



2017 IMPACT REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

# YOUR VOICE MATTERS



**on the table**®  
greater akron





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the President	1
Small Conversations, Big Ideas	2
Research Methodology	3
Demographics	4-5
Civic Attitudes & Activities	6-10
What's Next?	11

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For Akron Community Foundation and  
The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation





## ***Your Voice Matters***

In his farewell address from the oval office, Ronald Reagan said, “All great change in America begins at the dinner table.” I’d like to think Akron Community Foundation took his advice when we championed On the Table Greater Akron, which inspired discussions among 6,000 of our friends, co-workers, family members and neighbors, this past Oct. 3. These conversations encouraged members of our community to talk about the issues they care about most – all while breaking bread with friends and strangers alike.

On the Table Greater Akron also gave each of us the opportunity to listen, learn and understand that while we can do great work individually, together we can be a force for change and a catalyst for improving the human condition in our community.

This report summarizes the feedback and insights garnered from the remarkable number of responses we received from participants who completed hard copy and electronic surveys soon after their conversations. Thank you, everyone!

We are extremely grateful to the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for selecting Greater Akron as one of the 10 pilot communities invited to engage their citizenry in these meaningful dialogues. The initiative provided the platform for residents to envision how we might work together to strengthen our community. Akron Community Foundation has been an advocate for improving our quality of life for 63 years and has embraced and enhanced the work of charitable individuals, families and businesses that make a permanent commitment for the good of Greater Akron and Summit County as a whole. In fact, since 1955, we have awarded more than \$150 million in grants back into the community, touching and uplifting the lives of people we know and those we will never meet.

Moving forward, Knight Foundation has generously agreed to support our second On the Table Greater Akron event in 2018. The board of directors of Akron Community Foundation will be earmarking grant dollars this year to further some of the promising ideas for change and improvement that surfaced in last October’s conversations. These financial commitments – which are referenced on pg. 11 of this report – will help community groups further explore and advance practical and creative ideas that will strengthen our neighborhoods and overall community in the years to come.

Your voice matters. Thank you for sharing it.

John T. Petures, Jr.  
President & CEO  
Akron Community Foundation

# Small Conversations, Big Ideas

A one-of-a-kind initiative, On the Table began with The Chicago Community Trust in 2014, based around the idea that small conversations can generate big ideas – ideas that will ultimately help shape the future of a region. Chicago's successful event provided the inspiration for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to fund similar events through community foundations in 10 locations across the country, including Akron Community Foundation.

On Oct. 3, 2017, approximately 6,000 people from all walks of life gathered in small groups over a meal to discuss the issues that impact the quality of life in our community. On the Table Greater Akron offered friends and strangers alike the chance to converse and gain a deeper understanding of the community around us. It encouraged each of us to think about how we can help shape Greater Akron into a strong, vibrant, safe and dynamic place for all who live, work and play here.

While we recognize there are no quick fixes to the community's problems, we believe that together we can spur progress by sharing new ideas and bold solutions, and ultimately investing in those ideas.

On the Table Greater Akron participants were invited to complete a survey to help compile the information discussed. Highlights from the findings are included on the following pages, and the full 2017 Impact Report and Data Set can be found at:

[www.onthetableakron.com/Results](http://www.onthetableakron.com/Results)

AN  
INSIDE  
LOOK



# Research Methodology

Knight Foundation contracted with the University of Illinois at Chicago Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement (IPCE) to serve as the research partner for the On the Table Greater Akron initiative.

IPCE collected survey data using three methods:

- A public web link to the Qualtrics survey
- An e-mailed unique link to the Qualtrics survey
- Distributed print surveys

Per the request of Akron Community Foundation and to accommodate the community's non-English speakers, the survey was translated into Spanish, Karen and Nepali. The collection of the survey data began the morning of Oct. 3, 2017, when the public web link opened. That same day, print surveys were made available to participants. Following the event, participants were also sent an e-mail invitation to complete the survey online. These surveys were collected through Oct. 31, 2017.

