

**Scott County Delivers
Community Outreach & Engagement
February 15, 2022**



Panel Representatives:

Tracy Cervenka, Administrative Office Supervisor
Jake Grussing, Library Director
Chris Harder, Quality Improvement Manager
Luke Hennen, County Sheriff
Marleny Huerta-Apanco, Community Outreach Officer
Mark Kendall, Community Outreach Officer
Cara Madsen, Volunteer and Community Coordinator

Results Map:

- **Livable:** Diverse local services, community education, arts, cultural and shopping options
- **Responsible:** Policy makers listen and respect citizens' points of view and create a government that works for the people
- **Responsible:** Provides understandable and accurate information

Community Indicator(s):

- Population Demographics by Race and Ethnicity
- Citizen Rating of the Job Scott County Government Does at Listening to Residents
- Citizen Rating of the Job Scott County Government Does at Informing Residents

Scott County Board Objective/Strategy:

- **Objective – Performance:** Identify and implement changes to service delivery leading to improved outcomes
 - **Strategy:** Broaden community participation in all aspects of planning, decision-making, and plan implementation

What goal are you trying to accomplish:

Community outreach and engagement is about building relationships with our communities in a way that invites people to be part of solving problems and implementing solutions. The goal of Scott County's community outreach and engagement efforts is to understand what is working and not working for the individuals, families, and businesses directly and indirectly impacted by our decisions, policies, and services. We do that by creating opportunities for participation, listening to resident input, and working together on creative solutions.

Background:

Scott County has a long, successful history of engaging its residents. Through advisory groups, the SCENE and other newsletters, resident surveys, social media, and much more, the County has made it a priority to keep residents informed of what's happening and why, and to create opportunities for participation in their government. At the department and program level throughout the organization, staff use a variety of tactics to inform and consult with residents.

Similarly, up to this point residents have informed County planning and decision-making processes by providing input directly to Commissioners, responding to the resident survey, and making their voices heard through existing opportunities (public meetings, advisory groups, open houses, etc.). As the County Board developed its current Strategic Plan, a focus on broadening community participation in all aspects of planning, decision-making, and plan implementation was identified, with the expectation that over time the broadened participation would change service delivery and lead to improved outcomes.

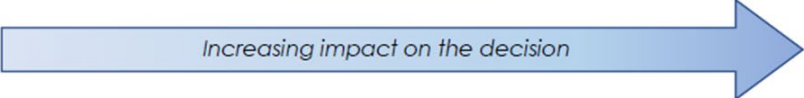
It is important to note that we intend to build upon the good work noted above to reimagine how we engage those directly and indirectly impacted by our decisions, policies, and services. Engaging our community will help Scott County provide better, more resident-focused services and promote a broader and deeper understanding of the services we provide and why. Our community engagement strategies focus on asking residents for their participation, listening to their input, and—through the partnerships we create—reaching creative solutions that improve opportunities and experiences. To make realistic progress toward achieving that, we need to have a cohesive and coherent org-wide approach to community engagement.

One framework for examining community engagement was developed by the International Association of Public Participation. The chart on the next page shows a continuum of engagement styles, ranging from Informing residents (limited community impact on decisions) to Empowering residents (high impact, community-driven, government supported). The continuum does not reflect increasing value or quality as it moves from left to right (e.g. it is not always better to be using an Empowerment approach). In fact, good community engagement relies on matching the engagement strategy and the level of resident impact to the project needed:

- For example, staff from the Property Taxation program would be disingenuous to invite community input into property taxation structures or timelines, which are statutorily mandated and directed by the state -- although they do bring forward legislative change initiatives for improvement. Staff members from Property Taxation can, and do work to be clear in the information they share with the community to help people understand; provide presentations and training to community groups; invite comments and are responsive to questions, and proactively identify tax benefits of which the tax payer maybe unaware.
- The Sheriff's Office uses many Collaboration strategies to help residents understand their roles and processes, but also actively seeks information from residents on how the Sheriff's Office can be helpful and responsive. Some of this engagement comes through special events, like public presentations, significant social media presence, diversity recruitment events, etc. Some efforts, like the Citizens' Academy and the Youth Fishing Derby have more than 20 years of successful engagement with community members. Equally important are the opportunities to engage residents organically – through individual, unplanned meetings with residents or through respectful, compassionate approaches to people who are struggling.

