

# Supporting Communities in Suicide Prevention

Troy Bush DiDonato Episcopal Health Foundation  
Lisa Sullivan, Texas Suicide Prevention Collaborative  
Jazzie Hamlett, Hill Country MHMR  
Lisa Blinn and Dyani Banda, The Harris Center



# Community Engagement Defined

## Community Engagement

The process of **working collaboratively with and through** groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations **to address issues affecting the well being of those people.**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Principles of community engagement (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) Atlanta (GA): CDC/ATSDR Committee on Community Engagement; 1997

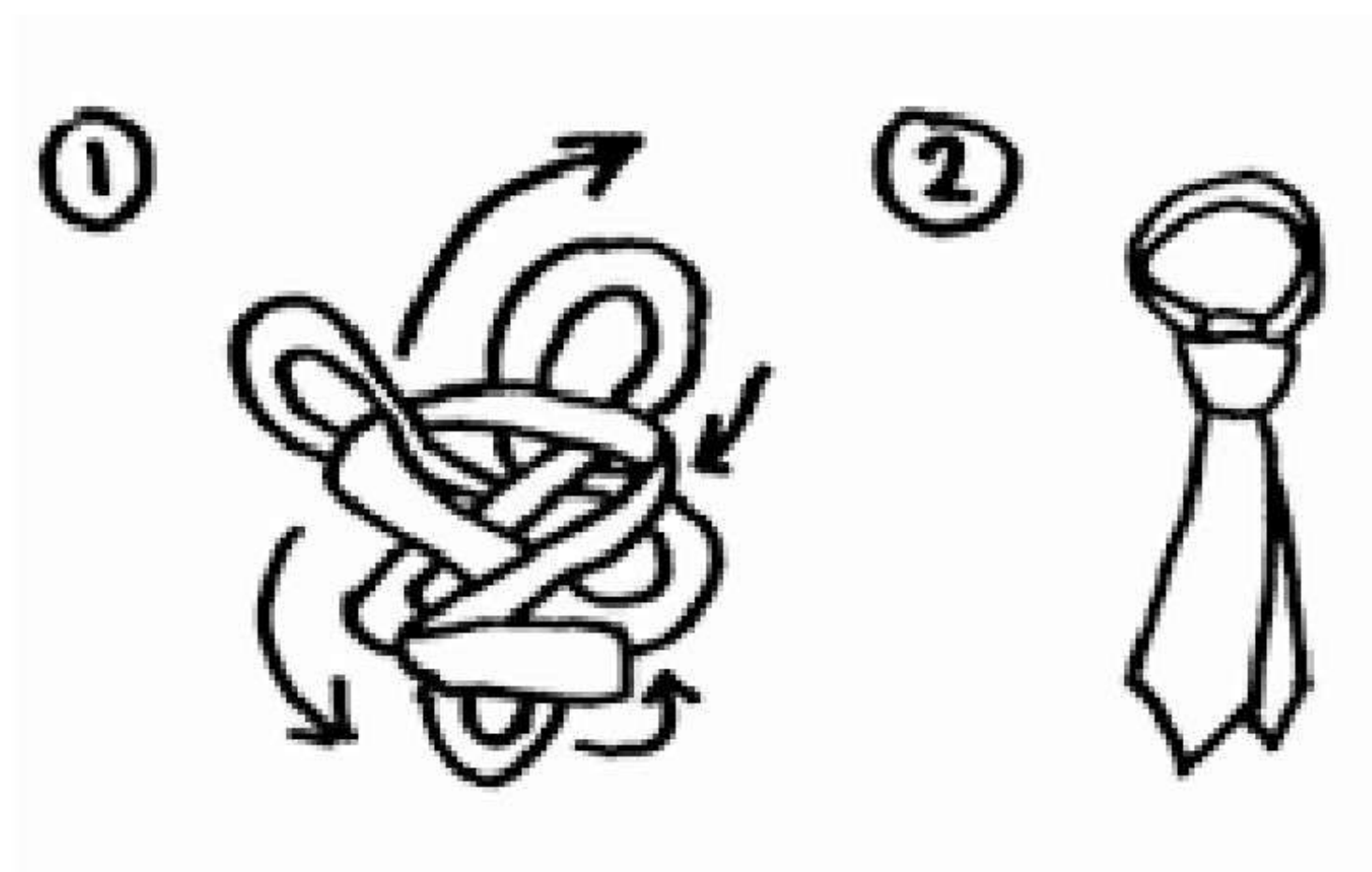
EPISCOPAL HEALTH FOUNDATION



## Why it Matters

- Relationships Matter & Community Voices Matter
- Can help move us away from creating technical solutions to adaptive (systemic) issues, gets to the root of the issues.
- Moves us to participatory decision-making that can uncover and mobilize community assets, strengths, and resources that would have been otherwise overlooked

## How it is done



# Principle of Community Engagement

## *Before starting a community engagement effort...*

1. Be clear about the purposes or goals of the engagement effort and the populations and/or communities you want to engage.
2. Become knowledgeable about the community's culture, economic conditions, social networks, political and power structures, norms and values, demographic trends, history, and experience with efforts by outside groups to engage it in various programs. Learn about the community's perceptions of those initiating the engagement activities.