The respondent population discussed in this report is a self-selected sample of participants who partially or fully completed the survey. The three survey sources yielded a total of 3,598 responses (60% of event participants):

- 1,153 through the e-mailed link
- 252 through the web link
- 2,193 through the print survey



# DEMOGRAPHICS

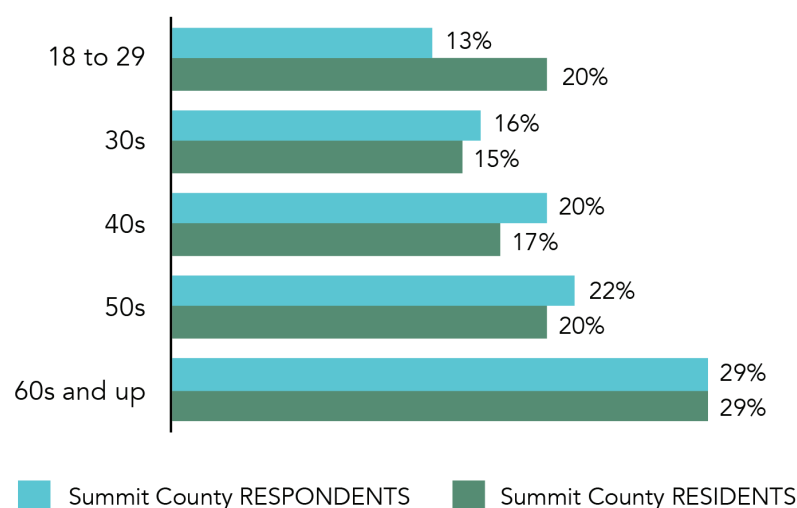
## OVERVIEW

Nearly 60% (3,500) of On the Table Greater Akron participants (6,000) completed the survey, with 68% of those respondents identifying as female. An overwhelming 86% of those who participated in the survey expressed a willingness to be a part of the solution(s).

## AGE

In general, respondents' ages tracked closely with the demographics of Summit County, but there was slight underrepresentation in respondents 18-29 years old. (13% – OTT respondents / 20% – Summit County population)

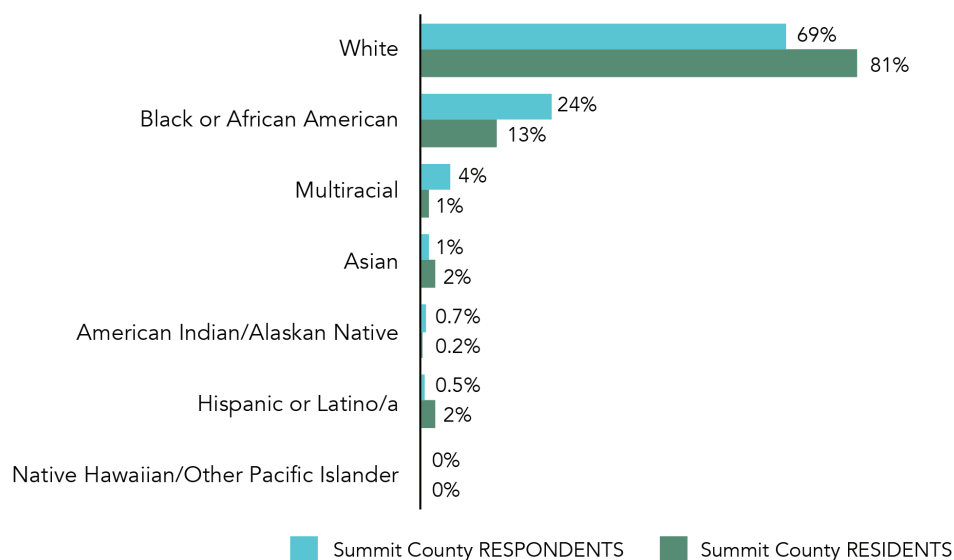
AGE OF RESPONDENTS BY DECADE, COMPARISON



## RACE

The racial makeup of survey respondents from Summit County was slightly more diverse than that of Summit County overall. While 69% of respondents from Summit County identified as white, 81% of all Summit County residents identify as white, according to current county census data. Further, 24% of Summit County survey respondents identified as black or African American, compared to the 13% of all Summit County residents who identify similarly.

