

La Plata County Children, Youth and Family Master Planning Process Committee Report

Key Focus Area: Youth in Transition

Committee contributors:

Lisa Barrett	Alexa Hermesman	Mikayla Sanford
Michelle Bonanno	Doug Hunderman	Laurel Schwarbe
Katie Brown	Gail Johnston	Amber Schwartz
Rose Burek	Carson Jones	Lynn Stevens
Linda Clarkson	Brit Meiers	Justin Tafoya
Erin Cummins	Joe Miller	Liza Tregillus
Robin Duffy-Wirth	Stephanie Moran	Andrew VanOrsdale
Nick Durr	David Preszler	Regina Wells
John Gillam	Mari Rice	Ryan Wirth
Sarah Gorman	Aubrey Riegel	Sharon Wirth
Patricia Hauschild	Madeline Riegel	
Eli Herb	Jacque Romero	

What was the vision your committee used to drive its process?

“from LOST ... to FOUND!”

How did your committee define thriving in relationship to its key focus area?

The committee contributed to, and supports, the following thriving definition:

“Thriving youth and adults are steadily growing towards and becoming people with a positive sense of self, nurturing and responsible family members, effective communicators, people who make healthy life choices, involved community members and responsible global citizens, innovative problem solvers and appliers of a creative process, exemplary workers and lifelong learners, and caring and ethical individuals.”

The Youth In Transition committee determined that there are already a great number of La Plata County youth-serving organizations as well as county and state resources that focus on assisting young people dealing with the variety of transitions that have occurred naturally to them or have been imposed on them. When the committee explored the kinds of transitions that a young person encounters it was clear that they fell into two distinct categories: those over which the young person has little or no control (death of a family member, placement into foster care, illnesses to them or their caretaker, moving to a new community at a developmentally difficult time, loss of employment by a caretaker, etc.) and those for which the young person’s behaviors have been an influence (adjudication, expulsion or suspension from school, running away from home, failing in school, involvement with a negative peer group, etc.).

The committee, therefore, determined that the most strategic approach would be to focus on a recommendation that would have the greatest likelihood of impacting all youth and their caretakers so that they could increase the number of thriving indicators thereby decreasing the likelihood that a transition, whether externally imposed or internally created, would be debilitating. Based on the thriving definition, we believe that our recommendation will allow a young person and/or his or her caretaker(s) to be positively affected by all of the thriving indicators, with a very clear connection to the following:

- People who make healthy life choices;
- Involved community members and responsible global citizens;
- Innovative problem solvers and appliers of a creative process; and,
- Lifelong learners.

What is your committee’s strategic recommendation?

The Youth in Transition committee recommends that an informational system be created and maintained that connects everyone living and working in the county to the resources they need to thrive and/or to help those with whom they interact to thrive. This system must be:

- Comprehensive;
- Innovative;
- Interactive;
- Engaging;
- Easily accessible; and,
- User-friendly.

Recommendation Category: The following recommendation is a:

Policy Initiative Guideline Program Other _____

The Youth in Transition committee recommendation suggests that the two checked categories, policy and initiative, be addressed as follows:

Policy:

The Youth in Transition committee recommends that each governing body (County Commissioners, Durango City Council, Bayfield Board of Trustees and Ignacio Board of Trustees) and the School Boards for Districts 9-R, 10 JT-R, and 11JT adopt the following policy statement: (We recommend that each political and educational entity pass the same policy inserting its name where appropriate. The following is an example of the policy we recommend for the county.)

In partnership with the City of Durango, the Towns of Ignacio and Bayfield, as well as School Districts 9-R, 10 JT-R, 11JT, La Plata County acknowledges its responsibility to the children, youth and families residing in the county and commits to support them on their journey toward thriving.

Since information is power, providing access to the information and resources a person needs to thrive will increase that individual’s ability to control his or her own development. By making this information equally available to all La Plata citizens, the county will be greatly increasing the likelihood that young people are better prepared to make decisions and take actions that enhance their thriving and that the caregivers in these young people’s lives are more capable of becoming better asset builders.

