



Measuring trust: How to collect meaningful and actionable data

May 28, 2026



Why measure trust?

- Understand what is actually happening
- Improve your programs
- Reach more diverse participants
- Strengthen community impact
- Show value to partners and funders





Interpersonal trust

Interpersonal trust means being open and willing in a relationship because you believe the other person will be reliable, well-intentioned, and inclusive of others. These three building blocks build trust when people demonstrate them through their actions and others perceive them.

Building Blocks of Interpersonal Trust

RELIABLE
(competent)

Anchored in **integrity** (keep your word), **accountability** (own it), and **transparency** (show it)



INCLUSIVE
(cultivating belonging)

Anchored in **belonging** (people feel safe and welcome), **parity** (equal status and voice), and **shared meaning** (common language and practices)



WELL-INTENTIONED
(benevolent/fair)

Anchored in **candor** (be honest about motives and limits), **fairness** (act with care and ethics), and **repair** (own harm and make it right).

Indicators = Signs of Success

| Reliable | Well-intentioned | Inclusive |
|--|---|---|
| <p>% of participants who report that they collaborated openly and productively with other participants</p> <p>% of participants who report feeling responsible for following and upholding fair application of group rules</p> | <p>% of participants who report that others tried to understand their views</p> <p>% of participants who report showing respect to others and feeling respected themselves</p> | <p>% of participants who report feeling welcome</p> <p>% of participants who report hearing a diversity of voices without dominance from a single group</p> |

9 indicators for each of the 3 building blocks

(a snapshot is shown here)

| Reliable | Well-intentioned | Inclusive |
|---|--|---|
| R1. % of participants reporting that they attended as planned to library event(s) | W1. % of participants who report that others tried to understand their views | I1. % of participants who report feeling welcome |
| R2. % of participants reporting that they experienced adherence to norms during the library event(s) | W2. % of participants who report that they could explain someone else's view fairly | I2. % of participants who report that turns were respected |
| R3. % of participants who report making specific commitment to the library | W3. % of participants who are willing to learn something that may change their view or approach | I3. % of participants who report that their points were reflected back accurately |
| R4. % of participants who report following through on commitment to the library | W4. % of participants who report learning and applying a tip for working with people different from themselves | I4. % of participants who report that terms were clear and understandable to them |
| R5. % of participants who report that they collaborated openly and productively with other participants | W5. % of participants who report that if harms or conflicts occurred in the library, they are addressed respectfully | I5. % of participants who report that roles rotated |
| R6. % of participants who report feeling responsible for following and upholding fair application of group rules | W6. % of participants who report finding it easy to take part in library events | I6. % of participants who report hearing a diversity of voices without dominance from a single group |
| | | I7. % of participants who report collaboration on a shared goal during activities |

Demographic **questions** help us understand whether trust experience differs across groups



- Age (captured in ranges)
- Sex/Gender
- Education
- Zip code or neighborhood
- Household income (captured in ranges)
- Political affiliation (answering on a spectrum rather than by political party)
- Library branch most used
- Language(s) most comfortable using
- Race/ethnicity
- Disability or accessibility needs related to programming
- Household with children under 18
- Education or employment status

How measurement works?

Baseline-
endline

Retrospective
pretest (RPT)

End-of-event
post only

Challenges

- 1) Direction of the scale
- 2) Very positive responses
- 3) Response rates
- 4) Understanding and self-reporting



Some results

In Pottsville Area Public Library:

- 95% of participants said they felt welcome
- 90% said people took turns and listened without interrupting

In North Liberty:

Bigger share of participants reported that:

- Other participants respected the agreed conversation guidelines
- Others could explain someone else's views fairly

