



Welcoming and Inclusive Community Assessment

Alexandria, Minnesota

August 31, 2022

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Extension Center for Community Vitality



Our Community Matters

About the assessment

- Conducted in person on May 16
- Open for online responses through June 30, 2022

Welcoming and Inclusive Community Assessment



Alexandria, Minnesota

May/June 2022

Social sectors in your community

University of Minnesota Extension developed the Welcoming and Inclusion Readiness Assessment to better understand the challenges and successes of both organizational and community-led efforts to be inclusive of all residents. To learn how welcoming or inclusive a community is, we ask questions about seven overlapping social sectors:

1. School system
2. Health care system
3. Law enforcement
4. Local government
5. Non-profit (includes social services organizations, service clubs, and local foundations)
6. Religious organizations
7. Business community/chamber

Design of the assessment – sectors and dimensions (example from another community)

Sectors	Dimensions of inclusion					
	Leadership energy	Awareness	Engagement	Resources	Sharing power	Policies and practices
School system	Dark Green	Light Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow
Law enforcement	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Light Green
Health care system	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Yellow
Religious organizations	Light Green	Dark Green	Dark Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Local government	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow
Business	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Nonprofit organizations	Light Green	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red

Average scores for questions in each dimension of inclusion, based on a scale of 1=not at all, 2=to a slight extent, 3=to a moderate extent and 4=to a great extent

Legend:

Moderate to high level of inclusion (3.0 or higher)

Moderate level of inclusion (2.5 to 2.9)

Low to moderate level of inclusion (2.0 to 2.4)

Low level of inclusion (1.9 or lower)

Measures of each dimension

Awareness	Engagement	Resources	Leadership energy	Sharing power	Policies and Practices
The [sector] is aware of the need for inclusion efforts.	Community members from diverse groups and lived experiences are represented in [sector] activities..	The [sector] accesses resources from inside as well as outside the community to support inclusion efforts.	[Sector] leaders understand the importance of inclusion within the [sector]..	The [sector] has authentic relationships with organizations representing diverse lived experiences to provide input into programs and advocacy.	The [sector] uses an equity lens or inclusion-related questions when developing policies and practices.
The [sector] provides opportunities for training and learning about the different groups that live and work in our community.	[Sector] leaders actively seek information about diverse groups and lived experiences of people in the community.	There are strategic or action plans in place to address inclusion in the [sector]..	[Sector] leaders are willing to look outside of the [sector] for new ideas and ways to promote inclusion and equity.	The leadership of the [sector] reflects the demographics of the broader community.	The [sector] has benchmarks around leadership development and retention of people from diverse groups and lived experiences.
There are opportunities in the [sector] for residents with different lived experiences to come together and learn from each other.	The [sector] uses a wide range of methods to inform <u>everyone</u> about activities.	[Sector] budgets commit financial resources to the values of inclusion.	[Sector] leaders encourage the development and support of future leaders from diverse groups and lived experiences.	The [sector] actively creates opportunities for people from diverse groups and lived experiences to become decision-makers.	The [sector] regularly assesses the impact of its policies or practices on people from diverse groups and lived experiences.

Completed surveys by sector

Sector	Number of completed assessments
Schools	78
Health care	51
Law enforcement	49
Religious/faith organizations	49
Business	38
Local government	36
Nonprofit organizations (includes social services organizations, service clubs, and local foundations)	34
Total	335



Demographics of survey participants

Gender identity	
Man	39% (106)
Woman	59% (163)
Non-binary or self-identify	2% (5)
Race/ethnicity (people could mark all that apply, percentages in parenthesis are population comparisons from the 2021 census estimates for the City of Alexandria)	
American Indian	1.8% (<1%)
Asian	0.4% (<1%)
Black or African American	2.1% (<1%)
Hispanic or Latino	1% (3.5%)
White	95% (91.6%)
More than one race	<1% (3.3%)
Median length of residence (and range)	20 (<1 to 70)

