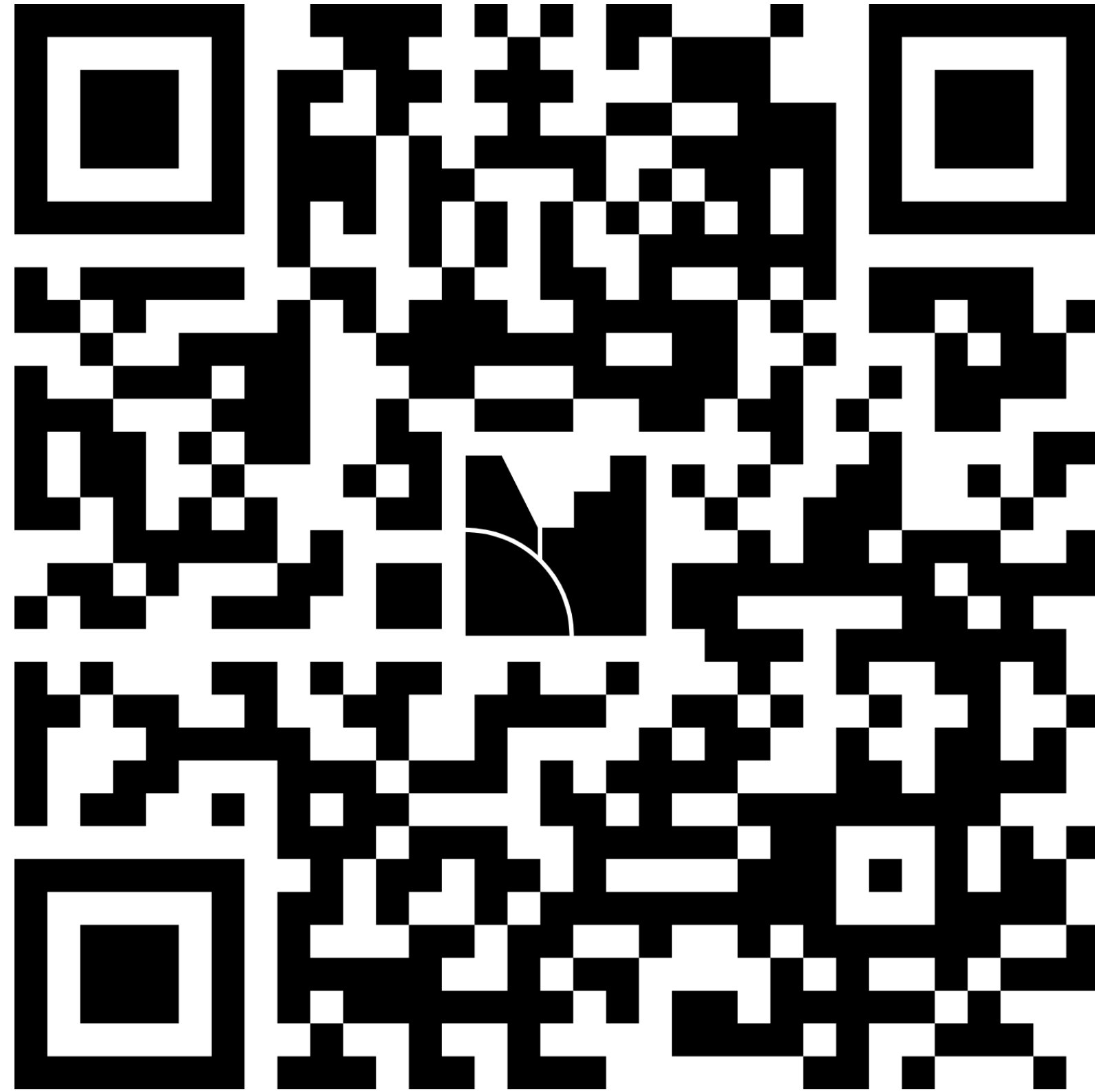




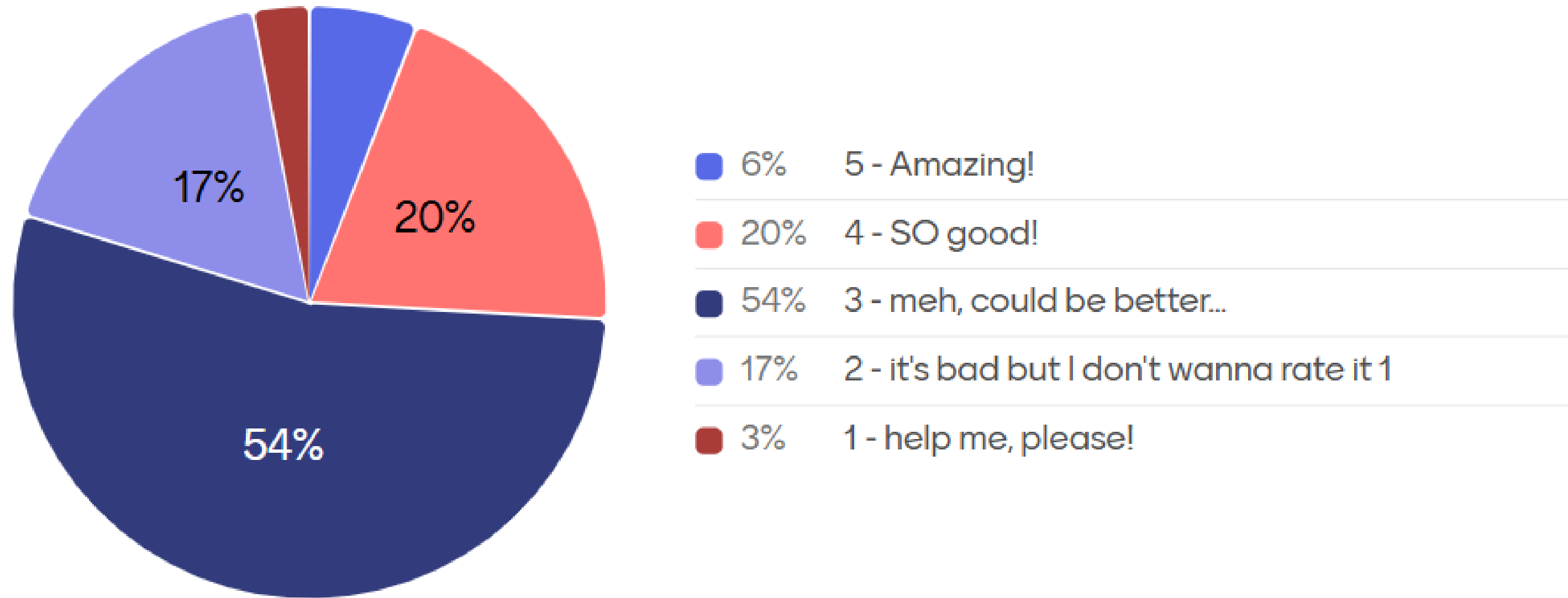
**Community Engagement, Reimagined:
Fresh Approaches for the CEDS and**