01

Ask

02

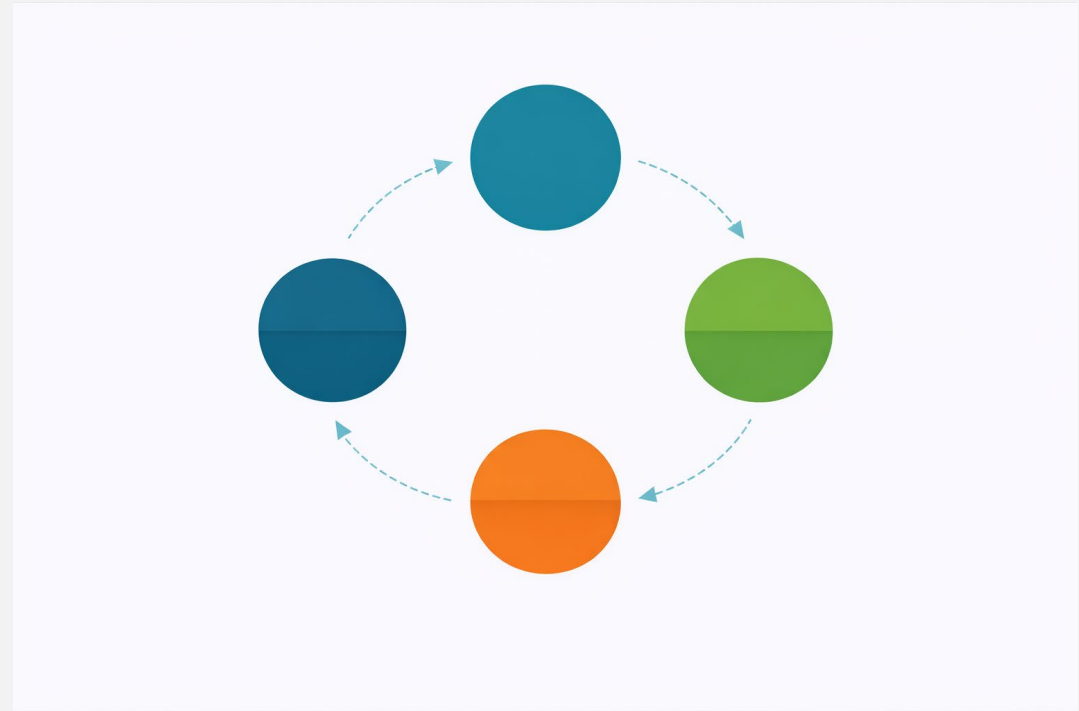
Measure

03

Learn

04

Act



How do libraries use data?

- Adjust the focus of programs
- Improve facilitation methods
- Make events more inclusive
- Encourage interaction across differences
- Reach groups that are not yet participating





Meet Your Neighbor

Building trust among old and new neighbors
at the Newburgh Free Library





This is the **question:**

The Newburgh Free Library staff asked themselves: *How do we cultivate what Shamichael Hallman calls “bonds of trust and affection” in our community and how do we measure this outcome?* Furthermore, how do you do it in a community that is rapidly gentrifying.

With the help of the IREX grant, we embarked on a quest to bring new and old neighbors together and called it ***Meet Your Neighbor***. We held two sessions in December 2025 and two in March 2026. We had 58 and 57 participants, respectively, and here we present what we did and what we learned.

We laid the groundwork

01

We invited trusted community ambassadors from various sectors of the community

02

Set the stage for psychological safety and comfort

03

Welcomed all, from the most affluent to the most vulnerable

04

Employed low-risk trust-building activities

05

Made sure to include open-ended questions to illuminate their experience

The IREX Trust Indicators:

Reliable

- Anchored in integrity (keep your word)
- Accountability (own it)
- Transparency (show it)

Well-Intentioned

- Anchored in candor (be honest about motives and limits)
- Fairness (act with care and ethics)
- Repair (own harm and make it right)

Inclusive

- Anchored in belonging (people feel safe and welcome)
- Parity (equal status and voice)
- Shared meaning (common language and practices that connect)