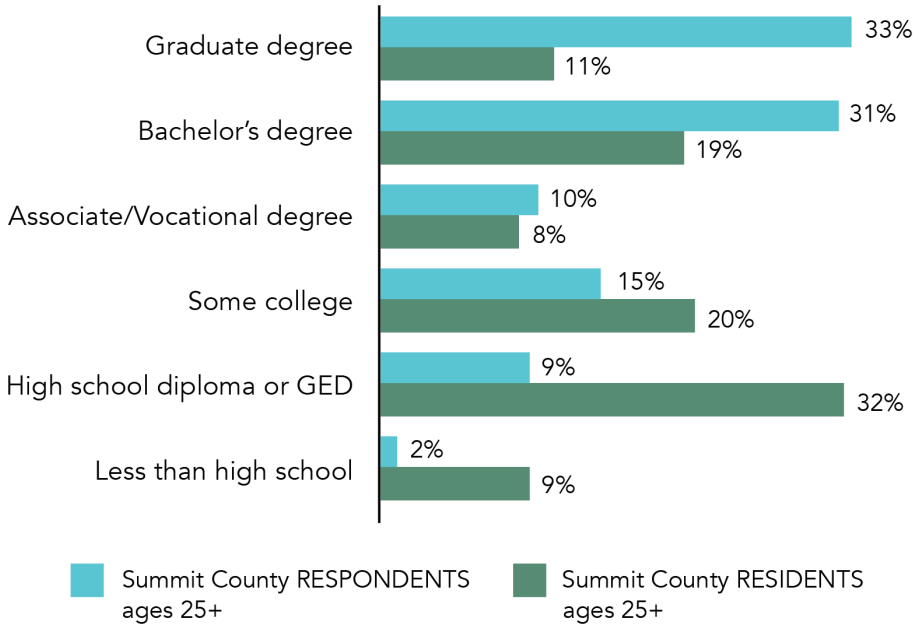
RACIAL AND/OR ETHNIC IDENTITY



EDUCATION

Respondents tended to be highly educated. Just under two-thirds (64%) of respondents reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. Comparatively, only 11% of all Summit County residents have a graduate degree, and 19% hold a bachelor's degree. While only 2% of survey respondents reported completing less than high school, 9% of Summit County residents report the same level of education.

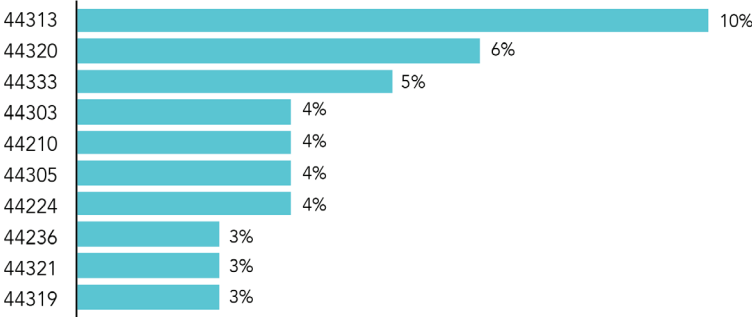
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION



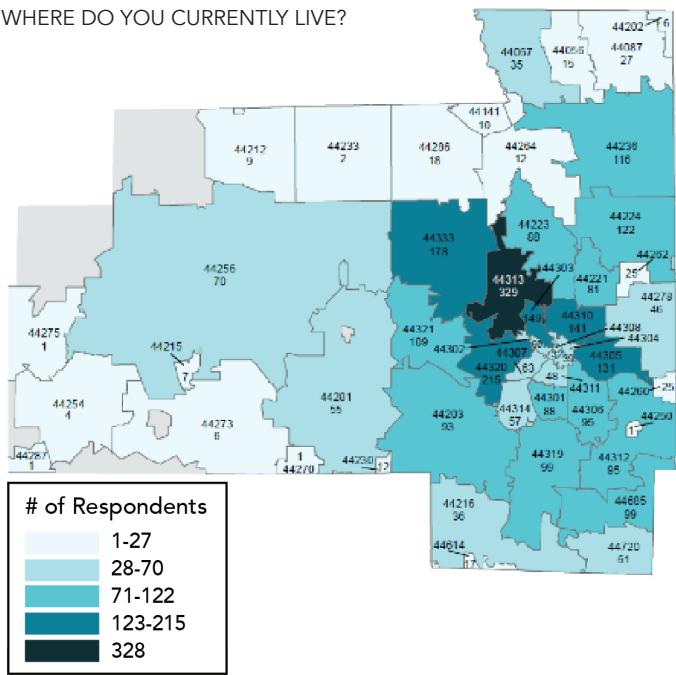
LOCATION

Nearly half (45%) of respondents indicated that they have lived in their local community for 20 years or more. Compared to national rates as identified by the Pew Research Center, these respondents are overrepresented, as 32% of people nationally have lived in their community for 20 years or more.

RESPONDENTS' ZIP CODES



WHERE DO YOU CURRENTLY LIVE?

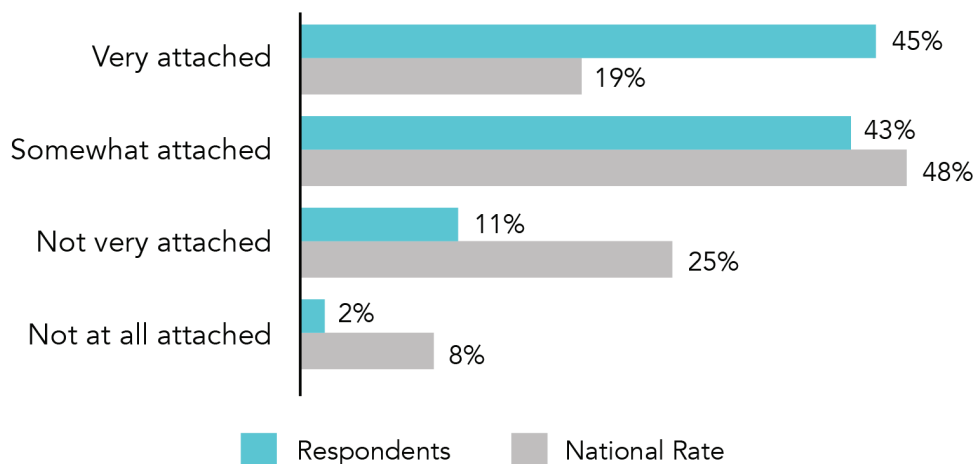


# CIVIC ATTITUDES & ACTIVITIES

## COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

Nearly one-half (45%) of respondents reported that they were long-term residents who have lived in their local community for 20 or more years, with the same amount stating that they feel very attached to their community, significantly higher than the 19% national rate.

IN GENERAL, HOW ATTACHED DO YOU FEEL TO YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