**More
October 15, 2025**

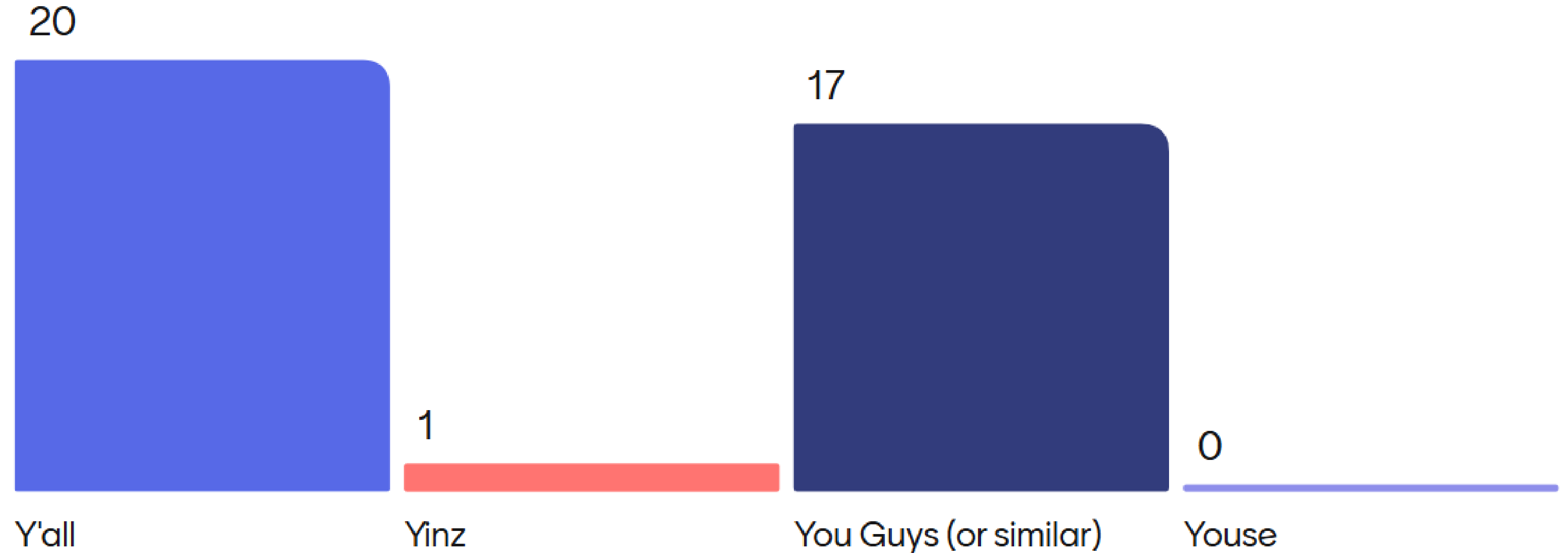
BEFORE WE BEGIN:



Rate your current community engagement



Which second person plural do you use?



7



38



WHO AM I AND WHY YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO ME

**Bachelor of Science
In Journalism**



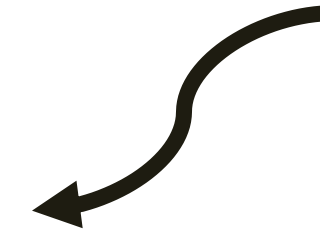
**Passionate Public
Servant**



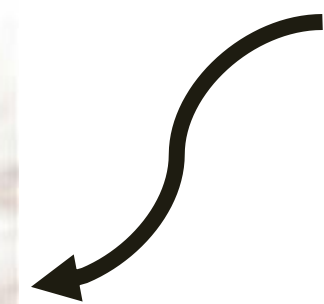
**Over 4 years as
Development
Director at BHRC**



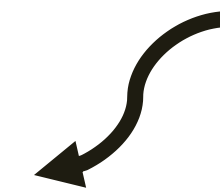
**Strategic Communication
Nerd**



Appalachian AF



**Former Regional
Representative for
U.S. Senator**



IF THAT'S NOT ENOUGH...



**I left my adorable
dog in Ohio to be
here!**

SOMES NOTES BEFORE WE BEGIN

- Community building happens at the speed of trust
- Local ownership of the process makes for a better end product



“Buckeye Hills is the region’s best kept secret”



- Source Not Found

**“Buckeye the red
kept secret**



- c



DEFINITION TIME!

- Community engagement - the dynamic, collaborative process where organizations work with groups of people (bound by geography, interests, or similar situations) to address shared issues and achieve mutually beneficial social, organizational, and environmental outcomes.
- It involves building relationships, facilitating dialogue, and encouraging active participation to inform decision-making, empower communities, and foster sustainable positive changes.



SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT



INFORM

- Provide the community with relevant information
- **We will keep you informed**



CONSULT

- Gather input from the community
- **We care what you think**



INVOLVE

- Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into process and inform planning
- **You are making us think, (and therefore act) differently about the issue**



COLLABORATE

- Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions
- **Your leadership and expertise are critical to how we address the issue**



EMPOWER

- Foster democratic participation and equity by bridging the divide between community and governance, through community-driven decision-making

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Transparency – why are we doing this? who has final say in decisions? what will the process look like to get there?
- Robustness (Inclusivity) – who isn't at the table? who is over-represented at the table? when should we meet for most input?
- Responsiveness – who will answer my questions? how long until I get a response? did my response really make a difference?