Designed the Evaluation Tool in Google Forms

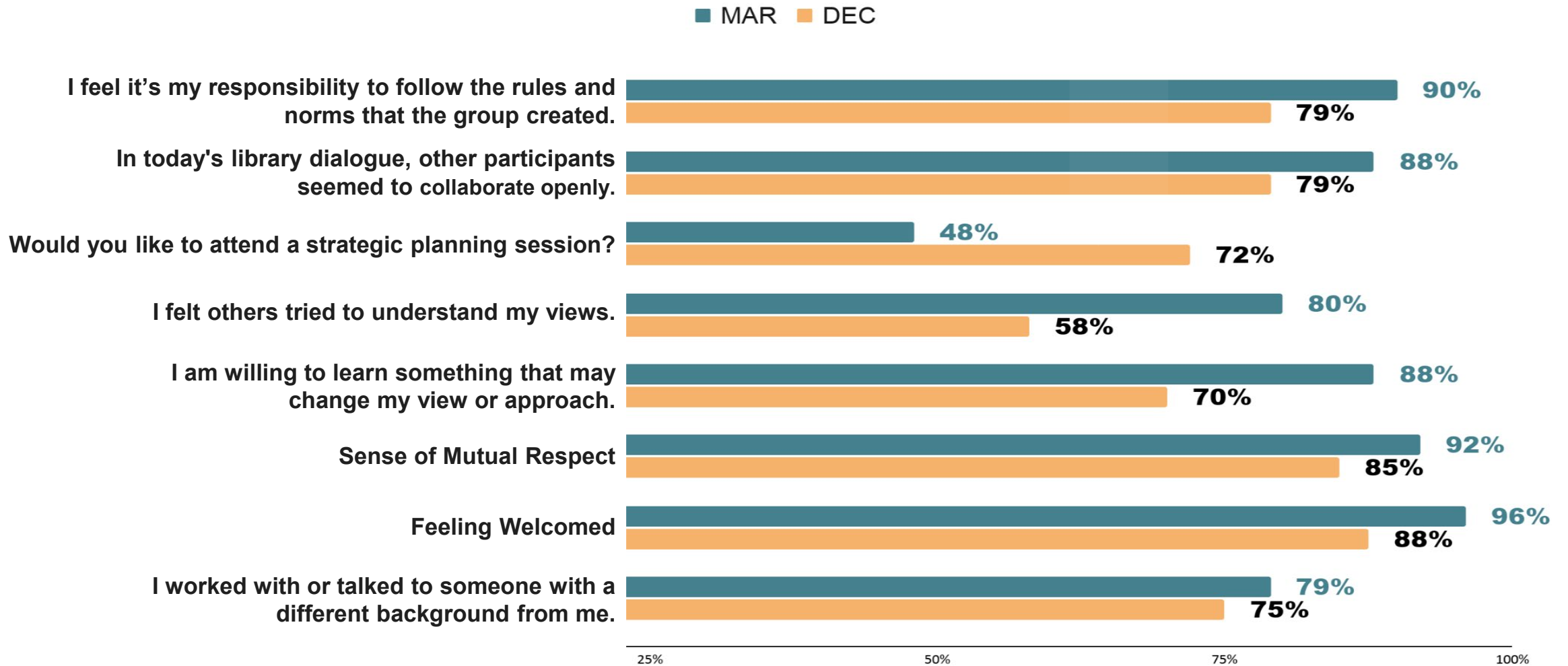
- Keep it brief (should take no more than 3-5 minutes to complete)
- Include a few demographic questions
- At least two questions from **each** of the trust factors
- Use paper survey at the end
- Offer small incentive
- Use sliding scales or matrix tables in responses
- Include a comment section at the end
- Keep number of questions to 10-15

What fun! What a cool, new, enlivening offer from NFL. Y'all really are a bastion in our Beloved Community. The event was so thoughtfully curated, so organized, great food, wonderful flow, and really heartening. I needed this. We needed this.

Thank you so so much for all that you do to create community, connection, and enrichment.

With so much love, gratitude, and respect, Lisa Pellegrino

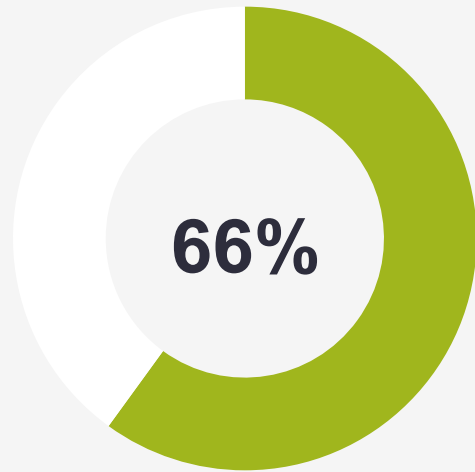
Respondents *strongly agreed* on the following trust indicators



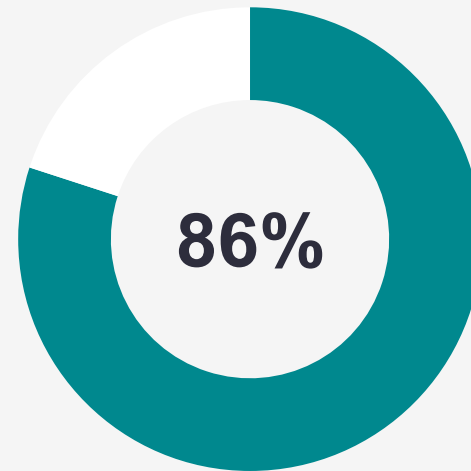
All results from Newburgh's Meet Your Neighbor event in March

Sense of Belonging: before & after

Strongly Agreed



At the beginning of today's event, I felt I belonged.



Now at the end of the event, I feel like I belong.





