# Sustainable Indicators



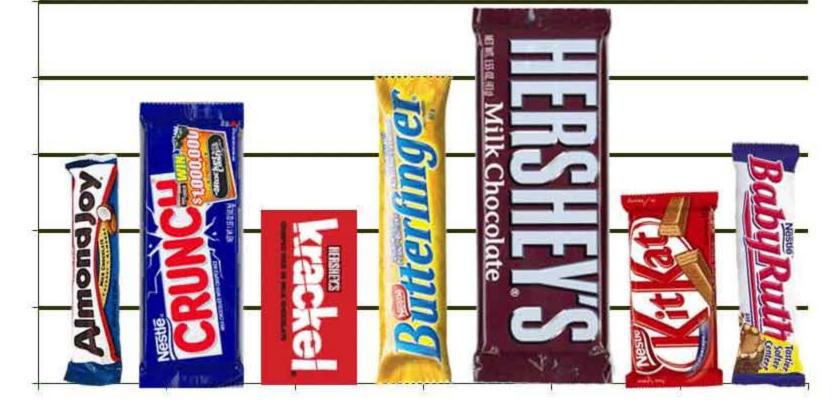
Garrett Dolan, Ph.D. Rice University, SSPEED Center June 2011





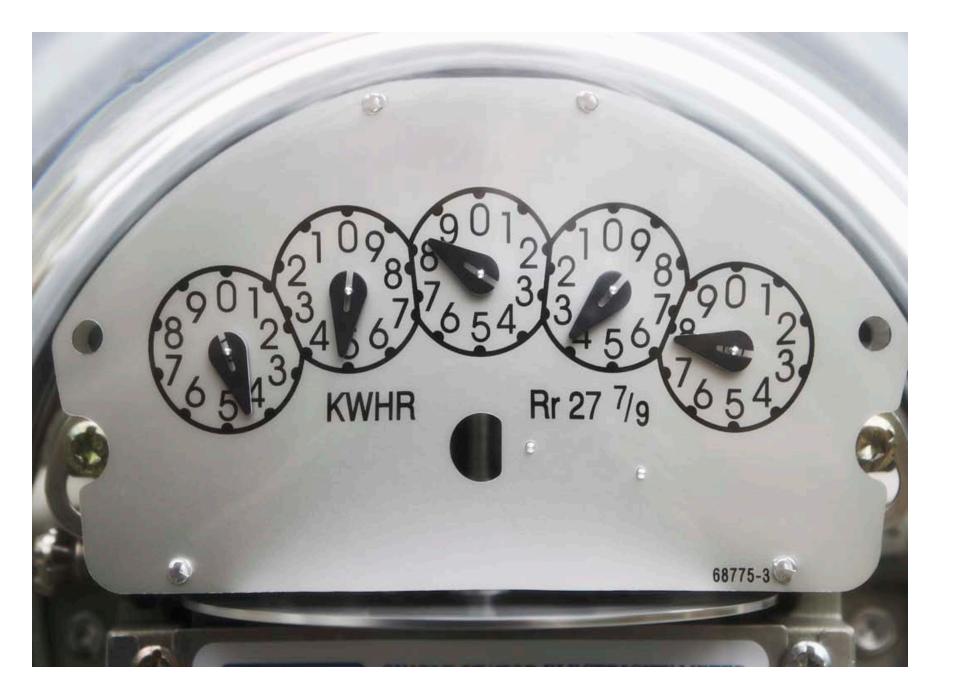


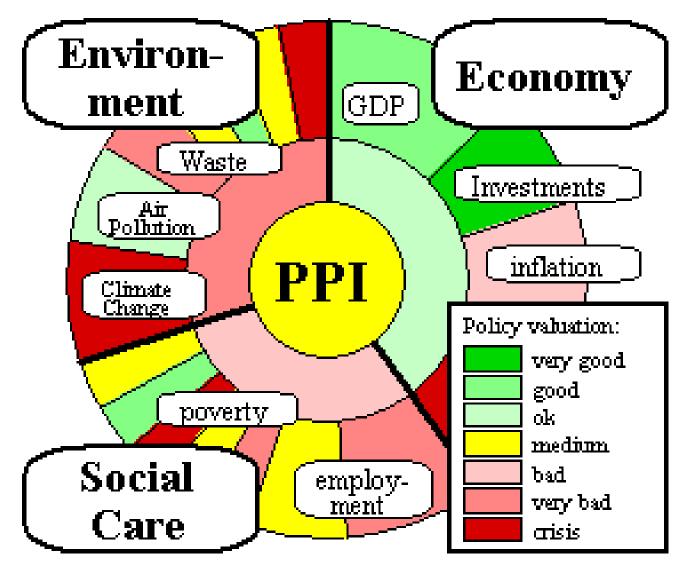
# Amount Of Chocolate



# **Candy Bar Chart**







Dashboard of Sustainability, http://esl.jrc.it/dc/pics/ppi\_fut.gif



# What is An "Indicator?"





 An indicator is something that helps you understand where you are, which way you are going and how far you are from where you want to be



# **Purpose of Indicators**

 To be able to understand and learn what is going on relative to the subject so that informed decisions can be made





# **Types of Indicators**

- Category Environmental, Social, Economic
- **Retrospective** Recycling rates
- **Predictive** Greenhouse gas projections
- Goal Indicator Matrix energy use to waste production; ...to income
- Pressure-State-Response-Impact
- Endowments # of college degrees to salary levels
- Systems population/acre

### **Coastal Comparative Examples**



| Traditional                  | Sustainable  | New Emphasis  |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Per capita income            | Amount of people earning a<br>wage that can support<br>dislocation and employment<br>disruption caused by<br>disasters | Changes focus from how<br>much people have to the<br>amount people need to deal<br>with major adversity |
| Tax revenue                  | Ratio of tax revenue to<br>support humans living in<br>flood prone areas versus safe<br>areas                          | Measures underlying<br>subsidies that may distort<br>public policy                                      |
| Number of fishing<br>permits | Ratio of permits awarded<br>versus rates of regeneration   | Changes focus from sheer<br>numbers to ratio needed for<br>sustainable social<br>/economic development  |