INFORM



INFORM

- Provide the community with relevant information
- **We will keep you informed**

Examples of Inform from BHRC:

- Our Monthly “You Are Here” Newsletter
- Publishing meeting notices for programs
- Holding informational sessions in the community around new programs

CONSULT



CONSULT

- Gather input from the community
- **We care what you think**

Examples of Inform from BHRC:

- Project priority setting via survey with our commissioners
- Roundtable discussion with stakeholders around impact of state/federal policies
- Economic sector focus groups for the CEDS
- Publishing documents online or in the paper for public comment

INVOLVE



INVOLVE

- Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into process and inform planning
- **You are making us think, (and therefore act) differently about the issue**

Examples of Inform from BHRC:

- Local leaders attend DC conference to advocate alongside us on The Hill
- SWOT workshops in each county to ensure local needs are heard
- Building out the CEDS Committee from 12 people to 32 to ensure robust perspective heard

COLLABORATE



COLLABORATE

- Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions
- **Your leadership and expertise are critical to how we address the issue**

Examples of Inform from BHRC:

- Regional Advisory Council in Aging Division
- Co-working on grants and administration with communities
- Delegating CEDS objectives to community organizations

EMPOWER



EMPOWER

- Foster democratic participation and equity by bridging the divide between community and governance, through community-driven decision-making

Examples of Inform from BHRC:

- Community planning sessions with small populations
- SWOT county workshops that utilized consensus

