

NORTH DAKOTA COMPASS

2017 EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

What is ND Compass?

A North Dakota specific resource, ND Compass provides a curated collection of reliable, accurate, and unbiased data on a variety of topics. A project of the Center for Social Research at North Dakota State University, ND Compass helps identify, understand, and act on issues that affect communities, regions, and the state as a whole.

Data on the ND Compass website is supplemented with additional resources, tools, and narrative to provide more context and facilitate understanding. The ND Compass team promotes the use of quality data through presentations, workshops, articles, a monthly newsletter, social media, and partnerships in organizing local and state-wide events.

All of these are driven by the vision that the data and information provided will increase the capacity of community members and leaders to advance their goals and positively impact their communities.

“A program to promote improvement across the state.”

“The right solution for so many entities.”

Why is ND Compass needed?

ND Compass was designed to address a number of significant and specific needs in the state of North Dakota: dramatic demographic and economic changes in the state; limited number of data providers; lack of centralized information at the state level; lack of local data and limited resources to compile data and information for small- and mid-sized communities and organizations; support for nonprofits to identify and assess areas where their investment can have maximum impact; among others.

“In North Dakota so much is changing so rapidly.”

ND Compass' strengths

Overall users appreciate ND Compass for being a credible, trustworthy, and non-biased resource that provides curated, vetted, reliable, valid, and local data in a user-friendly format. ND Compass is seen as a one-stop source of information and a time saver. Users also prefer ND Compass because it contains understandable, simple, and straightforward statistics; statewide trends, charts, analysis and narrative; in addition to valuable tools and supplementary resources.



Is ND Compass website used?

The website usage continued to increase from the website launch in February 2013.

Usage
2013 - 2017

- 22,765 users
- 43,882 sessions
- 181,073 page views

During the years, it has been a balanced proportion of new and returning visitors continually gaining new users while maintaining a loyal base of returning visitors (52% new visitors and 48% returning visitors). The depth of website usage also increased as evidenced by the increase in the number of pages/session and the time spent on the website, especially for returning visitors.

“Having ND Compass as a resource really cuts down on the time spent looking for data. I can go in one place. I can trust the resources. I have confidence it’s solid and I won’t be questioned on the validity. The data is in a format that is accessible. You don’t have to be a researcher to understand it.”

Who are ND Compass' users?

Data on ND Compass is used by many people within a wide range of entities and professions. Users are affiliated with government, social service, research, education, media, community or neighborhood organizations, advocacy organizations, foundations, and private businesses.

Website users include:

- Leaders or employees of non-profit organizations, businesses, and local or state organizations
- Community leaders
- Legislators
- Researchers
- Educators
- Students
- Grant writers
- Grant makers
- Librarians
- Interested citizens

“I can't imagine going back and not having this – beyond description, it saves time and energy.”

Hear directly from the users:

“It is also very informative for our nonprofits. I encourage them to use ND Compass and I believe we get better proposals. We use ND Compass for grant reviews as needed.”

“ND Compass helps us formulate strategic priorities.”

“The trends, demographics as well as other information gives us an idea of who to prepare our market for in the future.”

“To determine what programs and services are needed in communities.”

“I used it to respond to policy decisions I was facing.”



What is ND Compass used for?

The evaluation confirmed the extensive use of the ND Compass website for:

- Strategic planning
- Community planning
- Program development
- Program planning
- Needs assessment
- Benchmarking
- To support the work of foundations (determine funding initiatives, validate statistics during grant review, prepare for board meetings)
- As a resource for NDSU Extension leadership and extension agents
- Policy making
- Business development
- Grant writing
- Presentations
- Interdisciplinary work
- Increase understanding about a topic, issue, or need

“[We] use the ND Compass data because it provides the data we need to write grants.”

Measuring ND Compass' impact on organizations and communities

ND Compass is used and valued but to what extent do data and information on ND Compass guide community decision making and help identify and act on issues that affect communities? Assessing and isolating the impact of ND Compass on organizations and communities is very challenging. Case studies illustrate the way organizations have used data and information on ND Compass to make an impact for their organizations and community.



United Way of Grand Forks, East Grand Forks and Area

Data on ND Compass helped the organization redefine their strategic direction, develop a strategic plan, measure progress, and validate results.

"We used ND Compass demographics and poverty data to build our 5-year strategic plan."

North Dakota State University Extension

NDSU Extension agents throughout the state use ND Compass to validate the need of programs for a specific area, improve community plans, and improve services offered to communities.

"All of our programming areas throughout the state use this site for data."

Legislators

Data and tools on ND Compass helped legislators better understand and communicate with their constituents and tailor policy decisions.

"I used [ND Compass] and even referred to it every day of the legislative session to make sure that the policy decisions I made were consistent with the people who were in my district."

North Dakota Association of Counties

Data on ND Compass increased the impact of the information provided by the organization to various audiences and improved the response during the legislative session.

"The data helps kick everything up a notch- the data, trends, and charts increase the impact of the information we provide to our various audiences."

Results highlighted in this document were compiled by ND Compass at the Center for Social Research at North Dakota State University, as a summary of the evaluation report prepared by the external evaluator EnSearch Inc, sponsored by the Bush Foundation.