## *For engagement to occur, it is necessary to...*

3. Go to the community, establish relationships, build trust, work with the formal and informal leadership, and seek commitment from community organizations and leaders to create processes for mobilizing the community.
4. Remember and accept that collective self-determination is the responsibility and right of all people in a community. No external entity should assume it can bestow on a community the power to act in its own self-interest.

## *For engagement to succeed...*

5. Partnering with the community is necessary to create change and improve health.
6. All aspects of community engagement must recognize and respect the diversity of the community. Awareness of the various cultures of a community and other factors affecting diversity must be paramount in planning, designing, and implementing approaches to engaging a community.
7. Community engagement can only be sustained by identifying and mobilizing community assets and strengths and by developing the community's capacity and resources to make decisions and take action.
8. Organizations that wish to engage a community as well as individuals seeking to effect change must be prepared to release control of actions or interventions to the community and be flexible enough to meet its changing needs.
9. Community collaboration requires long-term commitment by the engaging organization and its partners.



# Community Engagement Continuum

Increasing Impact on Decision Making

Outreach	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Shared Leadership
<p>We will keep you informed.</p> <p>Promise to Community</p>	<p>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.</p>	<p>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>We will implement what you decide.</p>

# Collaborative Continuum

CDC Model

Himmelman's  
Collaborative  
Continuum

Outreach

- Networking

Consult

- Coordinating

Involve

- Cooperating

Collaborate

- Collaborating

Shared  
Leadership

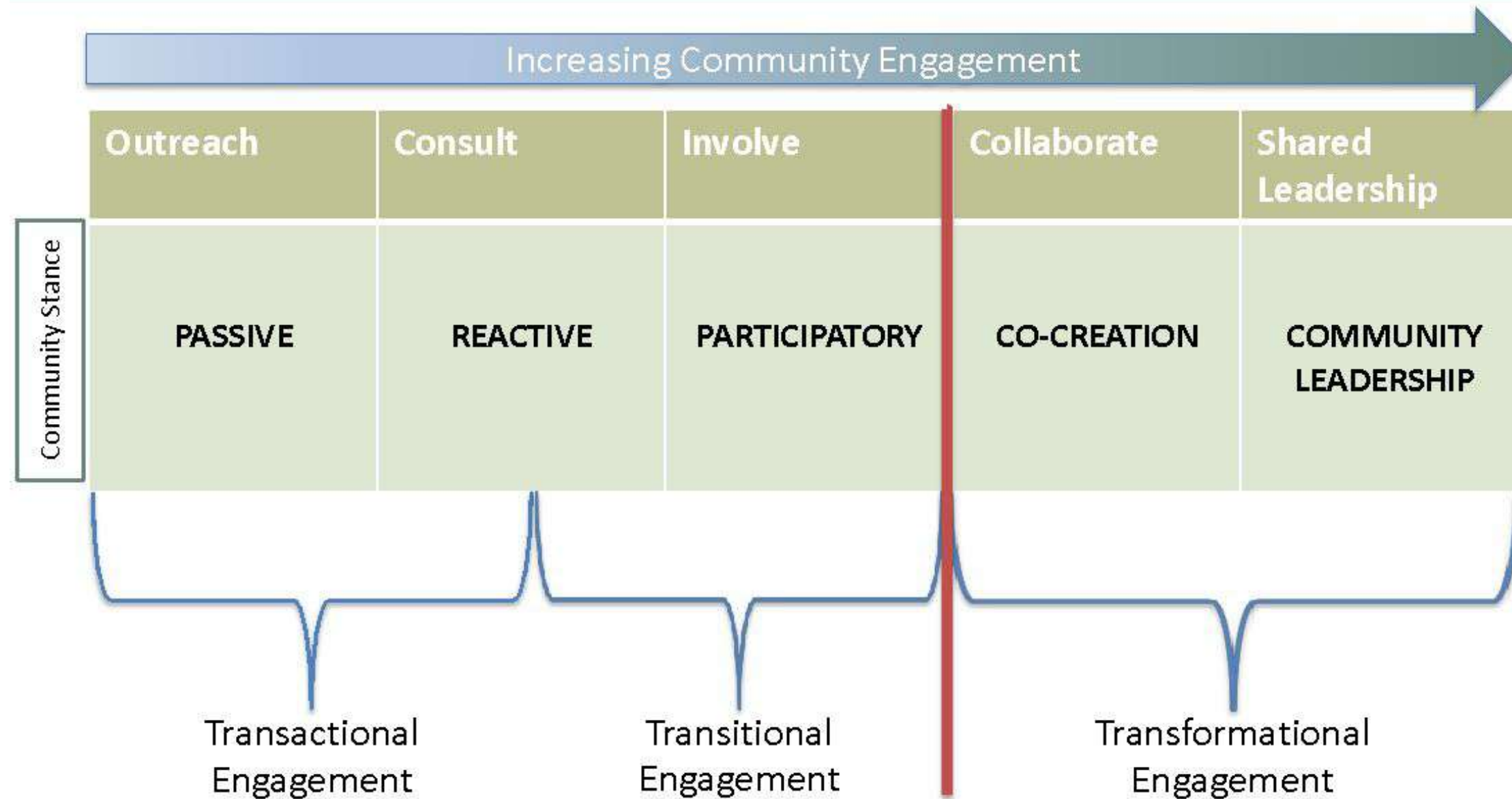
Shared Leadership

# What Makes a High-Functioning Collaborative?

- **Shared Purpose** and passionate members
- **Shared Leadership** (not held by an individual or single organization)
- **Action oriented** to drive effort toward the common goal
- Members feel **trust and respect** one another
- Membership is **diverse and inclusive**
- **Structure developed** to assist and sustain



# Community Engagement Continuum



Modified from Hashagan, S.: 2002, Models of Community Engagement (Scottish Community Development Centre, Scotland).

EPISCOPAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

# Texas Suicide Prevention Council

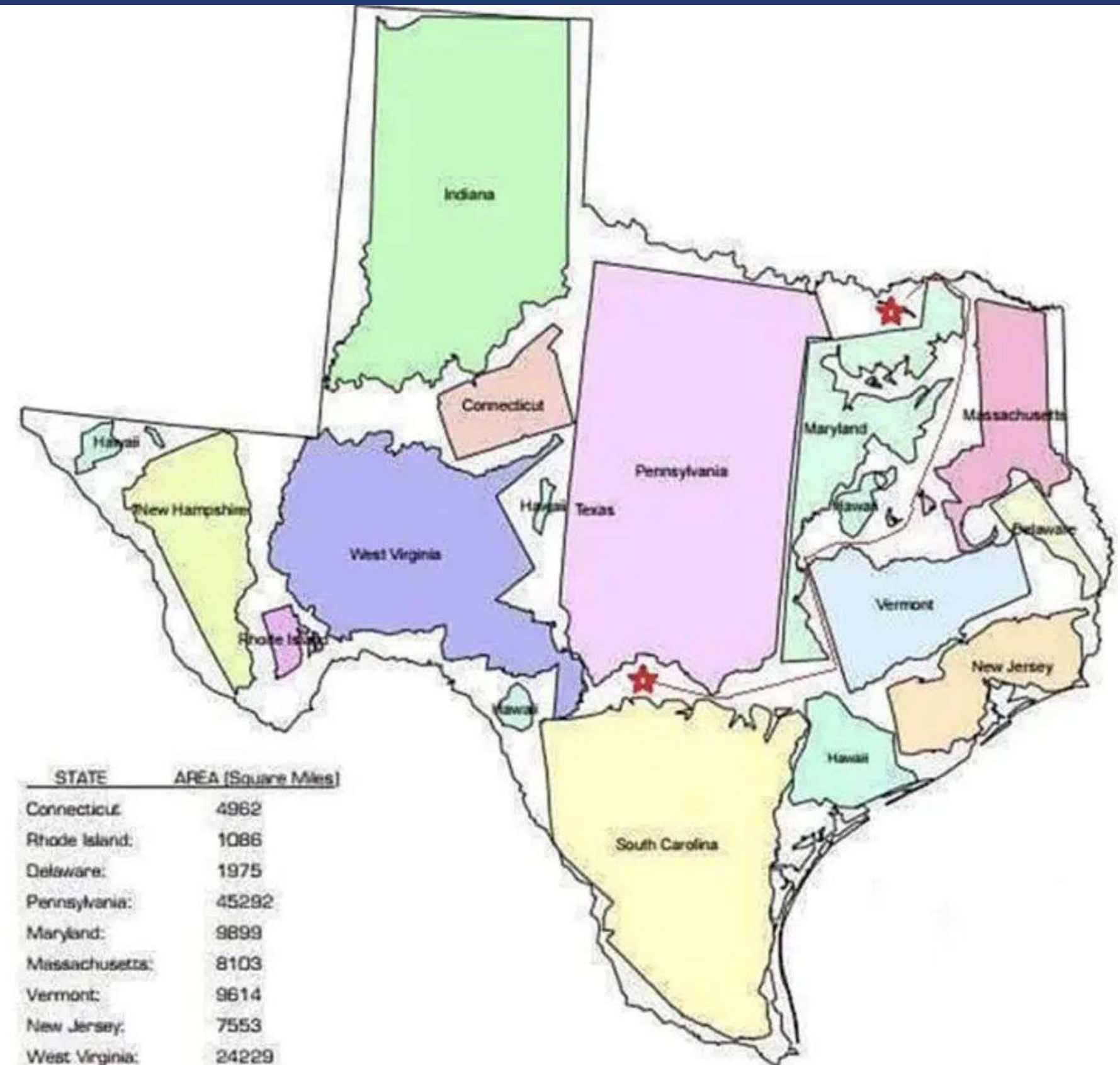
---

The Importance of Local Coalitions