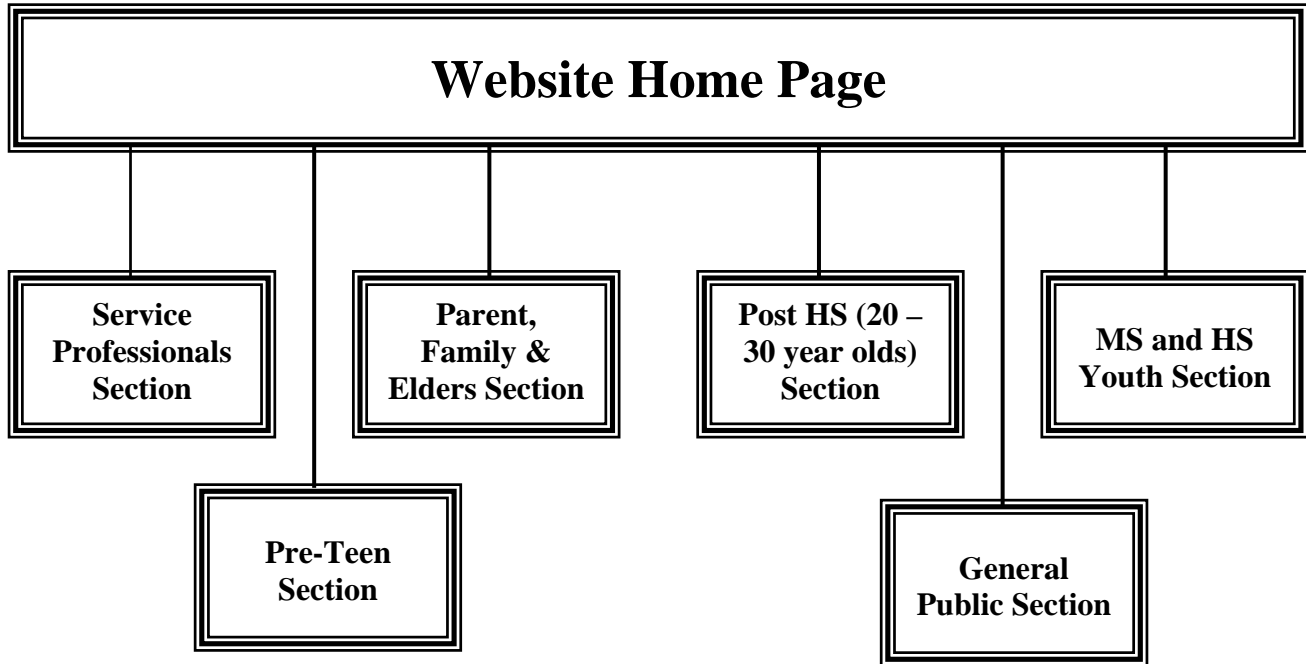
Therefore, La Plata County agrees to support and participate in the creation of a comprehensive information system that will provide our citizens easy access to the information and resources they need to thrive or to support those with whom they interact to thrive. We will also require of all those working for, or supported by, the county to provide access to their information and resources making it easier for others to thrive.

Initiative:

The Youth in Transition committee recommends that the primary arm of the informational system be a website that connects citizens, regardless of age to the information and resources they need to make thriving choices for themselves or for others. This website will be created by full time professionals, based on input from citizen advisory groups, and driven by a multitude of contributors to include:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| La Plata County | Fort Lewis College | Community Found. of SW CO |
| City of Durango | School District 9-R | Brainstorm Internet |
| Town of Ignacio | School District 10JT-R | San Juan Basin Health Depart |
| Town of Bayfield | School District 11JT | Pueblo Community College |
| Southern Ute Indian Tribe | United Way of SW Colorado | |

While the final website will be influenced by those identified to staff and to advise and will be adapted daily based on citizen input, the following represents the committee's best thinking as to its structure.



To further describe the above sections the committee collected and compiled the following suggestions:

Overall Site Suggestions: (In no particular order)