**Okay, but
now
what?!**

Sam's 8 Tips and Tricks for Implementation

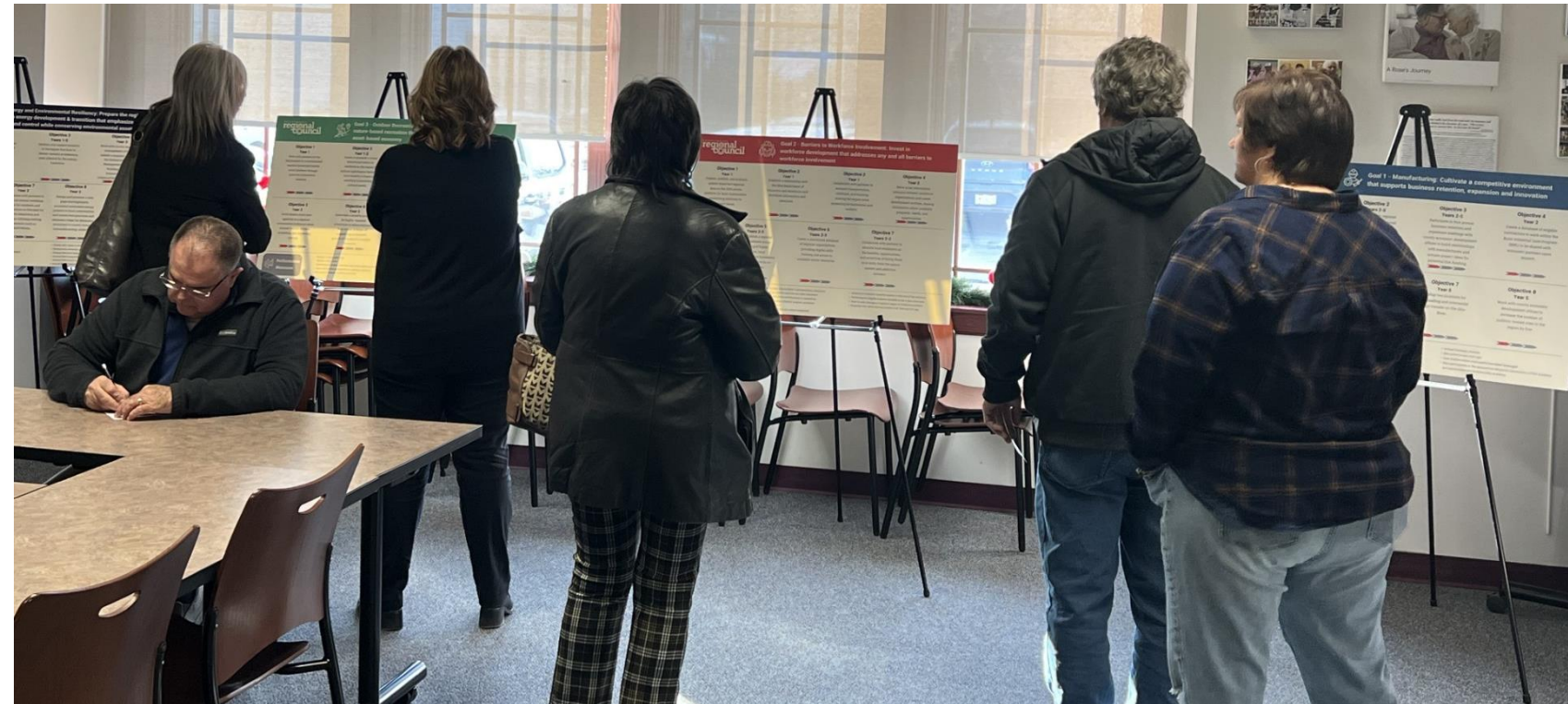
TIP #1 – SIMPLIFY JARGON

- Stop speaking in acronyms. You should like a robot!
- Create and share an acronyms guide with community members
- Start each presentation off with a simplifier slide



TIP #2 – LEAVE YOUR OFFICE

- We cover big ol' regions. Get out there and meet them!
- Hold meetings and workshops at sites within the community
- If possible, localize your meetings as much as possible.
Focus on county or city workshops, rather than regional workshops.



TIP #3 – BUILD A BIGGER TABLE

- Think about who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed for the work you do.
- Look through a LARGE scope
- Additionally, find a local champion who can assist in creating connections



TIP #4 – LISTEN TO YOUR PEOPLE

- When a trend shows up in what folks are saying, LISTEN TO THEM!
- Incorporate it!

Strengths:

- Appalachian Culture and Heritage
- Agriculture & Natural Resources
- Educational Assets
- Rail, River and Road Access

Weaknesses:

- Lack of Workforce Enablers
- Utility & Infrastructure Access
- Housing Supply
- Broadband Access

TIP #5 – FOLLOW UP WITH FINAL

- If you want folks to share, you gotta share, too!
- Share the final product
 - If no final product, share updates on the process