# THE TEXAS CHALLENGE? GEOGRAPHY

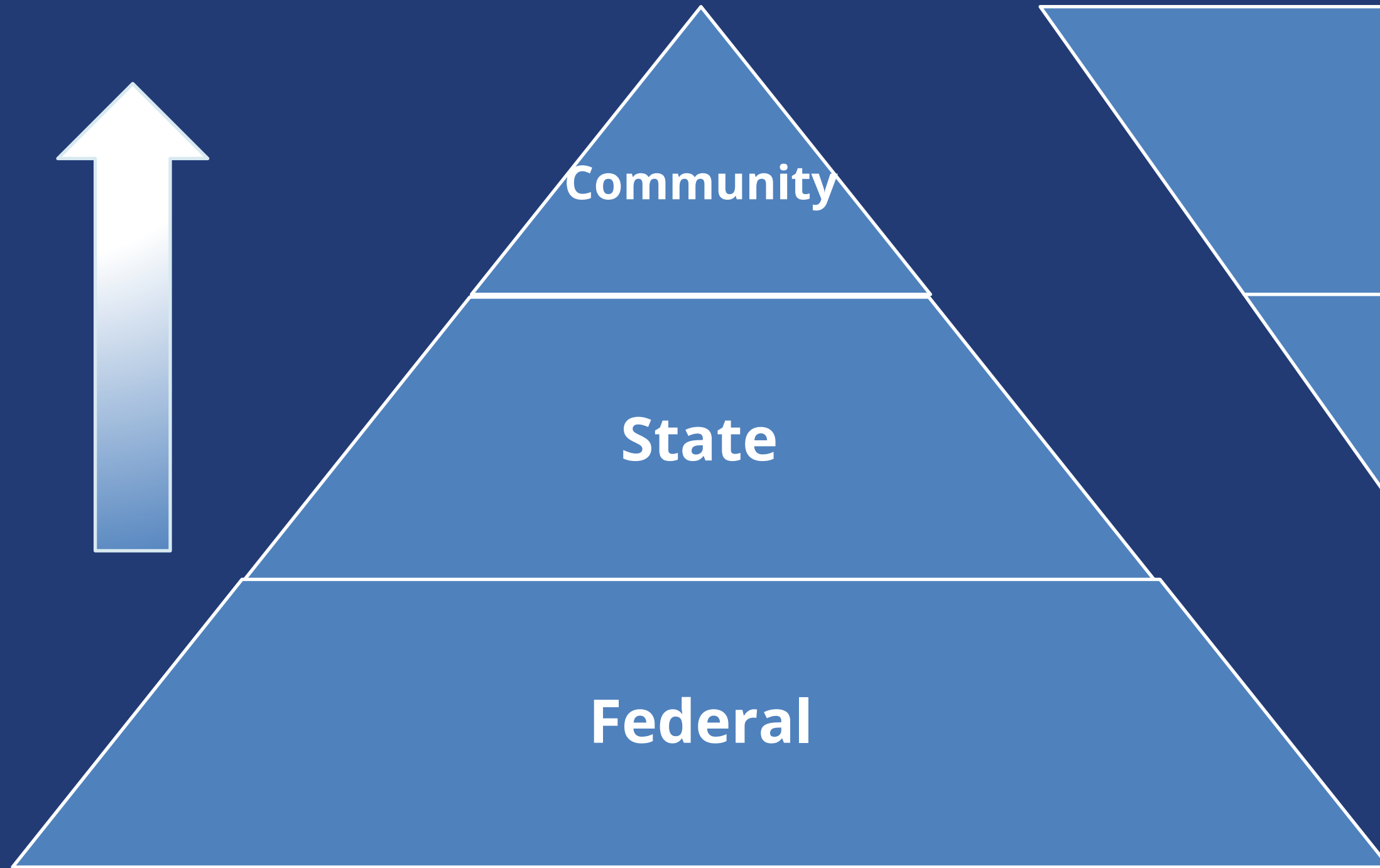
Of the 160 million  
acres  
encompassing  
Texas, 130 million  
are classified rural.