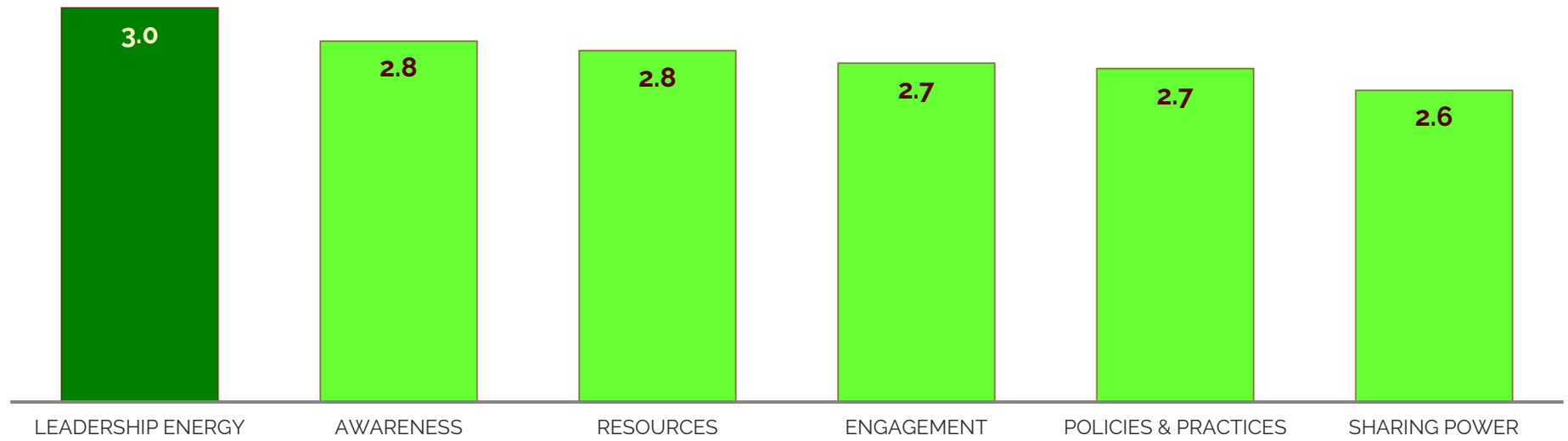




Schools

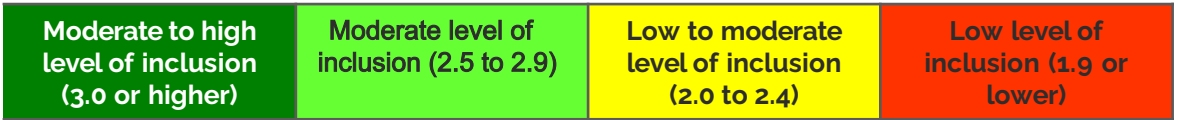
(78 completed assessments)

Strongest in leadership energy



Average scores for questions in each dimension of inclusion, based on a scale of 1=not at all, 2=to a slight extent, 3=to a moderate extent and 4=to a great extent

Legend:





School system – awareness

- *The district has consistently treated all with dignity and respect - equally. There is no need for further D&I efforts.*
- *The experiences offered have a focus on one sided awareness and education. What "whites" need to learn about other cultures, and unfortunately is not a two-way focus. I believe that ultimately marginalizes and separates groups even further.*





School system – engagement

- *My experience has been the school district wants to be inclusive and engage all sectors, but stumbles on the how.*
- *There are many opportunities to be involved. It seems they focus so hard on "getting more diversity" on committees. Our marketing materials are overrepresenting POC as compared to the community.*
- *Don't see a lot of diversity of teachers.*





School system - resources

- *Translation needs are missing in the greater community (i.e. what happens when the family at home doesn't speak English).*
- *Not sure if the district is proactive on needs or if they are scrambling to figure it out.*
- *Resources are allocated for code of conduct training that helps establish positive attitudes towards inclusion.*





School system – leadership energy

- *Our school leaders seem very open to learning and growing and I hear a lot about them visiting other communities and schools and researching best practices in other areas.*
- *Training is taking place which is good. How do we share stories of people that have had bad experiences in the community to bring realness to this?*
- *The leadership wants things to be better and inclusive, but struggle with implementing it when so many may not buy in.*





School system – sharing power

- *The school system needs to quit obsessing on dividing the demographic and focus instead of unity. Look past matters of gender, skin color, ethnicity, race, and beliefs and focus on the fact that we are all Americans, and our future success is found in unity! Stop dividing people up; stop being racist, sexist -- stop pushing exclusivity under the guise of so-called "inclusivity."*
- *I've volunteered to serve on numerous committees relevant to my family's lived experiences in the community but have been denied. Kowtowing to the political majority is a major problem.*