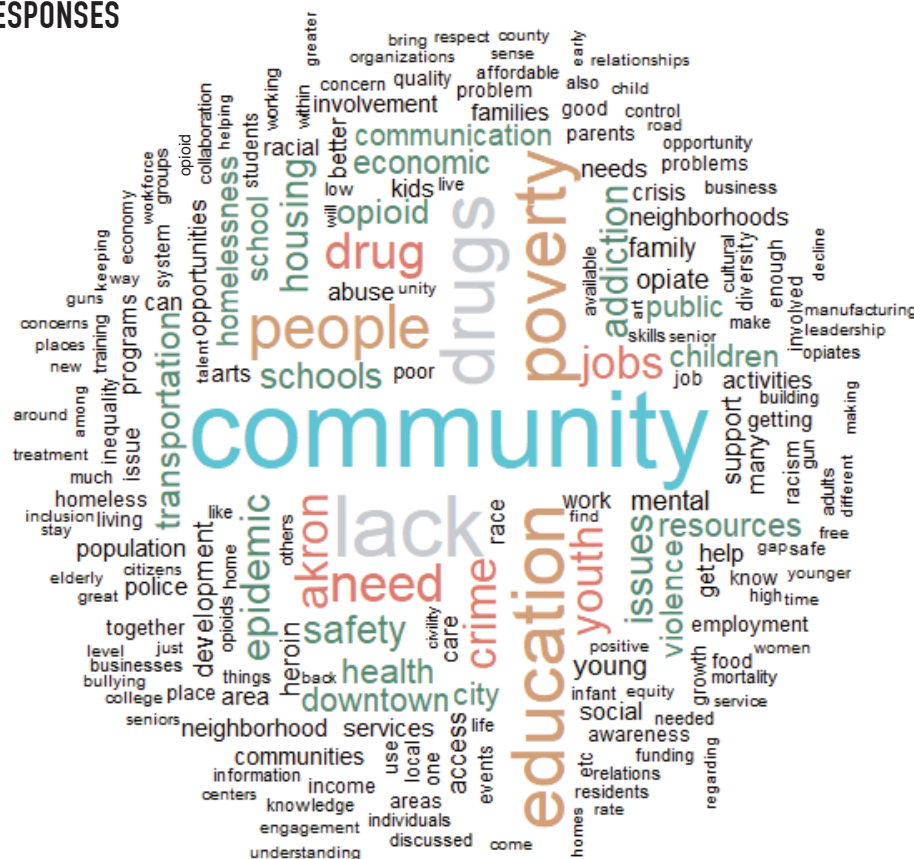
Respondents were a highly engaged group across all measures considered, especially when comparing Greater Akron respondents to national data. For example, 70% of respondents described themselves as already, somewhat, or very involved in community and neighborhood activities where they live. Respondents were most likely to have donated, volunteered and attended a public meeting.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST YEAR





## TOP WORDS USED IN RESPONSES



## TOP ISSUES OF FOCUS

A separate set of analyses was completed on questions that related to: topics discussed at gatherings, the biggest issues in the community, the social issues that respondents care most about, and the social issues to which respondents contribute their time, talent and treasure. These analyses provide a deeper understanding of the themes that emerged from the discussions and are helpful in identifying the areas of opportunity for further investigation or action. (cont.)

## EXPRESSING CONCERN



## CIVIC ATTITUDES & ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

### ECONOMIC ISSUES AND POVERTY



38%

We learned that the most pressing concern expressed was economic issues and poverty. This included economic development on one end and economic insecurity, or poverty, on the other, covering in the intermediate unemployment and jobs as well as income inequality and wage issues.

Respondents cited the “cycle of poverty” and “generational poverty,” and they brought up “need[ing] to break [the] cycle of poverty” and finding a “bridge out of poverty.” Respondents also talked about the conditions that contribute to and impact poverty, such as “living in our silos,” “institutional racism,” “economic instability,” and “lack of job opportunities.” They mentioned how “economic revitalization” and “improve[d] economic conditions” can “reduce poverty.”

### EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION



31%

Equity and social inclusion responses use a social lens to account for forms of exclusion and issues of access and equality for underserved groups. Reference is largely made to youth access and engagement concerns as well as to issues of disparity as noted across income levels, racial groups and neighborhoods. Overall, respondents said there need to be “positive youth activities” and “outlets for youth.” Respondents also expressed a need for “services for young people” and “more prevention programs.” Race and racism were also prominent topics for respondents who described the presence of “race issues” in their community, such as “racism,” “division by race,” “poor race relations,” “racial inequality,” “racial conflict,” “racial distrust,” “racial tensions,” “institutional racism,” “subtle racism” and “hidden racism.” At the time On the Table Greater Akron conversations were taking place, a high-profile and racially charged issue involving Akron City Council members was being widely publicized.

