments are participants in implementation of the community’s School Readiness Plan, and various City and County staff participated in the 17 task forces convened by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools system as part of the recent update to their strategic plan. Other City and County divisions also serve as conveners of community planning initiatives, often with data and research support from the Institute. Examples include the Immigrant Integration Task Force convened by the City’s Office of International Relations and the Poverty Task Force convened by the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners.

### Data Interpretation.

There may be times when interpretation of data in the Quality of Life Study is challenging, particularly when constructing variables from government operations data. For example, the next iteration of the study will include data from Charlotte-Mecklenburg 311, and variables such as volume of calls can be interpreted in a number of ways. In these instances, the project team works together to construct a variable and write a description that offers a range of interpretations. Because the Institute is relied upon as an objective data partner, there have not been significant disagreements to date. However, if disagreements arose within the Quality of Life Steering Committee, the dimension focus groups could play a role in resolving conflicts. The focus groups include broad representation from government, nonprofits, universities and neighborhoods and have already served a valuable role in defining and interpreting variables. To date, the focus groups have not been formalized as part of the study decision-making structure, but that may be an important step to take moving forward.

### Objective observers.

The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have a long history of sharing data through the Quality of Life Study because of a belief that the community has a role to play in both shaping policy and creating community change—regardless of how uncomfortable it may be. As an applied research center of UNCC, the Institute does not engage in direct advocacy around the data it collects. However, community nonprofits and even other university departments bring a critical external perspective to the local policies that might be challenged by the data in the Quality of Life Study. Some examples of policy and investment change stemming from Quality of Life data and community advocacy include:

- CareRing, a nonprofit that participates in the Health Dimension Focus Group for the Quality of Life Study, last year used data from the study to successfully advocate for an increase in funding from Mecklenburg County for their Nurse-Family Partnership program.
- Graduate student research from UNCC recently examined the City's Neighborhood Matching Grants program in relation to the Quality of Life Study and found that the most distressed neighborhoods in Charlotte were the least likely to participate in the program. The study prompted a comprehensive review of the program and the graduate student has been asked to serve on the review committee.
- In 2010, a coalition of advocacy organizations was successful in defeating a proposal from the local school system to make substantial cuts to their Pre-Kindergarten program by using data from the Quality of Life Study to identify and mobilize neighborhoods that would be adversely impacted by the cuts.

### **Brief History of Partnership:**

The City of Charlotte first began collection and dissemination of neighborhood-level indicators with the City Within A City Neighborhood Assessment in 1993. In 1997, the City contracted with the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute to update the assessment. Between 2000 and 2010, what is now known as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study was conducted on a biennial basis for neighborhood areas within the City of Charlotte, with modest funding and administrative data provided by Mecklenburg County. In 2012, Mecklenburg County joined the study as a full partner and engaged the Towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill and Pineville. The Quality of Life Study is now comprised of 464 Neighborhood Profile Areas (NPAs) covering the whole of Mecklenburg County, and includes over 80 variables organized into eight dimensions of quality of life.

### **How do you expect NNIP membership to benefit your organization?**

The primary benefit we anticipate from NNIP membership is to gain both knowledge and inspiration. As we continue to develop new ways to turn data and information into actionable intelligence and positive change in our community, we can benefit from the experience and expertise of the NNIP partner organizations for new ideas, new tools, best practice recommendations, friendly critique, encouragement, and moral support. Our experience in attending the NNIP meeting last June in Columbus and this spring in St. Louis exposed us to the enthusiasm, energy, and dedication of the diverse partners in NNIP, and we are excited about the potential for continued learning and inspiration from the many organizations and individuals involved in this work around the country.

In addition, we value the opportunity that NNIP membership would provide to be involved in cross-site projects and research related to the NNIP Issue Areas. There are a variety of strategic, collaborative community initiatives in Charlotte-Mecklenburg utilizing data to inform their work and evaluate their programs that could benefit from cross-site learning from the NNIP network. Recent areas of focus include cradle-to-career community development initiatives, school readiness, out-of-school time systems, education, school discipline, affordable housing and homelessness, and arts and culture.