- ❑ Oversight group needs to remain aware throughout the site's planning, implementation and maintenance phases that its overall purpose is to increase thriving for all citizens of La Plata.
- ❑ Both drop down menus and a search tool should be considered as navigation tools on all pages
- ❑ Consider using some type of consistent and recognizable figure/icon that would connect all the pages. It could also serve as a personal guide that could be programmed to return those revisiting to their favorites. A kind of Quick Start button.
- ❑ The site should never appear overwhelming, regardless of the amount of links/data on each link.
- ❑ Need to make it accessible to everyone regardless of where they live in the county: home, school, public buildings and office (including phone/blackberry connections), as well as kiosks for tourists and those away from a computer. Kiosks could be in banks, in restaurants, hotels, etc.
- ❑ The website office should be located somewhere that isn't connected to any one community. One practical idea would be the Fort Lewis College. This would accomplish the neutrality of the site, but would also ensure accessibility to interns and to those at the college seeking service opportunities. It also locates the offices in a location that will have access to a wealth of intellectual resources.
- ❑ An effort should be made to ensure the site has a "personal" touch throughout. Residents should be able to post "my space" sites and blogs. There also should be places to post art, writings, etc. Personals, classifieds can be included as well. The more people feel like the site is theirs as well as the community's the more likely they will be to keep returning.
- ❑ There needs to be an easy way for users to make recommendations for improving the overall site or any specific page. Consider a contest with prizes for the ideas that get incorporated.
- ❑ A paid, full-time Webmaster is essential to the success of this site. This can't be a volunteer effort or a task that is regulated to a secretary or staff member with other responsibilities. In

addition to the FT Webmaster there will need to be additional staff employed to handle administrative responsibilities. In addition the site will need interns and volunteers to be recruited and trained to create the different site sections and to ensure they are updated daily or as needed. Each section should also have a volunteer advisory group that is made up of those who represent a section's target audience (professionals, parents, MS/HS students, those in the 20-30 year old range, pre-teens and community members at large). These groups will advise the Webmaster as to the direction, additions, deletions or other suggestions germane to their section.

- ❑ Need to be aware of broadband size so the site doesn't overwhelm the server.
- ❑ Marketing the site will be critical. Similar, even if much smaller, sites from other communities need to be contacted for assistance on how they marketed. A budget for this will be needed, but it should shrink as the community becomes more and more familiar with the site and its value.
- ❑ The ongoing budget for this effort will be relatively static regardless of growth. Creating a partnership among the county's municipalities, local Foundations, the United Way, the Southern Ute Tribe, and the college would be the best way to proceed. A decision needs to be made as to whether advertising will be allowed. This could reduce the resources needed from the partners.
- ❑ There needs to be ways to safeguard those who visit the site. Different safeguards would be on each section. (See more at individual section recommendations)
- ❑ Need to create, post and enforce guidelines for what can be posted and what can't.
- ❑ A "permission to link" form will need to be developed that identifies agreements between this website and others. This form will be kept on file.
- ❑ Need to explore ways to create an internal connectivity between all the sections. This will reinforce to the community that everyone is working together to make sure all citizens thrive.
- ❑ The entire site, each section, and possibly each subsection should record "hits" and "revisits".

Home Page Suggestions: (In no particular order)

- ❑ Need an site name that is appealing to all the groups on which the site will be focusing. Name or visuals can't be associated with any one community.
- ❑ Page needs to be visually inviting and crisp (not cluttered).
- ❑ Very few words on home page. It needs to connect people quickly to what they are seeking. The concept is that the site is in effect a local GOOGLE.
- ❑ Could use some form of contest to name the site.
- ❑ The more inviting the home page layout, the more potential it has as a marketing tool.
- ❑ Consider offering a basic site, no frills navigational system and one driven by Flash.

Service Professionals Section Suggestions: (In no particular order)

- ❑ A primary purpose for this section is to allow La Plata residents and other service organizations to quickly and easily find what they need to know about a service organization. Those seeking services or information should use this site as their site of choice for finding out which service is most appropriate for them to pursue. This can and should be able to be done with confidentiality.
- ❑ Information of all local service organizations would be posted. This could be a link to their existing organizational website or one that they create specifically for this site. Those that serve parents and families would also be linked to the Parent and Family section, those serving HS students to the HS site, etc.
- ❑ This section's advisory group would develop minimum requirements for each organization to follow when creating their link. For an organization to be posted it would have to agree to provide at a minimum that information and to provide updated information when appropriate.
- ❑ Consider creating a password-protected component of this section that would allow professionals to communicate about shared clients. (This would need a great deal of research and would not be part of the initial site development)

- ❑ This section could allow individuals and organizations to pose questions to which other professionals could respond.
- ❑ This section could advertise upcoming training in which individuals could enroll. People could also use the site to determine interest in a training or information sharing opportunity.
- ❑ Organizations should be required to post their 1099 forms for the public to review. Could be a localized GuideStar system. (A national database of organizational 1099s.)
- ❑ Organizations could post upcoming events, fund-raisers, or changes they want others to know.
- ❑ Organizations could use the site to survey La Plata County residents about an issue with which they are struggling or about which they want more information.
- ❑ Organizations may also grant their clients or patrons “membership” access to their site with a password. This can make participating in the organization more appealing.
- ❑ This section would also allow professionals and others to link to related state, national and international sites of interest.