### DRUGS AND ADDICTION



31%

The majority of respondents referred to the current situation as an “epidemic” and a “crisis.” Our community has been at the forefront of this issue with the work of the Summit County Opiate Task Force, and recently, the conversation has been elevated since the United Way of Summit County identified the reduction of emergency room visits for drug overdoses as one of its Bold Goals in its new strategic direction. Respondents also referred to all levels of drug use and addiction, drug awareness and education, drug treatment options, drug-related violence and deaths as well as the many other aspects of the opioid crisis. Many respondents referenced drug “use,” “abuse” and “overdose,” as well as drug “problems” and “activity” in their communities.

The newly formed Opiate Leadership Council, a collaboration of United Way and Akron Community Foundation, will look at proven strategies and tactics to help address this issue in our community.

**Overall, the top issue raised by respondents involved economic issues and poverty, with 38% of respondents showing concern for this issue.**

## EDUCATION AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

**30%**

Education and youth development also were in the top tier of concerns expressed among On the Table Greater Akron participants. According to respondents, there is a “need to improve education for youth,” especially considering a “lack of proper education [for] young people (elementary [through] high school)” and “how unprepared young adults are.” According to the data, many respondents stressed the “importance of quality early childhood education” and described how a “lack of support at the younger [grades]” causes the “achievement gap [to get] bigger at the [high school level].”

Participants made reference primarily to schools (such as school systems or curriculum) and students (most often at the high school level) with mention of mentoring and general youth development. Topics of discussion also included community relationships, parent involvement and research.

The identified need for strong early childhood education programs and services aligns perfectly with Akron Community Foundation’s focus on funding early learning initiatives during our education grant cycle. Not surprisingly, other area funders, including GAR Foundation, United Way and PNC Foundation, have a similar focus. Each year, Summit County collaborations like First Things First, an early childhood-focused program, and Summit Education Initiative, which emphasizes the “Cradle to Career” continuum, are funding priorities for the community foundation.

## PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM

**21%**

Our judicial system and public safety ranked fifth among concerns of respondents. Respondents named crime and violence as areas of concern in their communities, citing “increasing crime rates” and the “reputation of high crime and that the community is not safe.” “Gun violence” and “domestic violence” were the two most common types of violence named. Most respondents referred to the criminal justice system, as well as public safety and crime. Of major concern were instances of gang and gun violence, drugs, trafficking, and how our police and other officials can provide better public safety.

**Of the top concerns, those surrounding public safety and the judicial system stand out as an area with a need for increasing engagement and awareness about opportunities. Only 28% of respondents who selected public safety and the judicial system among the top three most important social issues also selected this as a social issue to which they contribute their time, talent or financial resources.**

**On the other hand, education and youth development was cited as the issue with the least amount of disparity. Many respondents who reported it as an important issue also reported that they actively contribute to this cause.**

## CIVIC ATTITUDES & ACTIVITIES (CONT.)

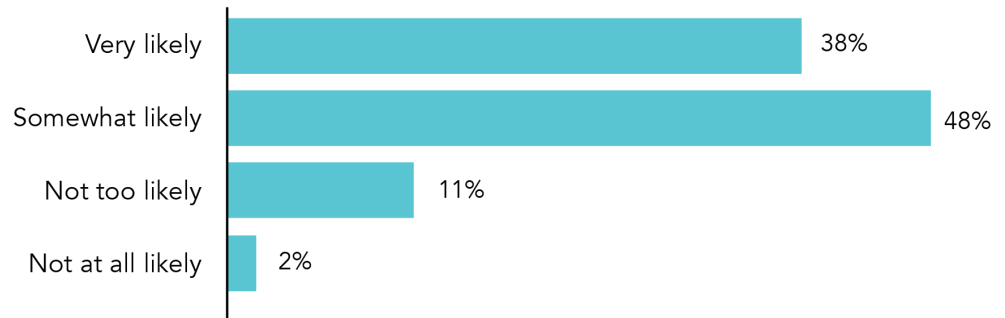
### TAKING ACTION

A large majority (86%) of respondents are likely to take specific action or next steps regarding an issue, with:

- 64% building relationships and collaborating
- 59% raising awareness and educating others
- 49% getting more involved in their community

89% of respondents said that, following On the Table Greater Akron conversations, they have a better understanding of how they can personally address issues facing their community.