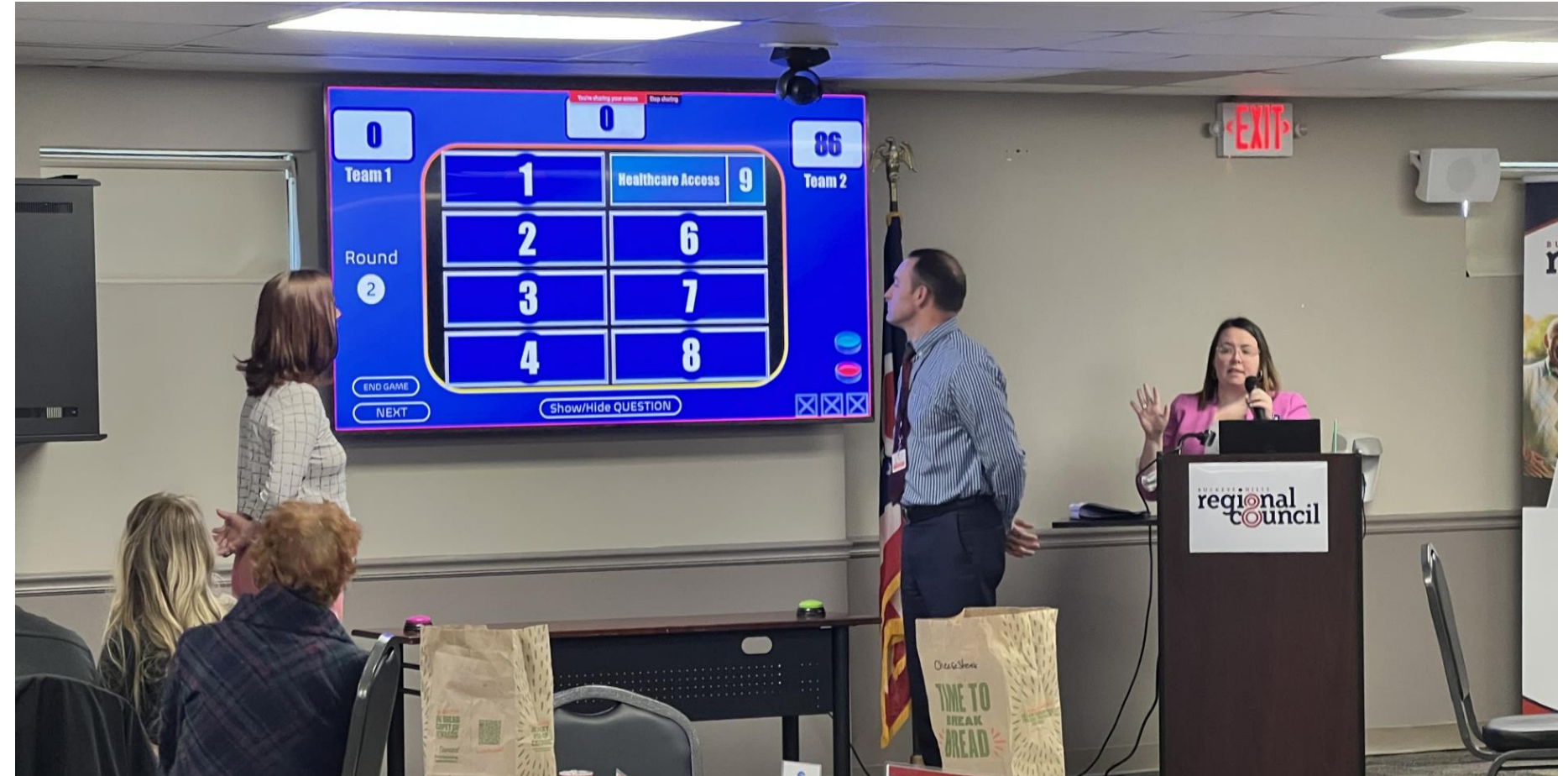
TIP #6 – REMOVE BARRIERS

- Really put thought into WHEN you're meeting people
 - Can you offer childcare?
- The WHERE is also important
- Food doesn't hurt ;)
- Incentives for involvement
 - Gas cards, gift cards, etc.



TIP #7 – HAVE SOME FUN, TOO

- Use opportunities with community to actually build community
 - Start every meeting or workshop with an ice breaker question (my favorite: “what’s your favorite way to eat a potato?”)
 - When able, provide food or snacks to smaller groups. If no budget, then encourage staff to make and bring some in.
- Build fun into the mundane