Parent and Family Section Suggestions: (In no particular order)

- ❑ A primary purpose of this section is for parents of La Plata to quickly and easily find information and resources that will enhance their ability to be better parents, connect with other parents for support, to gain access to family-friendly ideas for fun and/or growth opportunities, and to get questions answered regarding the personal or family-related issues with which they are dealing. We want parents living in La Plata to use this site as their site of choice.
- ❑ Connect this section to the Early Childhood Development Committee’s recommendation to create and maintain healthy child partnerships to support children from prenatal to 6 years of age.
- ❑ Have a link to all things prenatal and make sure that parents living in the County are given information about this link when they see their doctors.
- ❑ Have a link on ways for parents to ensure that their child is prepared to enter school capable of learning and ready to read.
- ❑ Parent support information would be available based both on the ages of children and their area of interest.
- ❑ Consider a question line that would be divided into categories with each category connected to an organization(s) that specialized in the category. Questions would be anonymous and responses would be made daily and posted so everyone could learn. Responses would be assigned to different organizations for response. If people wanted further information or felt they needed to connect with someone directly they could call the organization for an appointment.
- ❑ Consider an online parenting newsletter with tips and pointers on parenting and other family related information.
- ❑ Consider a chat room for parents, especially new moms.
- ❑ Consider a “For Dads Only” section that helps them know what they need to consider when helping their children to thrive.
- ❑ Consider having pages that allow parents to chime in on issues that affect them in the county or their city or town. This would provide a direct link to the most appropriate local government.
- ❑ Make the connections that allow parents to access information on their child’s schools.
- ❑ Consider allowing each parent to have a password link to his or her child’s teacher. This would be designed to allow them to see the homework given, to ask the teacher a question, and to allow them to give the teacher a heads up on things that might be negatively impacting their child’s ability to learn.
- ❑ Find ways that will allow parents to post things they want to share with others, i.e. recipes, poems, tips on parenting tricks that worked for them, etc.

- ❑ Consider a section that would include contests that would provide prizes to the winners. Prizes would be things to promote positive parenting and thriving and would be donated by local businesses.
- ❑ This section would also allow parents and others to link to related state, national and international sites of interest.

Post-HS Section Suggestions: (In no particular order)

- ❑ A primary purpose of this section is to allow the young adults living in La Plata to quickly and easily find information and resources that will enhance their ability to make the connections needed to find affordable housing, find jobs, build skills, learn what's happening that is of interest to them, find meaningful service opportunities and to allow them to connect with others their age. We want the 20-something's living in La Plata to use this site as their site of choice.
- ❑ Young adults would have a one-stop center for local jobs, internships and volunteer opportunities. This site would also serve as a recruitment site for employers. This could be much more detailed than classifieds that are restricted by cost and space.
- ❑ Consider creating a social page that would provide insights into what was going on in the county that would appeal to this age group. Chat rooms and blogs would be housed here.
- ❑ Consider having pages that were designed to answer questions that site visitors were struggling with personally.
- ❑ Consider a "Looking for a Roommate" page that would also include information about affordable housing and tips on how to move from a renter to a homeowner.
- ❑ Consider a page on ways to deal with separating from parents in positive ways and also how to deal with the failing health of parents.
- ❑ Consider having pages that allow this age group to chime in on issues that relate to them in the county. This would provide a direct link to the most appropriate local government.
- ❑ Consider having local and regional colleges make intentional links to this age group allowing them to learn about what these colleges offer and how they can become a matriculated or non-matriculated student.
- ❑ Find ways that will allow this age group to post things they want to share with others, i.e. music, poems, art, etc.
- ❑ Have a "register to vote" page that includes information about the political candidates (local, state and national) and how they can become politically active.
- ❑ Consider a question line that would be divided into categories with each category connected to an organization that specialized in the category. Questions would be anonymous and responses would be made daily and posted so everyone could learn. Responses would be assigned to different organizations for response. If an individual wanted further information or felt he or she needed to connect with someone directly they could call the organization for an appointment.
- ❑ This section would also allow those in their 20s and others to link to related state, national and international sites of interest.