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO TAKE SPECIFIC ACTIONS OR NEXT STEPS REGARDING AN ISSUE OR SOLUTION DISCUSSED?

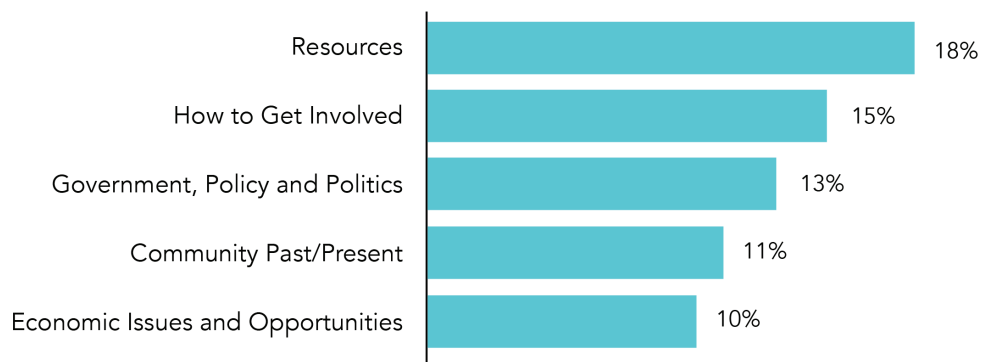


### I WISH I KNEW...

Of the survey respondents, 18% said they wish they knew more about resources in the community, with some expressing interest in learning how to best communicate all the resources available.

In addition, 15% of respondents expressed wanting to know more about how to get involved – the second highest ranked response.

THINKING ABOUT MY LOCAL COMMUNITY, I WISH I KNEW MORE ABOUT:  
(TOP 5 RESPONSES)







# What's Next?

Gathering information is important, but equally important is what comes next. While the good news is that funders, nonprofits, and civic and business leaders in our community are already tackling many of these issues, this report brings to light opportunities that still exist for leadership, growth and, ultimately, change.

## PROACTIVE SOLUTIONS

As Akron Community Foundation begins to explore our approach to proactive grantmaking priorities, we are reviewing the data in this Impact Report, as well as research from a community-wide needs assessment compiled by the Center for Community Solutions. The proactive investments Akron Community Foundation ultimately makes will be directed to programs and services that address the top issues that surface in these two reports.

## CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS

We believe that small conversations can generate big ideas. And these ideas can ultimately help shape the future of our region. We've heard that many of the conversations started at On the Table Greater Akron are continuing today – with individuals already making an impact in the community. Akron Community Foundation will continue that momentum by once again fostering conversation during On the Table Greater Akron on Oct. 3, 2018.

Conversations in 2018 will focus on the five key issues that emerged in 2017 (see pgs. 7-9): economic issues and poverty; equity and social inclusion; drugs and addiction; education and youth development; and public safety and judicial system.

## GRASSROOTS FUNDING

From door-to-door education to combat the opiate epidemic to cleaning up a local playground or bringing the arts to an underserved community – what could you do with a grant to benefit our community?

While open dialogue is key, we understand funding is an integral resource for solving issues in the community. On the Table Greater Akron convened passionate community members who shared not just hopes but actionable ideas for making a difference on the local level. And Akron Community Foundation will be helping you bring those creative ideas to life through the **On the Table Community Impact Awards**.

These intentionally small grants of no more than \$2,000 are aimed at supporting new grassroots, community-based solutions that emerge from conversations participants have during the 2018 On the Table event. Interested participants will be asked to submit a proposal and short video featuring the idea that emerged.

**Make sure you're the first to hear details about the next On the Table Greater Akron event as well as how to apply for funding, by registering for our emails at: [www.akroncf.org/Enews](http://www.akroncf.org/Enews).**

Thank you to the generous sponsors  
who helped make the first year of  
On the Table Greater Akron a success.



# THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING







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