Thank you

Newburgh Free Library

newburghlibrary.org

A special thanks to the grant team at IREX for making project possible and for excellent training and guidance.





Helping each other

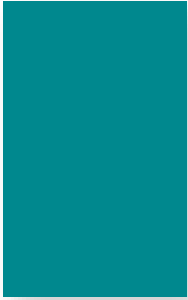
Connections in community to build trust and improve food resource information with the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library

Lissa Staley, Community Connections Librarian

Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library - tscpl.org

 www.irex.org





Trusting lived experience for local information

Reference librarians promote trusted sources of information.

What if library staff invite the people who access the services to promote and improve the information, so together we can help others access the services in our community?

For hyperlocal food resource information, what if

- people seeking food assistance
- people donating food and money
- agency staff and library staff

all work together across difference

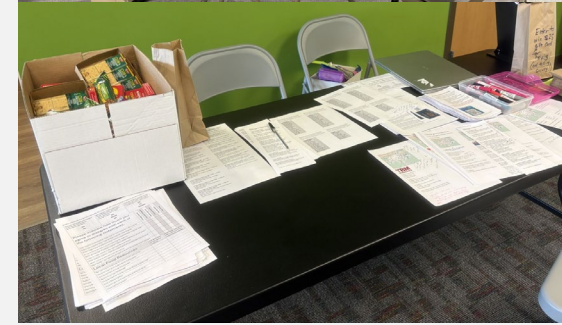
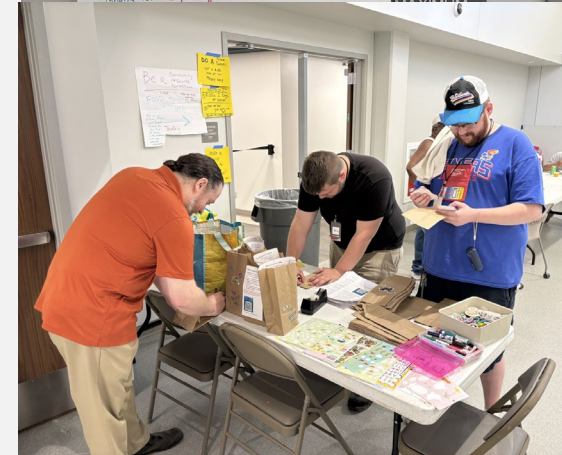
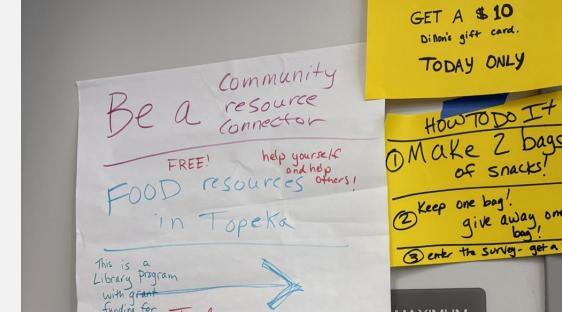
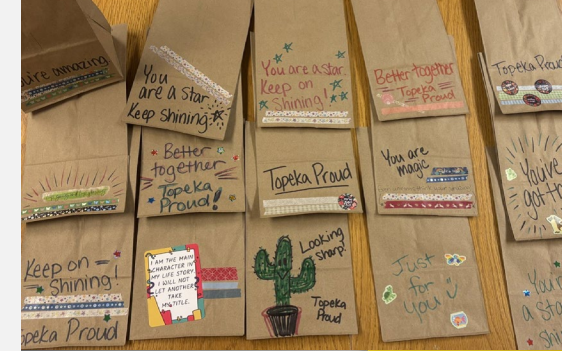
Can we build trust together?

Why I missed a lot of deadlines while moving at the “Speed of Trust”

- Such busy partners
- SNAP Funding Freeze
- Divisive media reactions and gossip
- New folks organizing food drives and funds
- Food pantries expand hours, holiday closures, merge, and change

Paper Surveys, QR Codes and Microsoft Forms

- Use paper forms at in-person events
- Make demographic questions *optional*
- Keep any contact information separate from surveys
- Remind them honest answers are better than high scores
- Compensate their time with incentives if possible
- Invite them to contribute input from lived experience
- Ask about things YOU don't know, not things THEY don't know
- Value them - focus on asking what only THEY can tell you

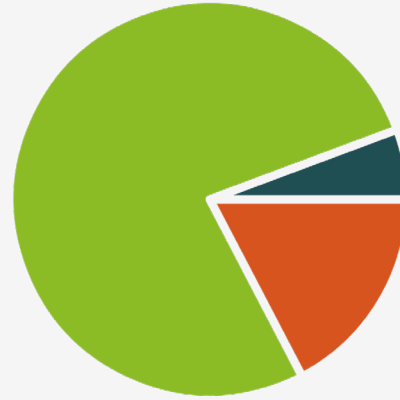


Crafting Together: Encouraging Food Bags



● Disagree | 17.1%
● Agree | 80%
● Hard To Say | 2.9%

Reliable: One reason I participated today was to help someone I don't know.