MS/HS Youth Section Suggestions: (In no particular order)

- ❑ A primary purpose of this section is to allow the youth between the ages of 12 and 20 living in La Plata to quickly and easily find information and resources that will enhance their ability to thrive. It will allow them to connect to their school and teachers, get confidential help, learn what fun and interesting opportunities are available for their age group, and to visit safe yet fun pages that will enhance their lives. We want the MS and HS aged youth living in La Plata to use this site as their site of choice.
- ❑ With the vast number of sites targeting this age group it will be most important that this site be appealing and ever changing so that we increase the likelihood that users will continue to return.

- ❑ This section would combine things directed at both MS-aged youth and HS-aged youth because the MS-aged youth would probably spend more time on the HS page than on their own.
- ❑ MS and HS aged youth would have a one-stop center for part-time or seasonal employment, internships and volunteer opportunities. This site would also serve as a recruitment site for employers.
- ❑ Consider having pages that allow these age groups to chime in on issues that relate to them in the county. This would provide a direct link to the most appropriate local government.
- ❑ Students would be able to link to their classroom teachers for their assigned homework.
- ❑ Make the connection between this section and the Youth Development Committee's recommendation to increase the number of opportunities young people have to meaningfully contribute to their schools, neighborhoods and community. In this section young people would learn about those opportunities.
- ❑ Consider a question line that would be divided into categories with each category connected to an organization that specialized in the category. Questions would be anonymous and responses would be made daily and posted so everyone could learn. Responses would be assigned to different organizations for response. If an individual wanted further information or felt he or she needed to connect with someone directly they could call the organization for an appointment.
- ❑ For those youth turning 18, have a "register to vote" page that includes information about the political candidates (local, state and national) and how they can become politically active.
- ❑ Have a page about what you need to know and do when you turn 18.
- ❑ This section should have a lot of contests and games that appeal to these age groups. Prizes should be ones that promote thriving and are donated by local businesses.
- ❑ Consider a page that would link HS students to sites that will help them with their efforts to choose the right college for them or to locate post HS training, i.e. GED, trade schools etc. These pages would also link to places offering scholarships and student loans.
- ❑ Consider a page that would address the issues youth face with transitioning out of the home.
- ❑ Find ways that will allow these age groups to post things they want to share with others, i.e. music, poems, art, etc.
- ❑ This section would also allow MS and HS youth to link to related state, national and international sites of interest.

Pre-teen Section Suggestions: (In no particular order)

- ❑ A primary purpose of this section is to allow parents with pre-teens to quickly and easily find safe, fun, educational and age-appropriate pages where they can feel confident allowing their child to visit. We want La Plata parents and pre-teens to use this site as their site of choice.
- ❑ All links would be pre-reviewed for safety and age appropriateness by professionals within the community.
- ❑ While the focus of the pages in this section would be to provide fun things to do, all would also be learning tools as well.
- ❑ Those young people visiting this site who already attend pre-school or school would be able to link to their classrooms and their teachers for their assigned homework. Parents would be able to use this link to communicate with their child's teacher.
- ❑ This section should have a lot of contests and games that appeal to these age groups. Prizes should be ones that promote thriving and are donated by local businesses.
- ❑ Find ways that will allow these age groups to post things they want to share with others, i.e. music, poems, art, etc.
- ❑ Consider having pages that teach young people to read or improve their reading skills.
- ❑ Consider having links to sites that are designed to help students gain skills in the subjects in which they struggle.

- ❑ Find ways that will allow these age groups to post things they want to share with others, i.e. music, poems, art, etc.
- ❑ This section would also allow the parents of pre-teens to link to related state, national and international sites of interest.

General Public Section Suggestions: (In no particular order)

- ❑ A primary purpose of this section is to allow residents of La Plata to quickly and easily find information and resources that will enhance their ability to live, play, work, worship and socialize in ways that advance thriving. We want those living in La Plata to use this site as their information site of choice.
- ❑ This section could also be very beneficial for tourists or those interested in visiting the county.
- ❑ This section would link to all the other sections, with this one being more about quick connections to useful information.
- ❑ A community calendar would contain all of the events, activities and meetings open to the public being offered in the county on any given day.
- ❑ Emergency information could be quickly found here, including closings or cancellations due to weather or public health warnings.
- ❑ Consider using this section to collect input from citizens on issues about which the county, city and towns, businesses, organizations or schools want input.

