

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO MOVE PUBLIC HEALTH EQUITY DATA TO ACTION

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

Scott County is located in the southwest metro and was the fastest growing county in the state of Minnesota for the last couple of decades, with a 45% increase in total population. The county is a mixture of suburban and rural land and its major cities include: Shakopee, Prior Lake, Savage, Jordan, New Prague and Belle Plaine.



Project description

Community design, the built environment, planning, transportation, and public health all influence the accessibility of healthy food and active living options in our communities. In Scott County, 8.2% of households reported being food insecure and for children, this increased to 12.6%. In addition, only 1 in 4 residents in the county engage in sufficient moderate physical activity during a typical week.

The goal of this project is to focus on engagement in Scott County's Latinx and Somali communities to develop and implement solutions to barriers related to healthy eating and physical activity. The County would like to engage a broad range of community members to create community-led initiatives.

To better understand the needs of those experiencing food insecurity and lack of access to physical activity in Scott County, public health staff undertook a targeted community engagement effort and conducted a Health Equity Data Analysis. From this, the County learned that individuals, when given the choice, would prefer to eat more locally grown and healthy foods. Residents also indicated the need for additional recreational opportunities, spaces to be physically active indoors, and the need to address safety issues. From the focus groups and surveys, it was also determined that there is a need to further engage with the community to determine culturally appropriate solutions, which may be different from projects the County has implemented in the past.

Creating edible landscapes is one strategy that public health has been focusing on to address food insecurity. An edible landscape, or "food forest" is a type of community-based agriculture that could be employed to address food access gaps identified by residents and the health equity analysis. Ideally the edible landscape would support a low-maintenance, sustainable, plant-based food production and agroforestry system, incorporating fruit and nut trees, shrubs, herbs, vines, and perennial vegetables that are adapted to Minnesota's climate and that yield edible, nutritious, and culturally appropriate products.

The county is hopeful that student research can provide some community-identified and culturally appropriate solutions to address physical activity.

Key issues, questions, and ideas to explore

1. Identify strategies for how Scott County Public Health can most effectively engage with Somali and Latinx populations in the county
 - a. What barriers prevent people from accessing food and getting physical activity? Is there resident support for growing food in their own yard?
 - b. Is there interest in Little Free Gardens or edible landscapes?
 - c. How could the City of Shakopee, City of Savage and Scott County connect with its residents and let them know of activities or events happening especially with diverse or underrepresented populations?
2. Identify tools that could be used to provide engagement to our Latinx and Somali populations, who primarily reside in Shakopee and Savage areas.
3. Create informational posters/flyers to engage residents

How will students' work be used to build community resiliency?

- To provide SHIP staff the tools they need to engage with residents to identify barriers around accessing healthy food and physical activity opportunities in racially and ethnically diverse populations
- To align with SHIP's goals to create healthier communities across MN by expanding opportunities for active living, healthy eating, and tobacco-free living

Potential community partners or stakeholders

- Scott County Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP)
- Scott County Community Health Improvement Committee (CHIC)
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)
- Scott County–Three Rivers Park District
- Food Shelf Networking Group
- Shakopee Diversity Alliance
- Scott County cities: Shakopee & Savage

Existing Plans & Reports

- Moving Equity Data Ahead (MEDA) work plan
- Community Engagement reports (2016)
- Health Equity Data Analysis (HEDA)
- Marnita's Table Report
- Food System Policy Analysis
- RCP reports: Edible Landscape & Active Living
- 2040 Scott County Comprehensive Plan
- Scott County Delivers: Healthy Food Access
- Scott County Community Health Assessment
- Scott County food access maps

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