School system – policies & practices

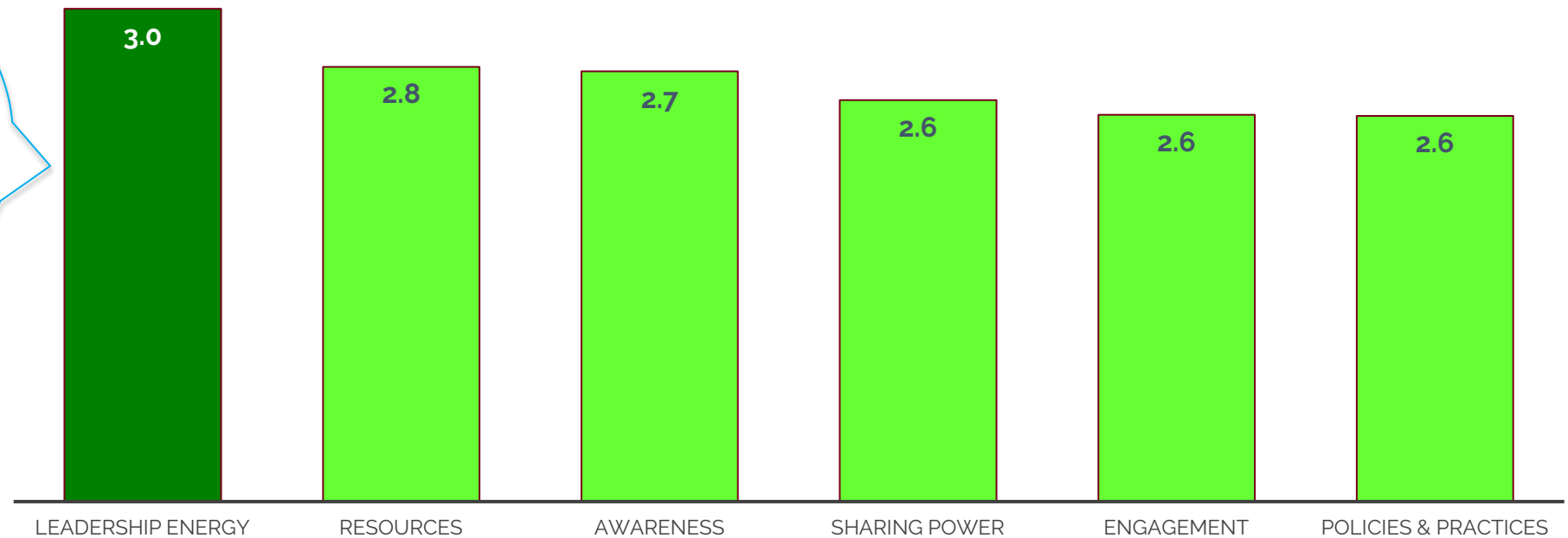
- *Get students at the table for solutions.*
- *Reach out to underrepresented populations to give input in policies.*
- *My school district SHOULD NOT use an equity lens for any purpose, rather it should, and I believe does, ensure a welcoming environment where all people are treated with dignity and have an equal opportunity to excel and advance.*



Law enforcement

(49 completed assessments)

Strongest in leadership energy



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Legend:

Moderate to high level of inclusion (3.0 or higher)

Moderate level of inclusion (2.5 to 2.9)

Low to moderate level of inclusion (2.0 to 2.4)

Low level of inclusion (1.9 or lower)





Law enforcement - awareness

- *City Police make an effort to build relationships with members of the community. They find trends and brainstorm ways to be proactive.*
- *I attended the Alexandria Area Community College and saw the attendees of the law enforcement program every day. Of the entire class, there were maybe 2 black people, no Asians, no Native Americans, and no women. Having interacted with the students of this program many times, I was genuinely concerned about the level of ignorance and prejudice. It made me concerned about the safety of the POC/women/LGBTQ in the town.*





Law enforcement - engagement

- *Need to get to doing more public forums to get questions from community and address those.*
- *My personal engagement with Alexandria police started when they started seeing me around town and started sitting outside my house just to pull me over to ID me and ask why I'm here.*





Law enforcement – resources

- *Need to be able to get funding for more program for LE to engage with our younger community.*
- *Our City Chief of Police is making efforts to make his officers more inclusive - I was part of a Racial Justice group with him - and he has a history of inclusion projects. I don't think the same can be said about the County Sheriff. We live in the same loop as a Sheriff Deputy and they have a racist flag in their yard. When I emailed the Sheriff to complain, I was told it was freedom of speech.*





Law enforcement – leadership energy

- *A recent change in leadership at the police department has brought about a change in the level of energy devoted to inclusion efforts.*
- *I would like to see Alexandria recruit and retain officers of color and employ officers or liaisons of different physical abilities.*





Law enforcement – sharing power

- *More inclusion with low-income people. Open discussions and give answers to questions.*
- *Opportunity to engage with residents of low-income housing sites.*
- *Might have to reach out to people who otherwise wouldn't come forward and share thoughts, ideas, information.*