What was the support data used to arrive at this recommendation?

The primary data for this recommendation came from the experiences of those who served on the committee. Based on input from the very diverse representation of professionals on the committee we learned about the lack of communication, collaboration and sharing that currently exists among the children, youth and family non-profits and governmental service providers. We learned that very rarely are resources pooled for the good of the customer. We learned that “working together” usually meant agreeing to collaborate on a grant so that each could get money to do their own thing. While there were very positive exceptions to these realities, they were far from the norm. We also heard examples of how many providers felt that sharing too much information about their organization would put them at a competitive disadvantage. This meant that citizens would likely only hear what the organization wanted them to hear and the more comprehensive and descriptive information would be much harder to obtain.

Based on the input from the diverse representation of youth, 20-30 year olds and older adults on the committee we learned about the lack of knowledge citizens have about what is available for them both when in need and when seeking recreational and fun things to do. We also learned that, while there is a very active countywide advocacy group for infants and young children, there is no such group advocating for those between 6 and 20 years old or for the families of this age group. We learned that it is almost impossible for young people to know where to turn when they do not have a positive and open relationship with their parents and we learned that the more issues a young person or his or her family are experiencing the less likely they are to know where to turn.

The Developmental Asset Survey results were provided to the committee fairly late in their deliberation process, so more than driving the recommendation the data supported the decisions that had already been made.

Please explain your committee’s justification for selecting this recommendation?

Many of the youth in La Plata County are struggling to thrive! The Developmental asset survey recently administered to a representative sample of 972 young people, age 11 – 19, indicates that the county’s youth perceive themselves as having less than half the assets needed to thrive. Research indicates that the fewer assets one has the greater the likelihood that he or she will be involved in high-risk behaviors and the less likely that he or she will perceive him or herself as thriving.

The young people serving on the committee or whose opinions were collected in focus groups or individual interviews were asked if they had knowledge of what was available in the county that would help them thrive. Most indicated that they had no idea of what was available for them, even within the school they attended or in the neighborhood in which they lived. They also indicated that this lack of easily accessible information made it unlikely that they would take the next step to conduct a more in-depth search for the information they wanted or needed. These young people also indicated that they did not view themselves as in charge of their choices nor did they believe they would be given input into the decisions that impacted their lives. So, without information and with others assuming responsibilities for their choices, many county youth have become apathetic about making positive life decisions for themselves, thereby running the increased risk of their becoming involved with negative peers and high risk behaviors.

Some other examples of how this lack of information impacts the thriving indicators of the county's youth include:

- ❑ Only 14% of those surveyed spend three or more hours a week involved in activities that promote the development or expression of the creative arts. Young people and their parents consistently reported that they have no idea of what is available, where it is being offered, or how much it costs. They also reported that do not know where to begin looking, either. They also report that they would love to know more about their choices, especially in the area of creativity.
- ❑ Only 57% of those surveyed spend three or more hours a week in sports, clubs or organizations within their school or community. Again, young people report that they wish that there was more to do and many indicate that they don't know any, or only a few, organizations that offer fun things to do and great places to learn. The reality is that the county has hundreds of opportunities and organizations that they never heard of and have no idea about what they offer.
- ❑ Only 37% of those surveyed feel they have any control over things that happen to them and only 32% indicated that they know how to plan ahead and make choices. Research points to these two factors as reasons for a decrease a young person's motivation to participate. It is logical that when both choice and information is withheld or unavailable, thriving decreases and high-risk behavior increases.

From both the Developmental Asset and the Healthy Kids Colorado Surveys, the data appears to indicate that many of our young people are falling through the cracks and only 11% believe they have enough assets to believe that their chances of thriving are excellent. The following is a summary of the reasons youth gave the committee as to why:

- ❑ They do not know where to go to find out what is being offered and where.
- ❑ The challenges/needs of their family are often going unaddressed because of a lack of information of what to do and where to go to get help.
- ❑ Many young people have a perception that they are not safe in their community and school (Females report feeling unsafe at a rate 20% higher than their male counterparts). This feeling often keeps them from participating.
- ❑ Many of their families are grappling with limited available resources. Making a bad choice about joining an activity or group can cost money and will limit further attempts in the future.
- ❑ A lack of willingness by both young people and adults to make the extra effort to find what is available and an often laissez' faire attitude about helping others in their neighborhood or community get what they need also contributes to young people not being exposed to the thriving opportunities they need.
- ❑ When young people's academic concerns/problems are not taken seriously they fall behind, and when they are behind academically they rarely have time to participate in extra-curricula activities. Without a well-rounded life experience, thriving becomes far more difficult.

