understanding
HOUSTON
Greater Houston Community Foundation

Out of 310 survey respondents, three out of four people agreed that their organization needs a single source of data for the region.

Houston is the country on fast forward. As one of the largest, fastest-growing and most diverse cities in America—with an economic engine that includes the energy capital of the world, one of the world's largest ports, and the world's largest medical center—what happens in Houston shapes the future—for our region and the nation.

We have lessons to share and challenges to face. We need a platform that helps us all understand the quality of life in our region, celebrate our successes, and spotlight our most pressing challenges in order to do what Houstonians do best—take action. **Our response is to initiate a highly collaborative, regional indicators project—Understanding Houston.** As an ongoing effort, Understanding Houston will be a major source of credible data, linking to resources provided by data partners, and tracking our progress on key measures over time for the region's three most populous counties—**Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery**.

WHAT: Greater Houston Community Foundation, in partnership with the Kinder Institute for Urban Research (Rice Kinder), will create a central resource for longitudinal data and trends on a broad range of issues affecting the Greater Houston region. **Understanding Houston entails building a new, highly interactive website that tells the Houston story** through compelling narrative, data visualizations, and life stories of Houstonians. In addition, we will publish a biennial brief sharing major data trends and engage a broad range of stakeholders in using these tools to learn and **think deeply about how we can—together—build a better Houston.**

TOP 5

Community members ranked the following issues as the most important to understand and track over time (229 survey respondents).

73% Community Context
(e.g. population, diversity, segregation)

66% Economic Development
(e.g. employment, wages, income, poverty)

63% Education
(e.g. school district performance, literacy)

54% Civic Engagement
(e.g. voting, community involvement)

51% Housing
(e.g. housing affordability, housing stock, homelessness)

HOW: Houston has the benefit of learning from over 300 indicators projects that have been established across the U.S., Canada, and Australia. **In fact, Houston is the only major metro without an ongoing indicators project.** This initiative will bring together disparate data across the three most populous counties (Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery) on the quality of life for residents in our region. The website will feature over 100 data points across important topics such as community context (i.e. demographics), economic opportunity, education, civic engagement, housing, health, transportation, the environment, and arts and culture.

WHO: Our primary audience is clear: any and all positive change-makers in Houston. The site will be designed to be accessible in user-interface and communication to enable a wide audience to engage. The site will be a resource for anyone, locally or nationally, interested in learning more about Houston and its strengths, opportunities, and challenges. Whether you are a **philanthropist** wanting to educate yourself on Houston's context to inform your giving or engagement in collaborative efforts; or a **nonprofit or policy staff** member who needs creditable data and research to make a case for a program or solution; or a **regional leader** in the public or private sector who decides where to allocate resources—the indicators project will be a valuable resource for you.

IMPACT: The three primary intended outcomes of the initiative are to:

1 **Increase awareness** of Houston's story and data resources, with regular updates over time;

2 Provide a platform for Greater Houston Community Foundation to **grow its community philanthropy** by informing its donors' decisions and convening cross-sector stakeholders to address the greatest needs of the region; and

3 **Inspire action** among people and partners to build their own solutions, and the use the data as a tool to support it.

We are developing an evaluation plan to support the learning, refinement, and assessment of impact for the initiative.

We cannot do this work alone. While initiated by Greater Houston Community Foundation and Rice Kinder, this project is designed to be highly collaborative. It cannot be successful without the active partnership and leadership of philanthropic funders and individual donors, data partners from private and public sectors, subject matter experts and researchers, civic and corporate leaders who can champion the effort, community-based organizations, and importantly—Houston residents themselves. The Greater Houston Community Foundation will lead robust engagement in 2019 to inform the Understanding Houston website and both the Foundation and Rice Kinder will lead engagements in 2020 to support data capacity building using the site and facilitate cross-sector conversations about our challenges.

FAQs

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US!
Contact Diana Zarzuelo at dzarzuelo@ghcf.org to learn more, partner, or provide your input.

How is this initiative different from previous Houston data indicators projects from other sources?
This project will leverage lessons learned and build on resources from three existing data projects in the Houston region. The Center for Houston's Future hosts a community indicators website for Houston, but no longer produces indicators reports. Our project is more focused on pressing issues and up to date. At Rice, the annual Kinder Houston Area Survey reveals residents' opinions about who we are as a region and where we are going. Also, Rice Kinder's Houston Community Data Connections site seeks to facilitate practical use of data for decision making and capacity building in Houston's disadvantaged communities. Essential to the Houston region, our initiative will complement Rice Kinder's efforts, while exploring different elements.

What kind of data will you make available?
Understanding Houston will begin by aggregating data from a multitude of credible sources to the county level for the three most populous counties in the region—Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery. Comparisons will be among these counties and with state and national data trends. Wherever possible, data will be discussed and analyzed using lenses of race/ethnicity, age, and gender. Existing resources from data partners will be linked to and/or leveraged as well.

Who are the key stakeholders in this partnership?
Greater Houston Community Foundation is leading the project with an intention to expand its philanthropic impact by educating and more deeply partnering with its donors throughout the Greater Houston region. The Rice Kinder Institute for Urban Research is our strategic research partner, with a mission to build better cities and improve people's lives by bringing together data, research, engagement, and action.
An advisory committee comprised of members of the Greater Houston Community Foundation Governing Board and community representatives will oversee and guide the project.

How is Understanding Houston funded?
To fund the proof of concept phase, the Greater Houston Community Foundation will raise funds from a few donors and private foundations that are interested in the initiative. Later in 2019 and in 2020, we anticipate launching a broader fundraising campaign that would include corporate and individual donors. This approach has been successful for other community foundations.

What is the time frame for Understanding Houston?
The initial release of data and report is scheduled for November 2019, with a second major update and report in 2021.

Advisory Committee

Laura Jaramillo
Wells Fargo
GHCF Governing Board & Committee Chair

Winell Herron
HEB

Quynh-Anh McMahan
The George Foundation

Elizabeth Love
Houston Endowment

Roxann Neumann
Silver Eagle Distributors

Julie Martineau
Montgomery County
Community Foundation

Shao-Chee Sim
Episcopal Health
Foundation

Nancy D. McGregor
GHCF
Governing Board

Jeff Taebel
Houston Galveston
Area Council