Law enforcement – policies and practices

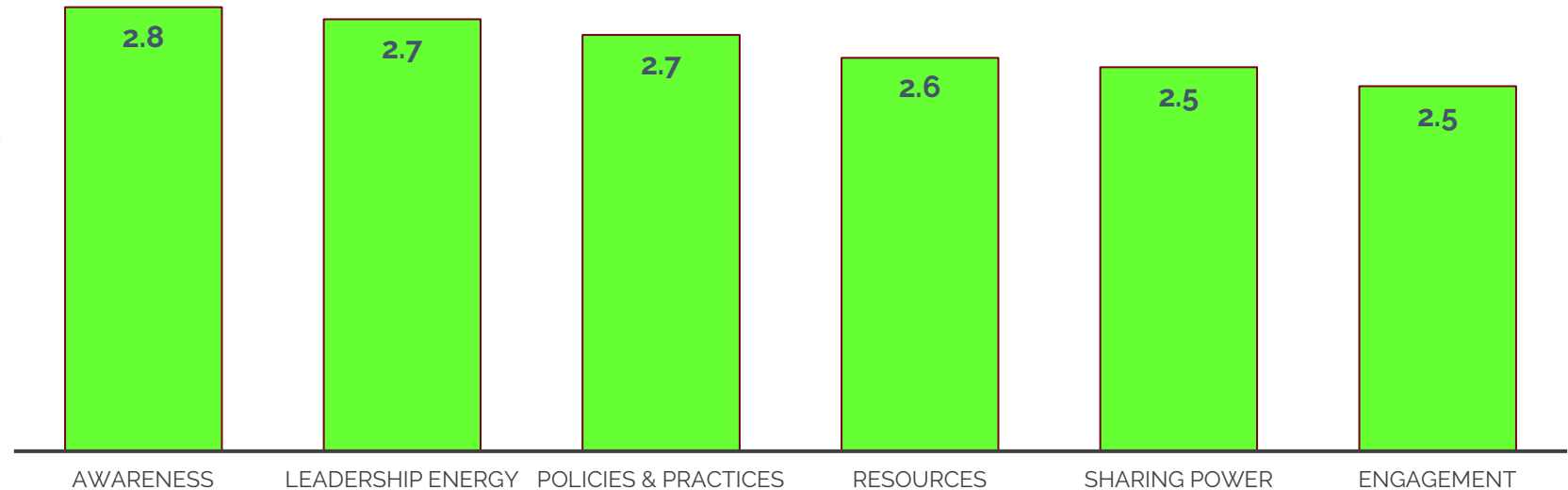
- *Very little known on their policies. Maybe being transparent on these would help? Not sure.*
- *I believe law enforcement is working to help all people, but I'm not sure what [citizen] review they have.*
- *I think our law enforcement does fine. It's criminals I worry about.*



Health care organizations

(51 completed assessments)

All dimensions of inclusion at moderate level



Average scores for questions in each dimension of inclusion, based on a scale of 1=not at all, 2=to a slight extent, 3=to a moderate extent and 4=to a great extent

Legend:





Health care – awareness

- *We need to provide more information to our community about many non-traditional services within our community.*
- *Educate about use of pronouns.*
- *The healthcare system is corrupt, which is why me and my family travel out of the community to receive proper healthcare with dignity. We are sick and tired of being divided and discriminated against because we do not align with pushed homosexuality, gender confusion, perversion, racist, sexist, anti-American values!*





Health care – engagement

- *There are opportunities for proactive healthcare moving forward. Health care is a person's first connector in a community. Engage the nonprofits.*
- *Phones are used for language translation at clinics and hospital. Working on signage. Utilize Public Health.*
- *Teach health care literacy, classes, Lunch and Learns*





Health care – resources

- *Lack of mental health services.*
- *Extend hours of facilities sometimes.*
- *We do not have enough transportation.*



Health care – leadership energy

- *Need intentionality around inclusion.*
- *There is a fear of retribution from people with a conservative perspective.*





Health care – sharing power

- *Public health does an assessment every five years and is always looking for participation. When data comes out, there will be planning sessions on ways to address inclusion.*
- *There is a full-time social worker in Oncology at the hospital that plays a vital role.*
- *Have seen more and more Spanish speaking patients and there are barriers.*