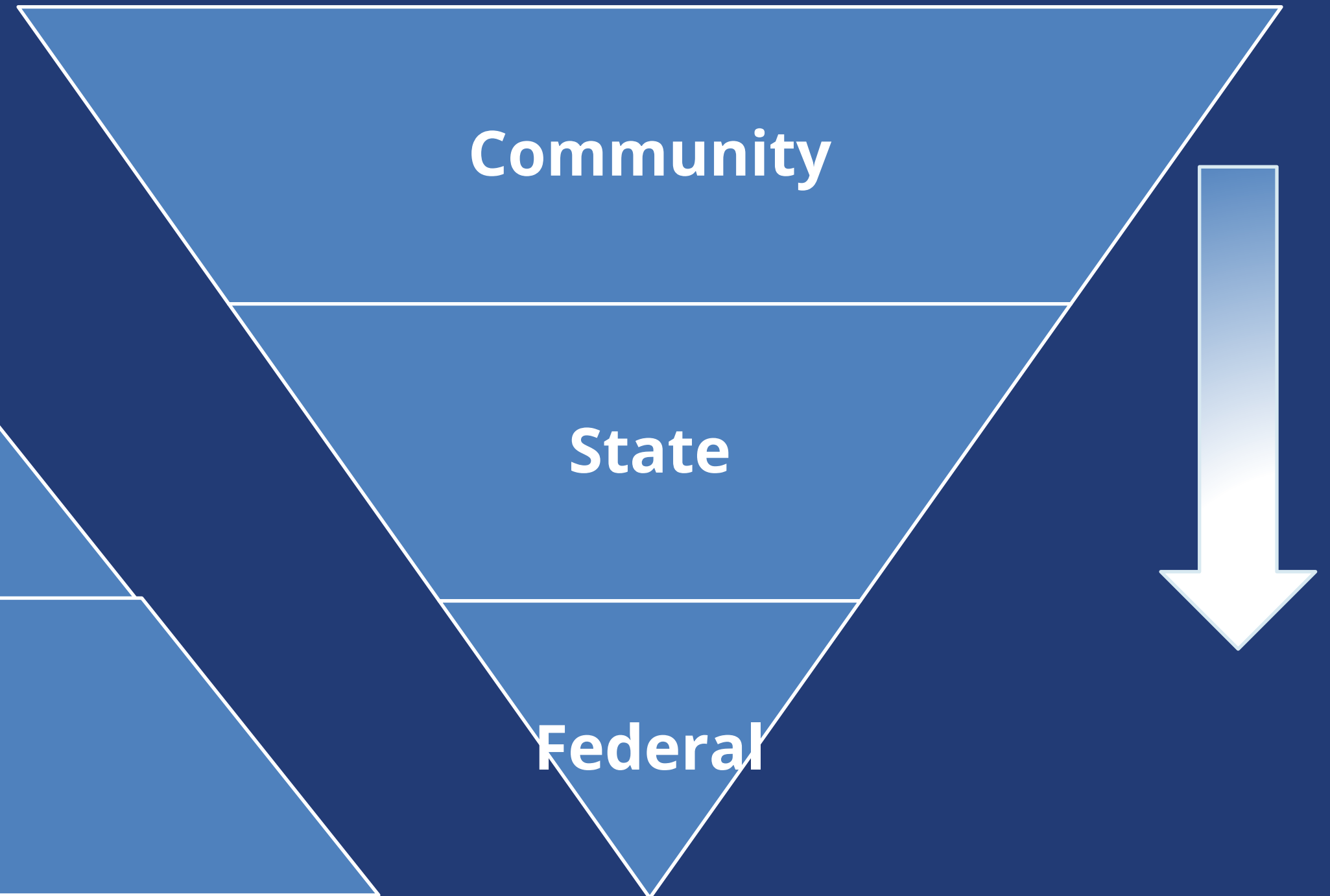
STATE	AREA (Square Miles)
Connecticut	4962
Rhode Island	1086
Delaware	1975
Pennsylvania	45282
Maryland	9899
Massachusetts	8103
Vermont	9614
New Jersey	7553
West Virginia	24229
Indiana	36183
Hawaii	8429
New Hampshire	9266
South Carolina	30941
TOTAL:	195,532 sqmi



How funding flows:



Where  
Texans  
intersect:



# Texas Suicide Prevention Council

**2020**

- No local coalitions reported funding

**2021**

- No local coalitions reported funding

**2022**

- 2 received funding

# Roadmap For Impact

In 2001, 10 communities informally came together to draft the first Texas State Plan for Suicide Prevention.

Their mission:

- Create, support and empower Texas communities;
- Advance suicide prevention education through local and state policy;
- Implement community-based priorities;
- Enlist local communities and organizations; and
- Support state agency and legislative action for suicide prevention.