TIP #8 – BEFRIEND LOCAL MEDIA

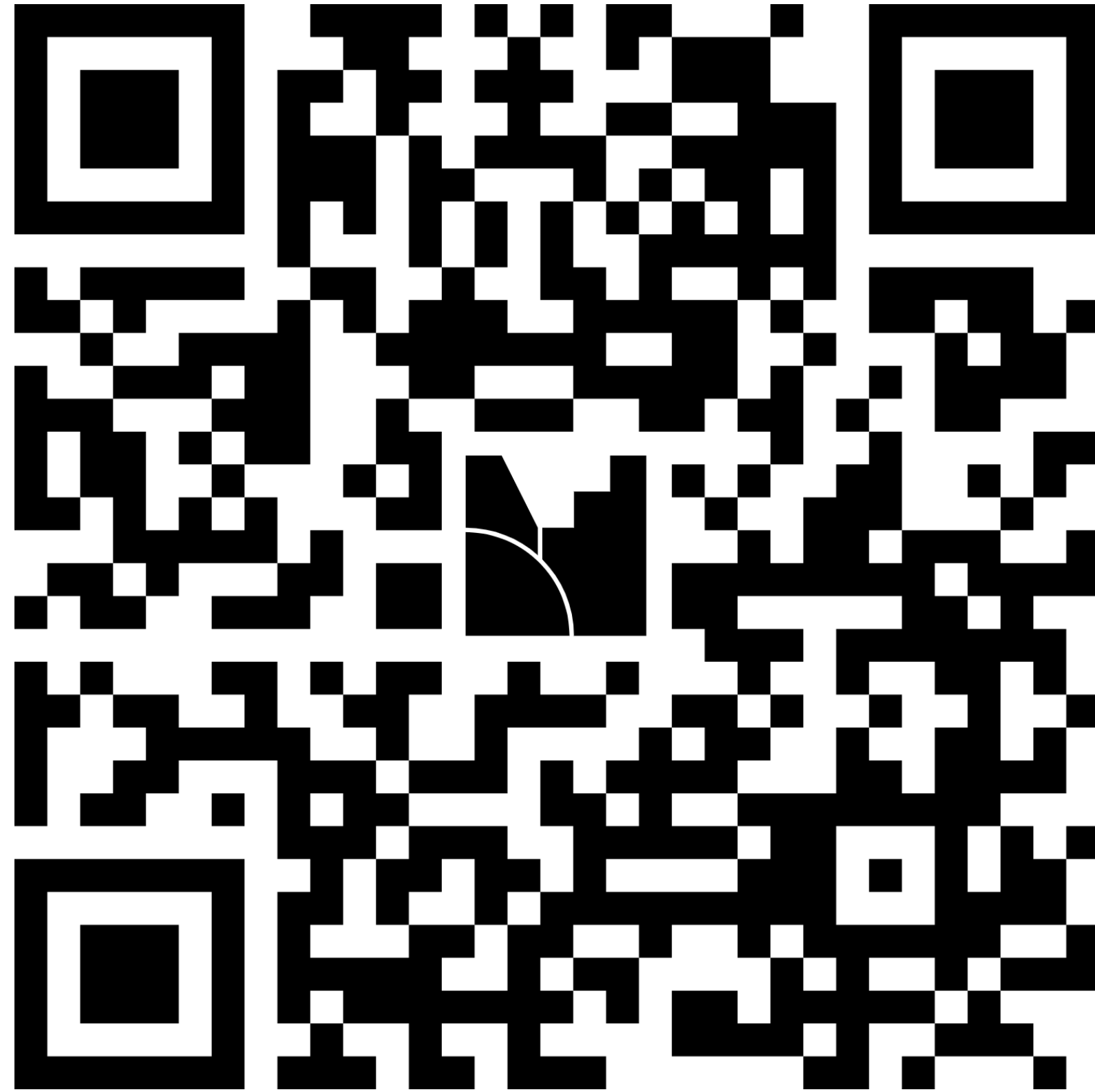
- Your local paper needs stories and you've got 'em!
- Don't always opt for the traditional press release
- Line up interviews from the community and your organization to highlight intersection of work.
- Pitch it to your media!
- Always opt for an interview. (I promise it won't kill you.)