What is this recommendation's overall intended impact on the healthy development of La Plata County's children and youth and/or how will it support its families?

When fully implemented, the following represents a few of the ways that the La Plata County Information System will positively influence the children, youth and families living here:

- ❑ Parents of young children will be confident that the sites that are posted in the system are safe, wholesome and positive learning opportunities. For many parents this easy-to-find, easy-to-access opportunity will promote an increase in the time their children spend in positive learning experiences. This should be especially important during the child's pre-school years as it will help prepare them to enter school ready to read and able to learn. It will also help the children create an attitude that learning is fun, a concept that is critical in promoting thriving.
- ❑ Parents will also have an increased amount of access to a variety of services that will assist them in raising their children. Currently, parents either have no idea who can help them or believe that their only help is in a governmental department, i.e. Department of Human Services or the Health Department. The information system will expand the number of possibilities, increase their ability to make informed decisions and in the long run increase their ability to get the best, most accessible services, at the most reasonable cost. The reduction in stress and the resource savings will help to keep the home more stable and thriving.
- ❑ Parents will no longer have to feel they have no support in raising their children. The information system, through its connections to support groups, chat rooms, question lines, etc. will provide parents the opportunity to feel supported, heard, and confident that they are not alone. Confident and informed parents can spend more time focusing on helping their children thrive.
- ❑ First time parents will have a plethora of easy-to-find, easy-to-access resources to ensure that their child is born healthy, gets the proper health supports during the key developmental ages, and that the parents feel a part of a "fraternity" of people experiencing the same joys, fears, and concerns. This should greatly reduce the number of first time parents who become so frustrated that they react inappropriately to the child.
- ❑ Human service professionals, for the first time will be able to access a single source for the information they need to make the best decisions for those they serve. The information system will be a resource where professionals can access vital information, build skills, and connect with other organizations, groups and individuals that will help them increase the likelihood that the youth and families they serve are better able to thrive.
- ❑ Human service professionals will be able to provide information within their fields of expertise to every citizen in the county, not just those they directly serve. This has the potential of greatly reducing the number of "office visits" needed, which will reduce the amount of hours away from school or work and will provide more time for families to be together for thriving reasons.
- ❑ Young people who have concerns about which they are reluctant to speak to their parents will be able to confidentially access information that will help them appropriately resolve their concerns. This is critically important because the results from the Developmental Assets survey indicated two very alarming findings: only 28% of the county's youth believe that their parents and other adults in their lives model positive and responsible behaviors; and, only 51% indicated that they would go to their parents with a problem. The information system will not be a way to circumvent parents or to eliminate them from this important role, but it will be a way for young people to gain the confidence they need to approach their parents, bringing them into the loop.
- ❑ Young people in the county are constantly stating that, "there is nothing to do, and no place to go". While the county, and in particular the towns, do lack a variety of fun, safe and youth friendly opportunities, there are quite a few that are going underutilized. Easy-to-find, easy-to-access information about what is available will reduce this problem.

- ❑ Making sure that the best and brightest youth remain or return to live and work in the county is critical to the community's long-term viability and sustainability. Allowing young people to contribute and serve the community is a well-documented way of increasing the likelihood that they will want to raise their own families here. The information system will serve a vital connecting role for these age groups.
- ❑ Because the creation of this site will combine the expertise of highly skilled webmasters, the technological intuitiveness of the youth, the personal insights of advisors that represent the target population and the ongoing opinions for improvement from those that use it, the La Plata Information System will continuously improve how it enhances thriving for an ever-increasing number of people.

Who needs to be part of insuring this recommendation is realized?

The municipalities of La Plata County, City of Durango, Town of Ignacio, and the Town of Bayfield will need to contribute financial support, pass the policy that requires their staff and those they support to fully participate, and have their governing bodies always seek ways to connect their decisions to the information system.