**CREATE A PIPELINE OF BEST PRACTICE  
SUICIDE PREVENTION ASSETS TO LOCAL  
COMMUNITIES**





# Texas Suicide Prevention Council

140 entities working together to improve suicide prevention outcomes:

- Statewide Partners
- Local Coalitions
- SMVF Partners
- Higher Education Partners



# Texas Suicide Prevention Council

Collaboration and  
Capacity Building

Texas State Plan  
for Suicide  
Prevention

Training and  
Symposia

Outreach

Coalition  
Development

- Technical Assistance  
to support partners

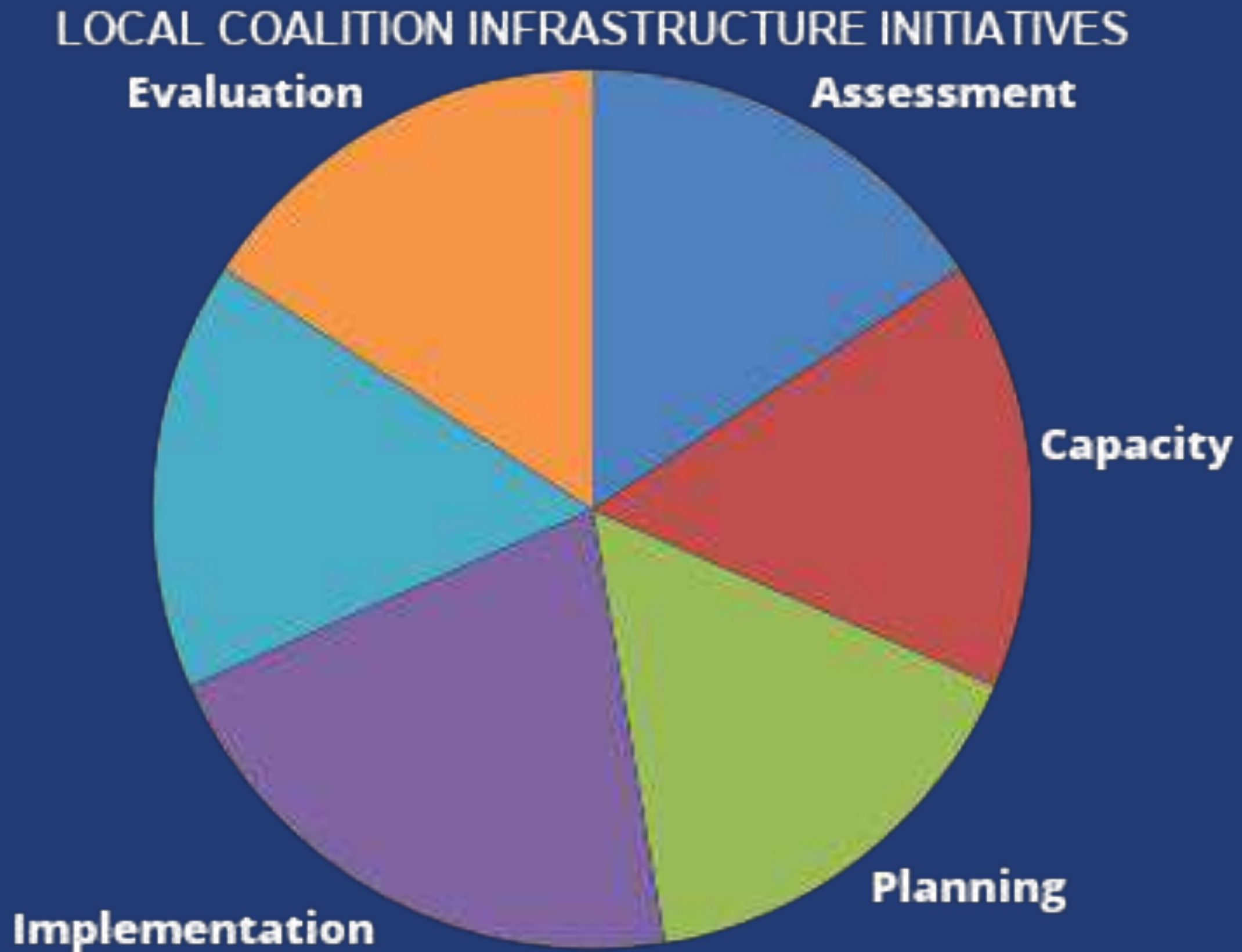


# Local Coalitions

Abilene Suicide Prevention Coalition	East Texas Suicide Prevention Coalition	Midland Suicide Prevention Coalition
Alamo Area Teen Suicide Prevention Coalition	El Paso Suicide Prevention Coalition	Milam County Suicide Prevention Coalition
Austin-Central Texas Suicide Prevention Coalition	Ft. Bend Area Suicide Prevention Coalition	Montgomery County Behavioral Health & Suicide Prevention Task Force
Bastrop-Tri County Suicide Prevention Coalition (Bastrop Cares)	Galveston County Suicide Prevention Task Force	Morris County Collaborative
Bell County Suicide Prevention Coalition	Hays County Suicide Prevention Coalition	Panhandle Suicide Prevention Coalition
Bexar County Suicide Prevention Coalition	Heart of Texas Suicide Prevention Coalition (Waco)	Pick With Austin
Big Bend Suicide Prevention Awareness	Highland Lakes Suicide Prevention Coalition	Rio Grande Valley Suicide Prevention Coalition
Brazos Valley Suicide Prevention Coalition	Hill Country Suicide Prevention Coalition	Suicide Awareness Coalition of Tarrant County
Caldwell County Suicide Prevention Coalition	Houston Area Suicide Prevention Coalition	Suicide Prevention Coalition of Corpus Christi
Collin County Suicide Prevention Coalition	I.AM.Here Coalition-Grant	Texas Tech Mental Health Institute
Comal County Suicide Prevention Coalition	Halliburton Foundation	Uvalde Together Resiliency Center
Dallas Area Suicide Prevention Coalition	Laredo Suicide Prevention Coalition	Wichita Falls Suicide Prevention Coalition
Del Rio-Val Verde Suicide Prevention Coalition	Levelland Suicide Prevention Project	Williamson County Suicide Prevention Coalition
Denton County Suicide Prevention Coalition	Lubbock Suicide Prevention Coalition	Wise County Suicide Prevention Coalition (Star Council)
Eagle Pass Suicide Prevention Coalition	McMullen Suicide Prevention Coalition	
	Mental Health Task Force of Brazoria County	



# Texas Suicide Prevention Council



# Texas Suicide Prevention Council Inquiry



# Regional Coalition

---