● Disagree | 17.3%
● Agree | 77%
● Hard to Say | 5.7%

Well-intentioned: Today felt collaborative – we worked toward a shared goal.



● Disagree | 8.6%
● Agree | 79.9%
● Hard To Say | 11.5%

Inclusive: After today's activity I better understand the challenges people face when trying to access food resources.

Helping Others: Results speak for themselves

In-Person Community Resource Events May 2026

- 25 of 36 people shared a tip to help others
- 10 of 36 contributed a suggestion to improve the information

“We all help each other. It doesn’t come down from on top. We’re better together than we are apart.”

–Monica



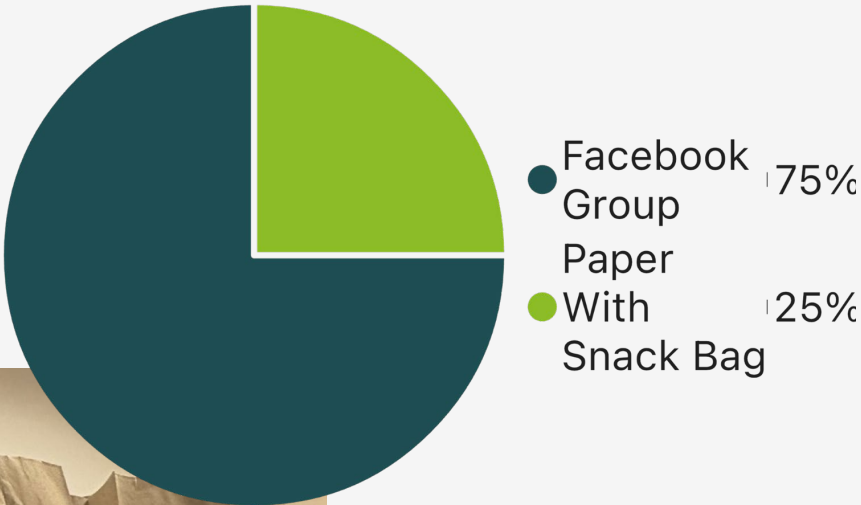
Some advice that everyone in Topeka should know about accessing food when they need help:

1. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help....these people love to help you make sure you and your family eat...
2. Be prepared to wait in long lines at Harvesters and use the bathroom before you go.
3. When you do visit any of the food pantries please remember to be patient. People volunteer their time to help others out.
4. Everyone needs help, use it wisely, don't over do it .

Eventless Experiments: Food Bags

Where did you find the invitation to this survey?

32 total respondents



How can information about food resources be improved in our Topeka community?

Pulling the stigma away from getting help – that you aren't a hard worker or that you're lazy – when most of us are just trying to get by and survive.

Maybe volunteers to help deliver to the ones that cannot or don't have access to get there

Doing some free food organizations and use the opportunity to talk more about food resources

This list that's being built is the way.