Finally, we expect that we will be able to leverage the broad network and national reputation of NNIP and its partners to demonstrate the continued value of community indicators to agencies and organizations in our community. This will benefit our local partnership in continued and expanded fundraising efforts, as well as continued efforts to expand open data in our community.

## **How do you see your organization contributing to the NNIP partnership?**

We believe that we can contribute to NNIP with both the breadth of our partnership and the depth of our collaboration. First, primarily through the strength of the University and the vision of the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, we have an incredible breadth of data resources at a variety of scales, including neighborhood-level indicators, regional indicators, and an individual-level integrated data system. We are also progressing steadily towards an open data portal for the City of Charlotte. We can contribute to the NNIP community of practice with our experience in developing these resources, both technically and in terms of the significant relationship-building required. We are also excited to contribute this wealth of data on the Charlotte metropolitan area to the NNIP community to enhance cross-site research and collaboration, and hope these data systems would make Charlotte an attractive addition to national grant proposals.

In addition, our partnership offers a strong model of collaboration between local governments, university resources, and community partners. We have a significant amount of capacity within local government around data preparation and data sharing, community engagement, and utilizing data to inform public policy. We believe that we can serve as a model and a resource for other communities looking to increase capacity for indicators work within local government, whether by increasing access to administrative data, finding new sources of funding, or achieving greater impact on public policy.

## **Other groups and organizations in our region that collect and disseminate data, including any current or past activities you have collaborated on with them:**

### **Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond**

The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond's Charlotte Branch collects and disseminates a wealth of economic data on the Charlotte region. We have recently begun working with them to host an annual Data Day event and hope to strengthen this partnership going forward.

### **Mecklenburg Area Partnership for Primary Care Research (MAPPR)**

The Mecklenburg Area Partnership for Primary Care Research (MAPPR) is a practice-based research network that studies barriers to healthcare access for the underserved and vulnerable populations in Charlotte. MAPPR is headquartered at Carolinas HealthCare System's Department of Family Medicine and includes numerous departments at UNC Charlotte. The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute is a core partner in this network, providing support for research design and data

analysis. Representatives from the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County also participate in this network as members of the community advisory board and provide support for other community activities.

### **Council for Children's Rights**

Council for Children's Rights, a child advocacy organization in Mecklenburg County, provides direct legal representation for children and also serves as our community's children's intermediary organization. CFCR works collaboratively with community partners to strengthen programs, improve local and state policies, coordinate efforts across systems that serve children, and increase community advocacy and funding for issues facing children and families. Data from the Quality of Life Study and the Regional Indicators Project (CFCR is an Indicator Partner) informs the work of CFCR and its many partner agencies that serve children and families in Mecklenburg County. CFCR compiles and disseminates academic research and community data in through their comprehensive community planning work around school readiness, out-of-school time, and child welfare.

### **References:**

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## MECKLENBURG COUNTY

July 20, 2014

Kathryn Pettit  
Director, National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership  
c/o The Urban Institute  
2100 M Stree, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Ms. Pettit:

I am writing to express the full support of Mecklenburg County in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg application to the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership. We are excited about the opportunity to learn from and share with the NNIP partners around the country and look forward to participating in the NNIP meeting this fall in Denver.

In collaboration with the City of Charlotte and the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, Mecklenburg County is committed to the use of neighborhood-level information, regional indicators, and integrated data to build community and improve local policy. The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute is a trusted, objective partner on numerous data initiatives across the region, and provides critical support to data-driven decision making by collecting and analyzing neighborhood-level data through the Quality of Life Study. Mecklenburg County helps democratize this information by publishing the data online in an easy to use web dashboard. In addition, Mecklenburg County utilizes this information to deliver services, prioritize investments, measure performance, identify policy solutions, and, together with many community partners, improve quality of life for the residents of Mecklenburg County.

Thank you for your consideration of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg application to the NNIP network. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 704-432-2163 or [timothy.tibbs@mecklenburgcountync.gov](mailto:timothy.tibbs@mecklenburgcountync.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy M. Tibbs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Timothy M. Tibbs  
Assistant to the County Manager

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