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## **Backgrounder: What is an Indicator?**

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The Rauch Foundation has made a valuable contribution to the Long Island community with their sponsorship of the development of a series of statistical indicators and conduct of in-depth policy surveys. The indicators serve a number of purposes.

### Purposes of Indicators:

1. They are numerical measures of economic, social, demographic, cultural, transportation, land use, housing, real estate, public safety, political, etc., activities.
2. They can be arranged for comparative purposes:
  - a. Between different jurisdictions or locations, e.g., different governmental units, competing economic areas, etc.
  - b. Between periods of time, i.e., time series contrasts, e.g., census comparisons over the decades.
  - c. Can provide a synoptic pattern for community analysis.
3. They can be used for cross-tabulation purposes, i.e., the contrasts between different indices, e.g., income vs. housing, etc.
4. Although indicators are numerical values, they are, by implication, measures of policy. Therefore they are a surrogate measure of the effectiveness of policy - both positive and negative, and as such serve as an input to policy development or change.

### Surveys

1. Surveys or polling are indicators of attitudes and preferences (public opinion) that can be expressed in prose, numerical indicators, or percentages.
2. When coupled to statistical indicators, they serve as the normative input for policy-making.

### Import

These indicators and surveys provide a snapshot of present conditions, changes over time, measures of Long Island's competitive position, and set the path for future action by government, the business community, academia and citizens concerned with the proper development of this land.