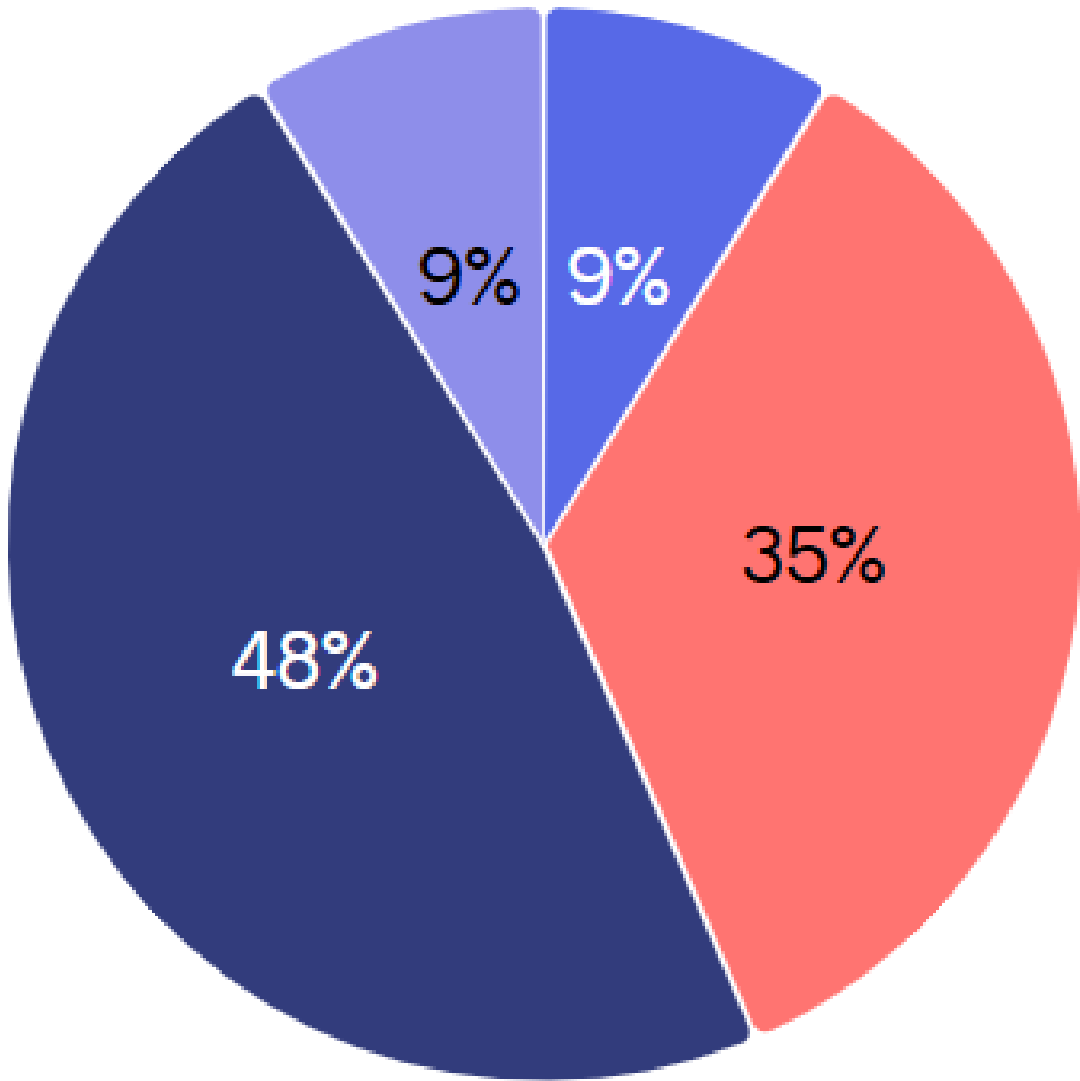
ANOTHA ONE – ACTIVITY TIME

- At your tables, introduce yourselves and answer the question:
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- Choose one issue you're currently facing when it comes to community engagement and brainstorm ideas which type of engagement might work best
- Identify the first step you'll take once you're back home to implement what you've learned
- I will ask 2 brave souls to share their "first step"

AS WE CONCLUDE:



How do you feel about community engagement after this session?



- 9% 5 - SO amazing! Thanks, Sam!
- 35% 4 - I feel a lot better!
- 48% 3 - oof, I gotta step it up.
- 9% 2 - pretty bad but I still don't wanna rate it
- 0% 1 - Sam, can we talk 1:1?

In one word, describe this session:



IT'S WORKING! (PROBABLY)



SHAMELESS PLUG



Buckeye Hills Regional Council

QUESTIONS?



Sam Miller

smiller@buckeyehills.org

Please see me as a resource for you
all.

I love to find creative solutions to
tricky issues.

BUCKEYE HILLS
**regional
council**