Health care – policies & practices

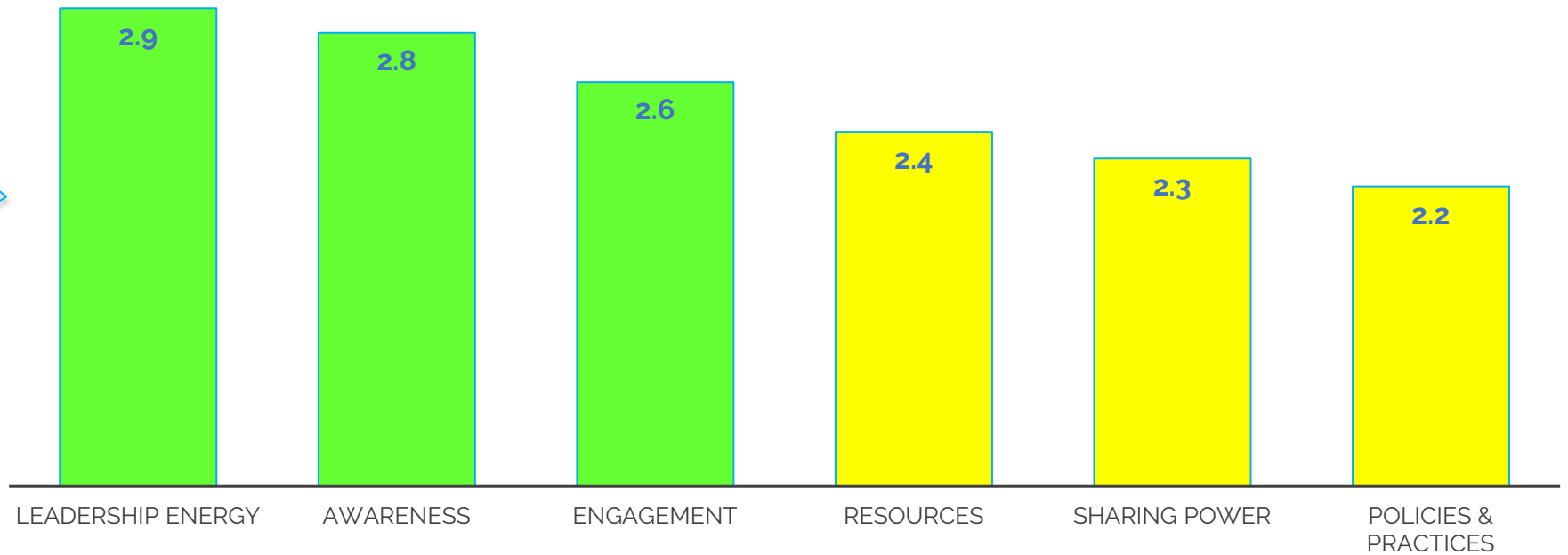
- *They don't know what they don't know or understand.*
- *Include inclusivity in the Strategic Plan to be purposeful.*
- *Train the leaders.*
- *Bible verses on the wall of the hospital coffee shop have offended some people.*



Nonprofit organizations

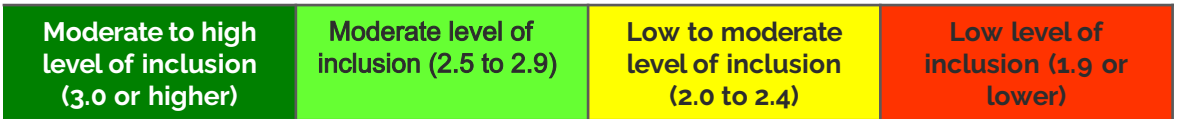
(34 completed assessments)

Strongest
in
awareness
and
leadership
energy



Average scores for questions in each dimension of inclusion, based on a scale of 1=not at all, 2=to a slight extent, 3=to a moderate extent and 4=to a great extent

Legend:





Nonprofit organizations – awareness

- *Examples that I think of are diversity in stories that the arts shares on stage in theater and music and in film study (Community Education). Book choices over the years to engage people in discussions (community read).*
- *Most non-profits in Alexandria are faith-based, or at least lean on that narrative as a way to halt progression.*
- *Several nonprofits that I have contact with have broadened their search for board members and employees with a variety of backgrounds.*





Nonprofit organizations – engagement

- *Documents need to be more readily available in other languages. We also need to recognize that there ARE still individuals that do not have computers. Not everyone has a cell phone with internet access. We have an underserved population that our community doesn't always recognize.*
- *Nonprofits probably do the best job of trying to reach the largest segment of the population in our area.*
- *The Inclusion Network is a great addition to our community.*





Nonprofit organizations – resources

- *Have strategic or other action plans in place to address inclusion is a great place to start. It would be helpful to the nonprofits to know who is available to help with that process....that person knowledgeable about strategic planning AND inclusion language and practices.*
- *A recent success was several nonprofits pooling resources to provide assistance to local faith organizations through the Hope Haven initiative to combat homelessness.*