Collaborating Across Sectors and  
Regional Partners





# How it all started

2014

- Mental Health Task Force came together to discuss gaps and needs
- Consisted of twenty-nine provider agencies and city and county officials
- Over a series of meetings, the task force established a written plan and shared goals for the community

2015

- MAP was established (Mental Health Advocacy Partners)
- Website for the community to access resources was a key focus
- With the support of the McKenna Foundation, MCOT and SOS (Signs of Suicide) were established
- The development of MCOT and SOS has not only been a support to a suicide safer community but gives the ability to track data and see true numbers to the unique challenges in Comal County

# Continued Growth

-MAP has become a clearinghouse for the community, partners, and citizens to rely on for vetting mental and behavioral health resources, training, and events

The last two years MAP has focused on three areas



Training

Outreach

Suicide  
Prevention  
Council

# The Suicide Prevention Council of Comal County

## Why did we need the council?

- By participating in Zero Suicide meetings, we recognized Comal County was underrepresented in the data considered for the state's plan for suicide prevention
- There was a focus on outreach and training for the community, but the prevention piece was missing
- The increase in the number of completed suicides over the years proved the need for a council

## How we got started?

- With the support of MAP the Suicide Prevention Council of Comal County was able to launch a successful first year
- MAP revised their website to include information specific to the SPC (logo, hashtag, resources, and suicide prevention colors)
- MAP also provided the first order of promotional items including stickers, business cards, magnets, etc.



# Our First Two Years

- Comal County Fair Parade
- Workforce Lunch and Learn
- Pride
- 1845 Creative Golf Classic Fundraiser
- Men's Health Fair
- Movie advertisement at all theaters in Comal County
- Documentary screening of STAY followed by panel discussion





# The Future

- Multidisciplinary approach to prevention
- Continue to offer trainings to the community/workforce
- Stay involved in community events
- Establish and grow a social media presence
- Consider 501c3 designation as we continue to fundraise

Making the SPC a household name for training, resources, and support by expanding outreach efforts