Topekans Help Each Other!: Facebook

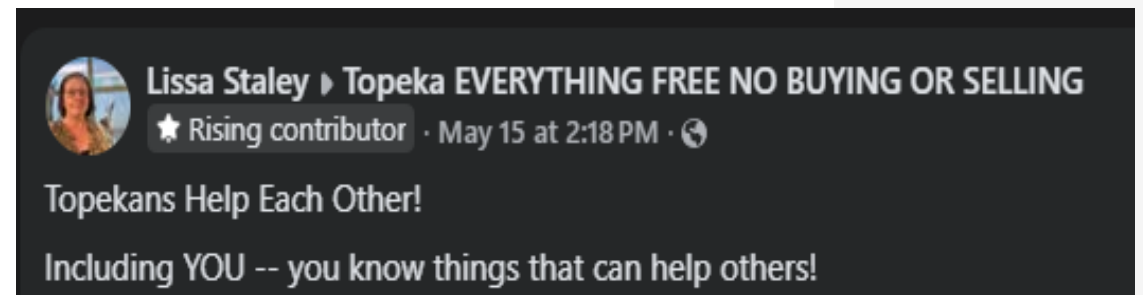
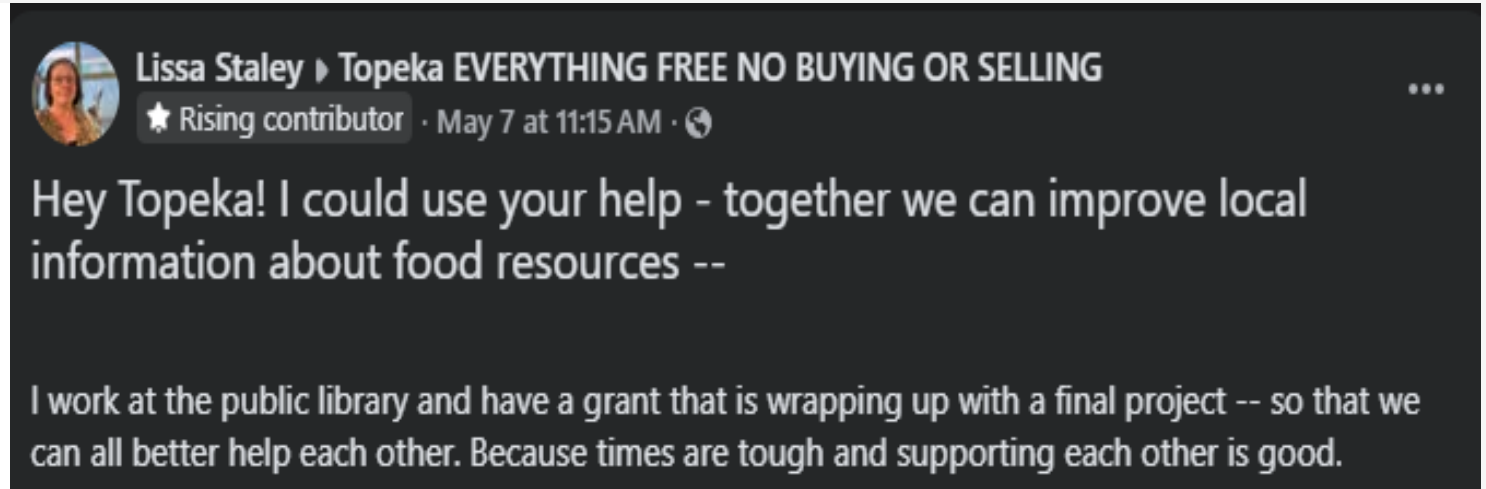
Posting in a 27.3K member
Public Facebook Group
*Topeka EVERYTHING FREE
NO BUYING OR SELLING*

May 7

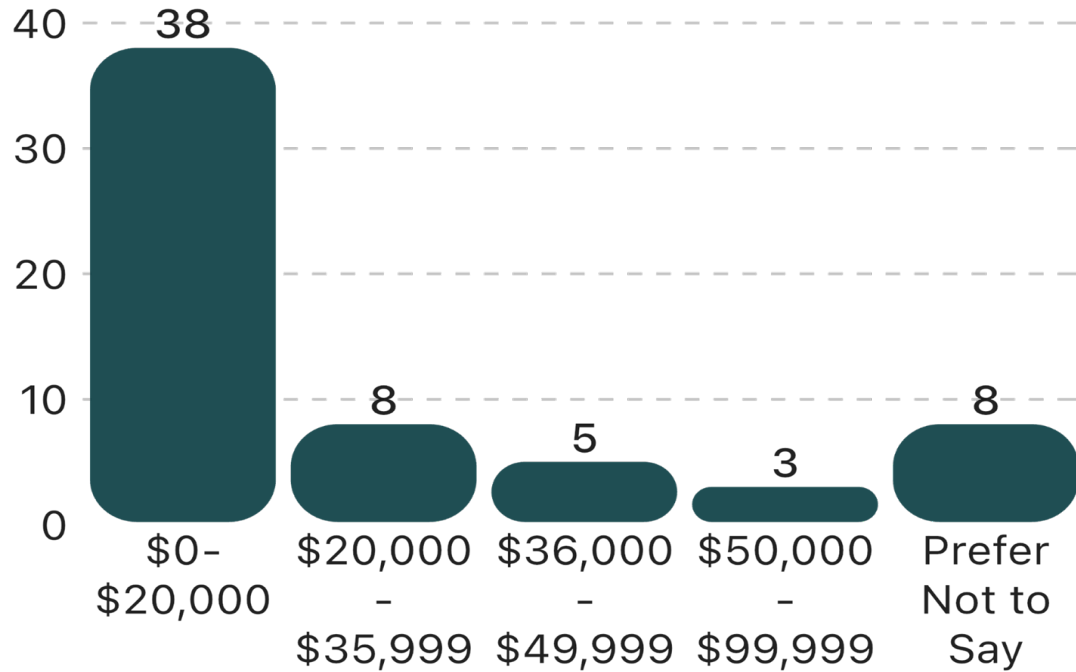
- 1 image
- 29 comments
- 54 shares
- 2 of the 112 people who “reacted” were my “friends.”