Nonprofit organizations – leadership energy

- *I think the energy is emerging but latent. Opposition to inclusion (strident politicians and vocal writers, letters to the editors) are powerful voices. The mayor of Alex has made a difference in inclusion efforts.*





Nonprofit organizations – policies & practices

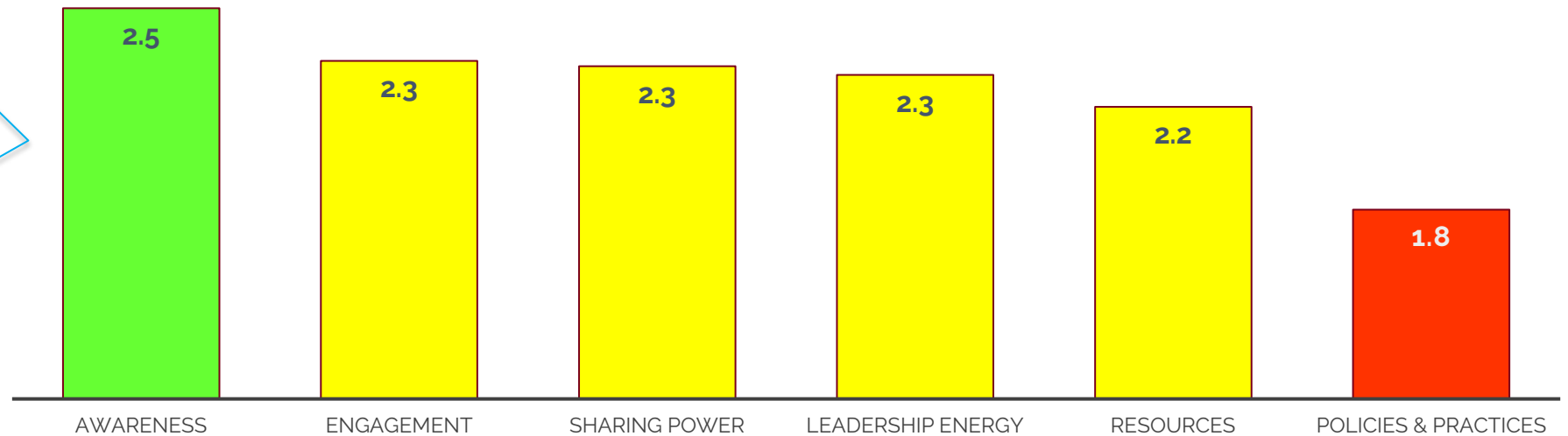
- *Need lots of help here. Primary practice seems to be “recruit people like us.”*



Religious organizations

(49 completed assessments)

Low to moderate levels of inclusion across most dimensions



Average scores for questions in each dimension of inclusion, based on a scale of 1=not at all, 2=to a slight extent, 3=to a moderate extent and 4=to a great extent

Legend:

Moderate to high level of inclusion (3.0 or higher)

Moderate level of inclusion (2.5 to 2.9)

Low to moderate level of inclusion (2.0 to 2.4)

Low level of inclusion (1.9 or lower)





Religious organizations - awareness

- *This community is very Christian. I am not . . . I'm fine with respecting their belief system but they are very disrespectful of my belief system.*
- *Not necessarily in the churches themselves, but para-church organizations like Love INC in cooperation with congregations can provide some of these opportunities. There had been some talk among the four ELCA Lutheran congregations of Alexandria in early 2020 to bring in speakers who could highlight people of different experiences and viewpoints, but COVID ended those efforts.*





Religious organizations - engagement

- *Most congregations have social media in addition to their newsletters. The Alexandria Area Ministerial Alliance is a place to seek and receive information about diverse groups. Usually, the focus there is on groups with differing socioeconomic statuses.*





Religious organizations – resources

- *I am unaware of resources currently or potentially available specifically to target activities that address inclusion. There are resources available i.e. Thrivent Funding that can be applied and accessed - but to my knowledge I am unaware of the number of projects undertaken to specifically address inclusion.*





Religious organizations – leadership energy

- *Some religions restrict leadership roles to only males.*
- *It totally depends on the religious group.*
- *Provide a series on “Who is your neighbor?” or on immigration and assimilation.*





Religious organizations – sharing power

- *Nearly all religious leaders in Alexandria are white men. (I know of two female leaders.) The religious organizations I know of tend to be pretty closed-off on who gets power and how it is shared.*





Religious organizations – policies and practices

- *Although I believe that we need to focus on our common ground rather than our differences, I do understand that it is important to be sure people are able to access groups, not being excluded due to barriers (wheelchairs, language).*