Matching the strategy with the project/goal creates an authentic invitation to share information and perspectives that add meaning and value, leading to stronger solutions – and not simply complying with an organizational expectation for engagement.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision from development to solution.	Shared leadership of community-led projects with final decision-making at the community level.
Style	"Here's what's happening."	"Here are some options, what do you think?"	"Here's a problem, what ideas do you have?"	"Let's work together to solve this problem."	"You care about this issue and are leading an initiative, how can we support you?"
Tools & Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites • Fact sheets and brochures • Newsletters • Displays • Reports • Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings • Online forum • Social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community workshops • Crowdsourcing • Community mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset-based community development • Delegated decision-making



Increasing impact on the decision

WHAT'S WORKING WELL:

In 2021, a small workgroup created a draft of a Community Engagement charter that was later reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and approved by the County Board. There were four key deliverables in that charter:

Establish a framework for community engagement that promotes empathy, respect, and understanding of issues and service needs from multiple perspectives.

- In 2021, the fall DWM small group presentations included information about the County Board's strategy to broaden community participation, the Community Engagement charter, and engagement spectrum. These meetings were a first step toward building a common understanding of what community engagement is, why it is a focus, and what it hopes to achieve. It also confirmed the assumption that all departments conduct some type of community engagement.
- Also in the fall of 2021, staff scheduled focused, deep-dive conversations with leadership in each division to begin the inventory of current engagement strategies being used across the organization, identifying what has been tried, what has worked, what has not worked, and what each program area would like to be able to do that has not yet happened. All departments within Scott County conduct some type of community engagement work, and there have been strong efforts to build good community relationships.
- Community Outreach workers met with each of the Strategy Coordinators who are leading the work included in the strategic plan. These meetings included discussion about where further outreach might be helpful in reaching our goals.

Create opportunities to receive input from new voices helping to shape service delivery models.

- Data from the 2020 census reflects that the population of Scott County continues to grow, but is also getting a little older and considerably more diverse. This likely means we need to change or adjust how we engage residents and provide core government services to a changing population.
- In August 2021, the county created two designated positions for community outreach to:
 - Support broader partnerships with faith communities and non-profit organizations in our strategic planning work. The early focus of this position has been on housing needs in

- our communities, including supports for re-entry housing and sober housing resources. The first of what we hope to be a series of community conversations with faith leaders is scheduled for March 31, 2022. The topic for this roundtable will be discussions about families experiencing homelessness in Scott County and will help inform some of the County's decisions related to potential ARPA projects.
- Reduce disparities and improve the experiences of subsets of our population for whom disparities exist in our outcome data. This position currently supports cross-cultural work across the organization including supports for early childhood screenings/early literacy (Libraries and ReadMobile); the Family Resource Centers' media messaging and outreach; targeted marketing and language translation supports for vaccine clinics; work with the redistricting; and coordination with outreach staff in the Parks programs and with the Sheriff's Office to support their program goals.
 - Our work with volunteers is one way to engage community members, provide opportunity for input, understand community needs, and bring community solutions to problems.
 - In 2020, Scott County volunteers saved the county approximately \$408,435. The nationwide average for the value of a volunteer service hour is calculated annually. In 2020, the nationwide average was \$28.54 per hour. In Minnesota, that value average was slightly higher, at \$30.28 per hour, resulting in over \$400,000 in offset costs. Data on the annual average value for a volunteer service hour in 2021 will be released in April, 2022.
 - When county volunteer opportunities were paused due to COVID restrictions in 2020, the Volunteer Services Coordinator helped coordinate volunteers for community programs like food shelves, food distribution centers, help at Senior Centers, Meals on Wheels, and meal preparation for TreeHouse.

Reinvent the role of advisory commissions, committees, and boards in informing policies and decisions.

- In fall 2021, conversations with division leadership and staff began to inventory existing advisory groups, identify areas of success, and document opportunities for reinvention.

Promote self-reliance and individual success; lower or remove unnecessary barriers

- Employee Relations is providing training, support and resources to help our workforce serve a more diverse community. Also in 2021, the County Board and Cabinet participated in facilitated conversations about diversity and the differing experiences of people in our communities.
- Through continued focus in Scott County Delivers sessions and program-level continuous quality improvement efforts, staff throughout the organization have an understanding of community indicators and where disparities exist across those outcomes.
- In 2021, the fall DWM small group presentations, which included data from the 2020 census that reflected how the population of Scott County continues to age and diversify, fostered discussion about the successes and opportunities that arise from serving a changing community.

Challenges

- One potential challenge is how staff and programs within the organization view community engagement. It is not a program, but a way of doing business. Who owns it? Everyone.
- Across the organization, departments are involved in community engagement efforts, demonstrating some capacity to do the work with positive results. Through the inventory process, most also identified gaps or barriers to more fully involving residents, largely due to time and staffing constraints. Other barriers included insufficient access to supports for working with people who speak a language other than English.
- The recent addition of the two Community Outreach workers creates new support and resources for this work. As part of the start-up for a new program, there is an ongoing process of examining how these positions align with existing county staff positions so efforts are not