May 15

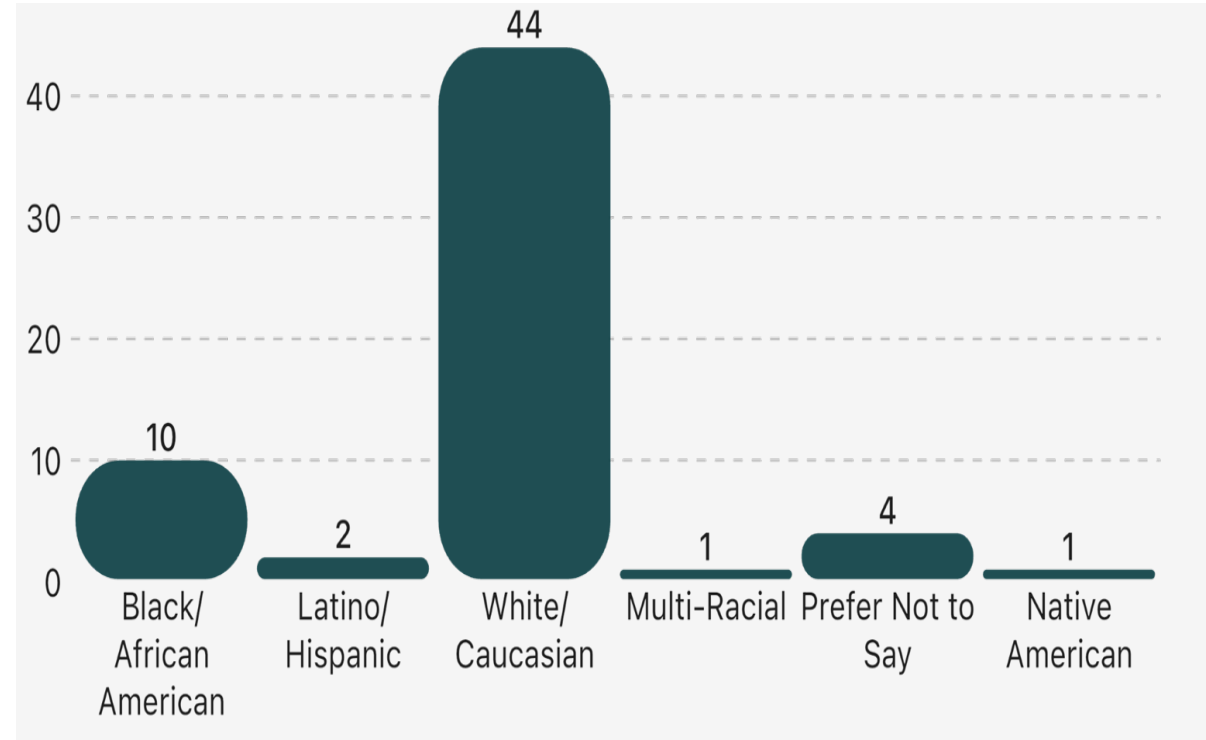
- 9 pages of images
- 7 comments
- 18 shares
- 7 of the 24 people who “reacted” were my “friends.”