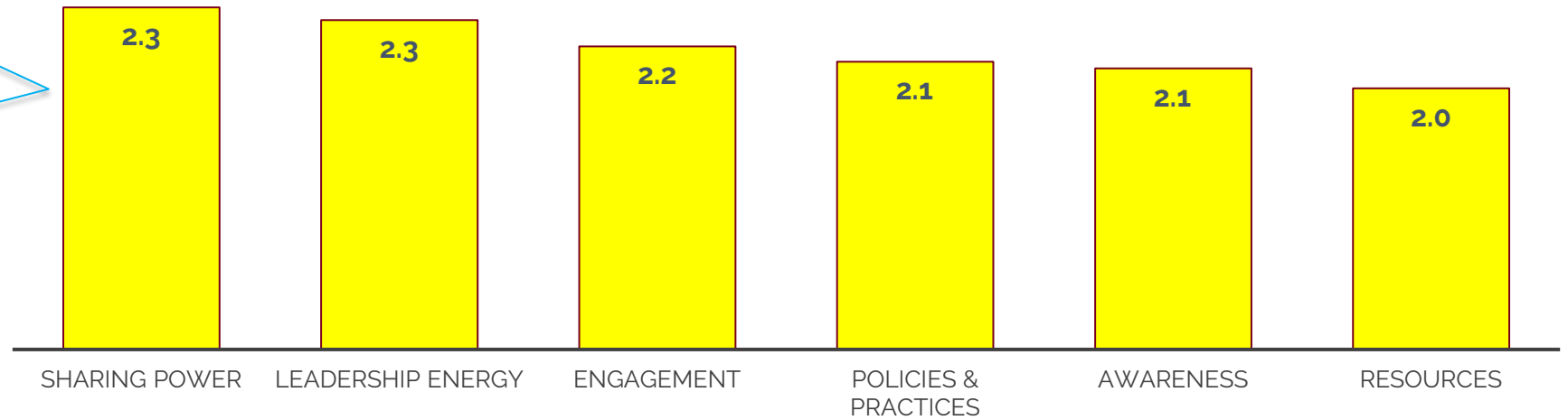




Business

(38 completed assessments)

Low to moderate levels of inclusion across all dimensions



Average scores for questions in each dimension of inclusion, based on a scale of 1=not at all, 2=to a slight extent, 3=to a moderate extent and 4=to a great extent

Legend:





Business – awareness

- *Most of the awareness comes from the need for workforce.*
- *There is probably a lack of consensus on what "inclusion" means. Some will say it is to not exclude. Others will say it means to actively include. In Alexandria, the business attitude tends to be "We do not exclude; therefore, we are inclusive." Some larger employers are better at providing training.*
- *Having had a negative experience with a business owner, I feel that the conversation of inclusiveness is not in the forefront.*





Business – engagement

- *The business community is probably the most diverse of all the groups surveyed. The diversity is represented in many categories such as race, ethnicity, religious preference, sexual orientation, age, gender, etc.*
- *Could the Chamber leadership group have more diversity?*



Business – resources

- *At least one large local employer (Douglas Machine) devotes resources and provides training on these topics. Smaller employers tend to understand the importance of not excluding, but they generally do not commit resources to actively include.*
- *Trying to start up Welcoming America this September.*





Business – leadership energy

- *I don't know if the business community understands that they have a role and that they have an important role in inclusion.*
- *Some leaders in the business community are closed-minded. To make changes, we need to make them feel uncomfortable.*





Business – sharing power

- *Provide incentives for minority owned businesses - greater chamber membership. Model communities like Long Prairie.*





