

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County HELP program progresses: Community engagement results and next steps

July 12, 2022 (Warsaw, IN) – Kosciusko County leaders recently announced they’ve collected and analyzed all data from participating community members for the community engagement phase of the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP), and share insight on next steps for the program.

As a recap of the program, Kosciusko County was one of three communities selected by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) to participate in the first cohort of the HELP program. HELP assists and equips rural communities with developing Strategic Investment Plans, culminating in a legacy project for each community focused on at least one of four community development pathways or focus areas including **advancing e-connectivity, enhancing quality of place, promoting community wellness, and strengthening local economies.**

This second phase of the program focused on engaging community members and gathering input about priorities for community development and project ideas within the four focus areas.

“We’re extremely pleased about the participation and variety of ideas we received from local community members,” said Kosciusko County Coordinator Amy Roe, who is leading the HELP Kosciusko program.

Leaders with HELP have worked diligently to ensure voices from all areas of the county have been heard, particularly in the County’s smaller rural communities of Etna Green, Mentone, Milford, and Pierceton, who agreed to participate with the County, collectively, in the HELP program.

Data was collected in a number of ways to reach a wider audience including four different Art Infused events where community members were invited to share feedback in person while doing hands-on art projects for their communities; an online survey shared via a variety of digital channels, and at a county-wide community engagement event. Around 350 responses were collected from communities throughout Kosciusko County from the community engagement activities.

Some highlights from the data collection are included below. These highlights show how respondents in participating communities prioritized the four pathways/focus areas in their own communities:

Etna Green:

- 43% of respondents said Enhancing Quality of Place is most important to them.
- Promoting Community Wellness: 38%



- Strengthening Local Economies: 14%
- Advancing E-Connectivity: 5%

Mentone:

- 56% of respondents said Enhancing Quality of Place is most important to them.
- Promoting Community Wellness: 26%
- Strengthening Local Economies: 11%
- Advancing E-Connectivity: 7%

Milford:

- 46% of respondents said Enhancing Quality of Place *and* Promoting Community Wellness are most important to them.
- Strengthening Local Economies: 4%
- Advancing E-Connectivity: 4%

Pierceton:

- 71% of respondents said Enhancing Quality of Place is most important to them.
- Promoting Community Wellness: 14%
- Strengthening Local Economies: 14%
- Advancing E-Connectivity: 0%

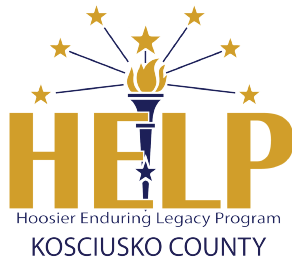
County (which included other non-HELP communities):

- 37% of respondents said Promoting Community Wellness is most important to them.
- Enhancing Quality of Place: 36%
- Strengthening Local Economies: 19%
- Advancing E-Connectivity: 8%

“On behalf of HELP Kosciusko, I extend a BIG thank you to all who participated. Your voices are incredibly valued in this process. The Program would not be successful without your input,” said Roe.

HELP Kosciusko also thanks all who attended the Community Forum celebration last month at [Grace College](#). Nearly 100 attendees gathered together to learn more about HELP. Sponsors who helped make the event possible were: Anderson Florist, Core Mechanical Services, Inc., Grace College, and Lake City Bank.

Next steps with the program include a review of all project submissions by committees of local residents, led by educational facilitators. Each local unit of government will then review project submissions and make recommendations to a local Core Advisory Team comprised of town clerks, county-wide leaders, and local funding agencies who will work with OCRA to determine funding sources for the projects recommended by each community.



For updates on HELP Kosciusko visit www.kcgov.com and follow HELP Kosciusko on Facebook @HELPKosciusko.

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About the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) in Kosciusko County

The Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) supports communities directly by building capacity, creating a peer network system between communities participating in the program, developing a strategic investment plan and providing access to set-aside funding. HELP is a 52-week process culminating in a dynamic Strategic Investment Plan rooted in four pathways: advancing e-connectivity, promoting community wellness, enhancing quality of place, and strengthening local economies.

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