The Southern Ute Indian Tribe could also contribute financial support and we hope they see the value for their staff and tribal members to become active participants in providing to and accessing information from the site.

Fort Lewis College will be the most logical location for the website office to locate. It is a politically neutral location and, because of its community-based learning and research (COBLAR) initiative, will be able to provide a wealth of interns and those seeking service opportunities. We hope that the college will donate the space and support the website as a primary placement location for students.

The 9-R, 10JT-R, and 11JT School Districts will need to help in many ways. These include making computers featuring the website available to all students and faculty, using the website as a learning tool within curricula, requiring staff to contribute information and support question-lines for parents and students.

The United Way of Southwest Colorado and the Community Foundation of Southwest Colorado will need to contribute financial support and also require organizations funded by them to participate fully in the information system.

Local businesses will need to find ways to support this information system because it is good for their businesses. An example of this support is that Brainstorm Internet has indicated its willingness to provide the site free of cost and will also provide technical assistance in the system's developmental stage. If it is determined that the site will allow advertising then local businesses can contribute by placing ads on the site.

San Juan Basin Health Department will need to agree to participate separately from the local municipalities since it is a state organization. We trust that the Health Department will agree to staff a number of the question-lines and will be willing to provide updated information as appropriate.

Local non-profits and for-profits that serve the county's children, youth and families will of course make up the bulk of the information posted on the site. The success of the site will be dependent on these organizations participating.

For this recommendation to be successfully implemented what shifts or changes (if any) are needed in the county's infrastructure?

The municipalities within the county will need to understand that service providers, both internal and external to government, have not to date found significant ways to come together around service delivery or to collaborate to reduce duplication. This shift may only occur if there are funding consequences to not collaborating or for being unwilling to share their resources and information with others.

This initiative will only work if a common ground can be identified--one where everyone benefits: citizens, providers, municipalities, organizations, etc. Finding common ground begins with the willingness to look for it and then builds when people communicate in the spirit of dialogue, not debate. Dialogue is a form of communication that asks participants to suspend their judgments in an effort to find common ground. The goal is always to create a better whole rather than selecting the best idea from the many ideas in the room.

The non-profits and service departments within the municipalities will need to shift who they view as their consumers. By focusing only on those with a definable issue or those that fit within a certain limited target group, these organizations are allowing the bigger causal issues to grow, thereby ensuring that the numbers in need will continue to grow. Using this approach within a community almost always means the resources a community has to address issues are never enough.

La Plata citizens will need to learn that the information they need or want is now available to them almost instantaneously and when it isn't they have the tools and the power to find ways to get it. All of this can be done without having to travel, identify themselves, or pay for it. While this may sound wonderful to some, it will be overwhelming or scary to others. Support and effective marketing will be key to shifting this paradigm.

What specific strategies for implementing this recommendation does your committee suggest?

- Create a developmental team that will help create the initial strategy for creating the information system. This team will include technology experts, administrative staff from the participating municipalities and the college.
- Present CY&FMP plan to municipalities.
- Municipalities and School Boards approve the policy recommendation
- Locate suitable office space for site and wire it to handle sufficient broad band
- Securing funding for creation and maintenance of information system
- Hire webmaster and administrative staff
 - Form advisory groups for each section of website
 - Recruit interns and service project people to assist in creation of site
 - Contract with Brainstorm for site
- Make the site operational
- Create Kiosk locations and make them operational
- Market site throughout the county
- Evaluation system and adjust as indicated

The Youth in Transition Committee believes that the return on investment for La Plata County will be threefold:

1. Information and resources will be easier to find and easier to access for all citizens. When people have a way to find what they need or want, when they need or want it, it naturally reduces dependency and when dependency is reduced confidence and self-reliance increases.
2. Information and resources will be easier to find and easier to access for all professionals and service organizations as well. This should influence their collaboration and networking both with each other and to the strategic agenda's of the community in which they provide services. Funding sources, for the first time will be able to see overlap, assess how resources are being allocated, where gaps exist and be able to hear directly from citizens about problems that exist within the human services network.
3. It will become clearer that each citizen, regardless of age, has a role in creating a thriving community. "What can I do to help?" will be answered, "There's nothing to and no place to go" will be challenged, and "Why didn't I know about that?" will be a question of the past.