Business – policies and practices

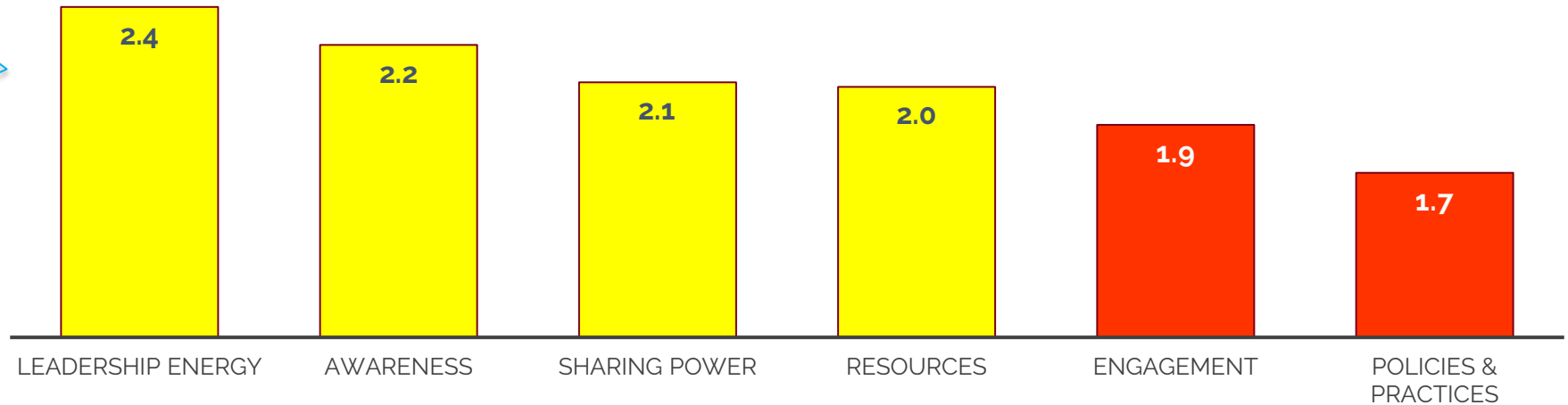
- *The community has a strong local chapter of SHRM. The employers who participate in that chapter and those who take their HR policies seriously have a much clearer equity lens. However, there are still many local employers who view their HR function as a burdensome expense they'd rather avoid.*
- *The elephant in the room - Republican Party of Trump.*



Local government

(36 completed assessments)

Low to moderate levels of inclusion across all dimensions.



Average scores for questions in each dimension of inclusion, based on a scale of 1=not at all, 2=to a slight extent, 3=to a moderate extent and 4=to a great extent

Legend:

Moderate to high level of inclusion (3.0 or higher)

Moderate level of inclusion (2.5 to 2.9)

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Low level of inclusion (1.9 or lower)





Local government – awareness

- *City of Alexandria government is more tuned in to these issues than Douglas County government. The city is showing this by engaging in this discussion. There are plenty of opportunities, but only a narrow group of people tend to choose to get involved.*
- *In this county, the minorities are well taken care of. They all get max benefits (food, cash, housing, utilities, transportation, daycare, & Healthcare) while the rest of us are denied for every single one of their programs. So they keep unemployed to collect benefits while we work our butts off to pay on taxes that go to them. This needs to change ASAP.*





Local government - engagement

- *They are TERRIBLE at letting the public know of events. We've lived here for 9 years & still haven't heard of a single parade until after it was over. We shouldn't have to cross-check 10 different calendars & community events websites & newspapers everyday just to find something that is happening . . . Alex caters to the tourists & the retired & nothing in-between.*
- *Does city planning commission have a wide variety of members with various lived experiences? I'm not sure.*





Local government – resources

- *There are often resources available for various projects/programs that the local government doesn't even pursue because of the work involved. When locals try to drive an effort local government often stands as a barrier to progress.*
- *What incentive do local officials have to be inclusive in a primarily white community that leans heavily Republican.*





Local government – leadership energy

- *I think the mayor of Alexandria is trying to do more, as are some council people. However, Alexandria is very heavily conservative, and sometimes not open to change. Conservative is not bad, but if any group is not open to listening and finding common solutions there is a blood clot!*
- *County needs a "why" statement. Align planning and resources behind the "why."*





Local government – sharing power

- *This survey is a step in the direction of developing these relationships and learning where more input is needed. Unless and until there is data showing a lack of opportunity, local government has no incentive to create them.*
- *Go to where the families are: schools, clinics, public health, stores, and invite them to the table.*





Local government – policies & practices

- *Planning commission should think about multi-family housing policies so diverse people can afford to live here.*





The big picture

Sectors	Dimensions of inclusion					
	Leadership energy	Awareness	Engagement	Resources	Sharing power	Policies and practices
School system	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
Law enforcement	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
Health care system	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
Nonprofit organizations	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Business	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Religious organizations	Yellow	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Local government	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red

Legend:

Moderate to high level of inclusion (3.0 or higher)	Moderate level of inclusion (2.5 to 2.9)	Low to moderate level of inclusion (2.0 to 2.4)	Low level of inclusion (1.9 or lower)
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Discussion

- Q&A
- What information in the report about each sector stands out to you as important? Did anything in the results surprise you?



Next steps for Alexandria

- Please share your insights about next steps for a cohort program – scan this QR code or follow the link in the chat.
- If you'd like be involved in those cohorts to please email cicalexandriamn@gmail.com.





Thanks for your work to make Alexandria more inclusive!

For more information, contact Scott Chazdon at schazdon@umn.edu

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