Across differences: combined demographics

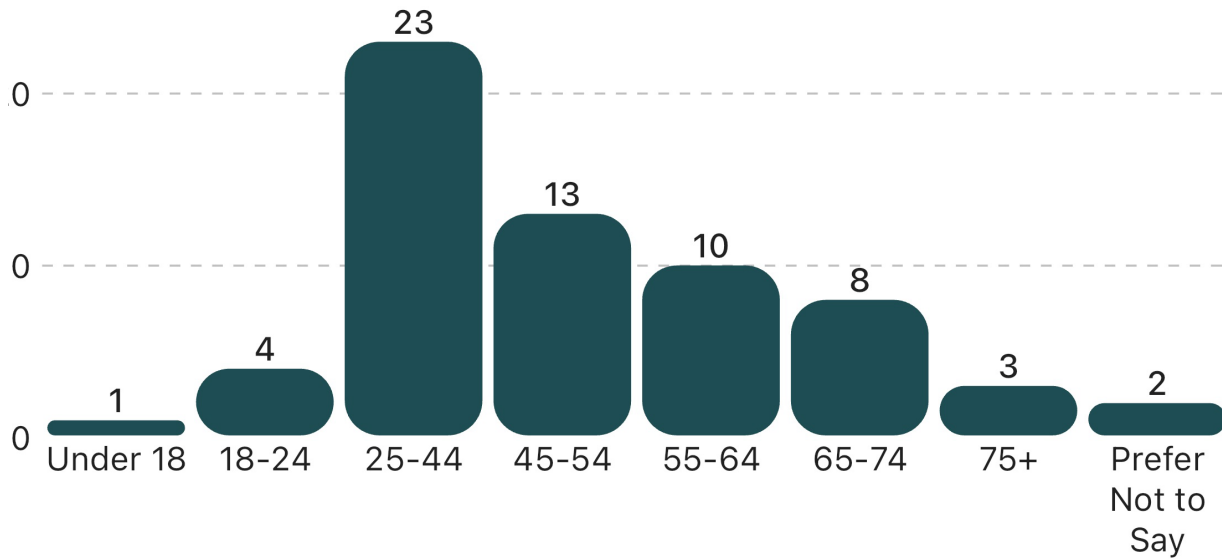


What is your family annual income?

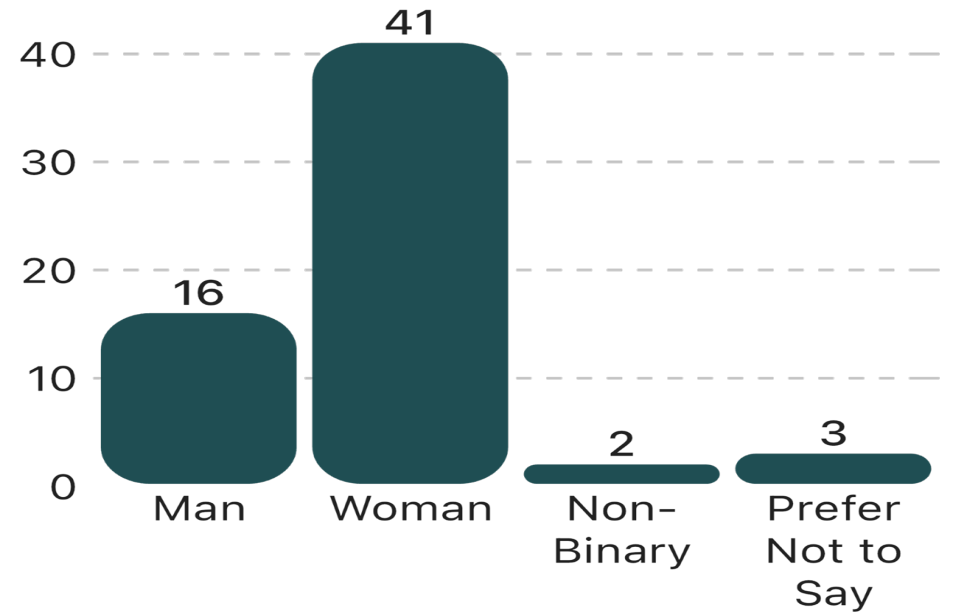


Which of the following best describes you?

Across differences: combined demographics



What is your age?



What is your gender?

What Now? The Lean Experimentation Cycle Continues



THE best office supply
for fostering connection



Be a Community Resource Connector

Food Pantries & Meals



Wednesday, January 14
6:30pm - 8:00pm
[Add to Calendar](#)



Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library
Anton Room 202

Learn how to help yourself, family, friends & others navigate local resources to help improve their lives, address challenges or create positive change. This month's focus is food pantries & meals.



Thank you!



Yoly Avella, New Americans and Adult Literacy Librarian, Newburgh Free Library, Yavella@rcls.org

Phoebe Bierly, Project Director, IREX, pbierly@irex.org

Kate Clarke, Library Assistant, Public Engagement Team, Newburgh Free Library, Kclarke@rcls.org

Tetiana Liubyva, Director of Research and Learning, IREX, tliubyva@irex.org

Lissa Staley, Community Connections Librarian, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, estaley@tscpl.org

Elizabeth Vega-Lebron, Community Engagement Coordinator, Newburgh Free Library, Evega-lebron@rcls.org