## Critical Issue #1: Conceptual Framework



 What is our agreed understanding of sustainable development such that it will help us make decisions?

#### Recommendation

- Do this first!
- Codify meaning and remind people often
- Process is as important as result



## Critical Issue #2: Definitional Ambiguity

#### Challenge

 Words have meaning and they are all subjective

#### Recommendation

- Define terms second!
  - Sustain, develop, community, indicator, carrying capacity





## Critical Issue #3: Time is of the Essence



#### Challenge

 How much time does a sustainable indicator require?

#### Recommendation

- Seek generational equity
- Sustainability = long-term

"In our every deliberation we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

-From the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

# Critical Issue #4: How Many?



#### Challenge

- Complex systems
- Multiple variables
- Personal issue

#### Recommendation

- Quality trumps quantity
- Keep user and purpose in mind

8-12 KPIS – McKinney Rogers

"Small as possible, but as large as necessary" – Hartmut Bossel

76 data sets into 21 indicators – ESI, Yale

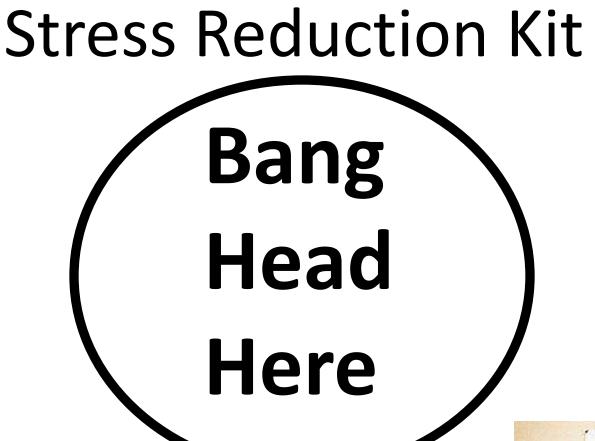
143 (now about 50) – UNCSD

"More than One" – Paradigms of Progress



## Recommendations – Next Steps

- Process is very important
- Secure leadership consensus on terminology <u>FIRST</u>
  - Principles, values and definition
- Develop small set of effective <u>CORE</u> indicators
  - Determine types of indicators wanted
  - Test suitability
- Can't do enough education and outreach
- Take a systems view
- Workshops
  - Definitional, indicator selection process, measurement methods, etc...



#### **Directions:**

- 1. Place kit on firm surface.
- 2. Follow directions in circle.
- 3. Repeat step 2 as necessary.
- 4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.