# Applying Coalition Models to Community Settings

---

Meeting People Where They Are





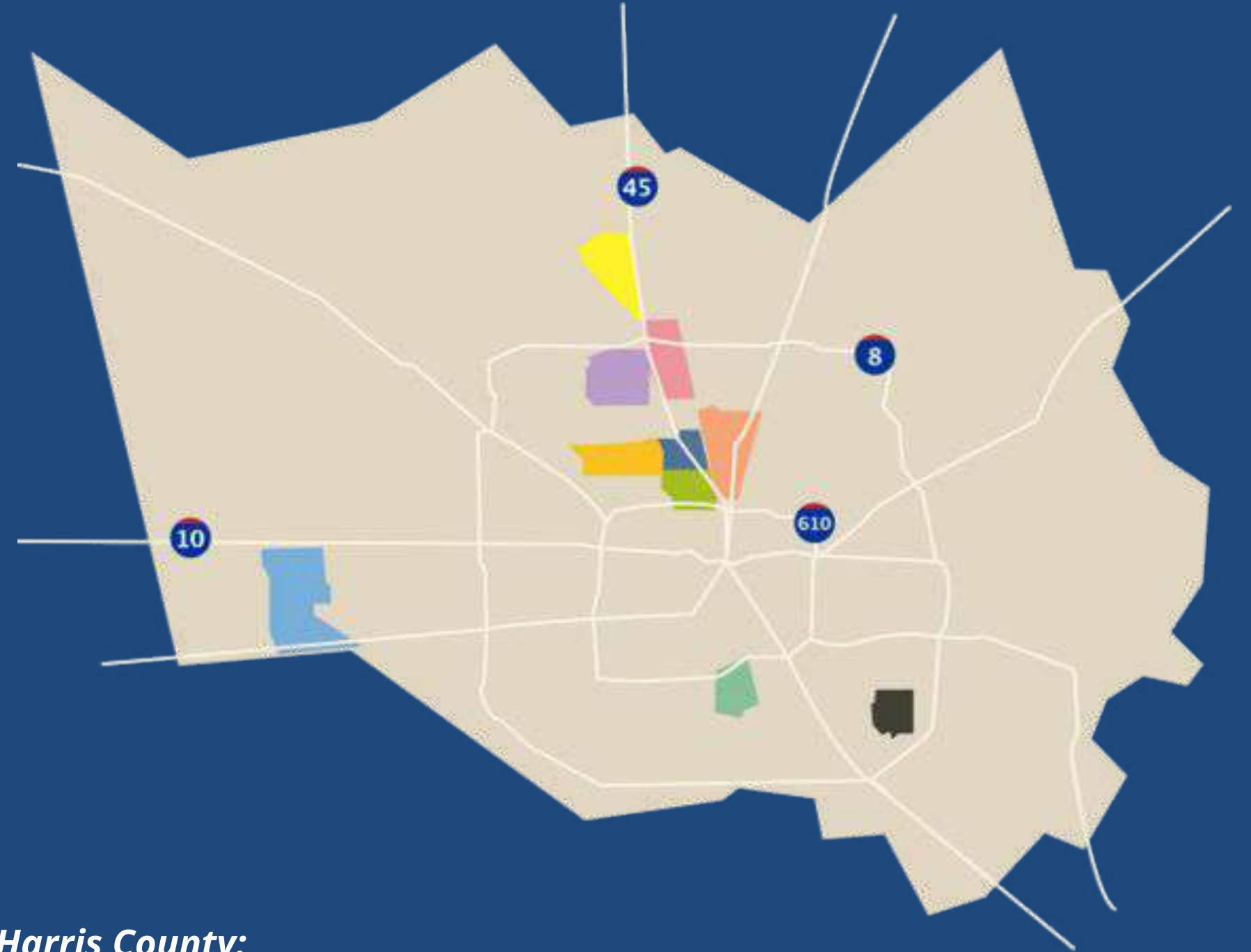
# Healthy Minds, Healthy Communities: A Community-Initiated Model

## Focused in ten diverse zip codes (40K) with:

- Highest disproportionate impact of COVID-19
- Highest number of suicides
- Lowest usage of behavioral health services

## Goals:

- Build sustainable networks led by community members committed to changing attitudes and beliefs about mental health, suicide, and emotional wellness
- Provide tools and training so that community members can better support each other in real time
- Strengthen access bridges between qualified behavioral health professionals and communities throughout Harris County



### **Harris County:**

*Most populous county in Texas and third most populous county in the United States at 4.8 million people as of 2020 census.*

### **Houston:**

*Largest city in Texas and fourth largest city in the United States with 2.5 million people as of 2020 census, with 145 different languages spoken and 48% of residents speaking a language other than English at home.*



Who are the people  
in your  
neighborhood?





# Intervention #1: World Cafés in Focus Communities

*Using a Community Initiated Care Model means identifying what communities want and need first.*

## Task Sharing

- The community shares in the solution to the challenge

## Community Acceptance

- The culture, ethos, stigmas, and perspectives of the community must be reflected in the project

## Community Leadership

- Sustainability is only possible with community ownership and investment in the project

## Perspective Matters

- Everyone in the community must have a voice in the process for it to have a long-lasting impact





## Who's NOT at the table?

- Non-English speakers
- Different socio-economic classes
- Varying educational attainment
- Diverse faith communities
- Newcomers to the community
- Different age groups

*Does your coalition reflect the varying demographics of your community, city, or county?*





# EMERGENT STRATEGY

## THE 9 PRINCIPLES

adrienne maree brown

1. SMALL IS GOOD. SMALL IS ALL

(THE LARGE IS A REFLECTION OF THE SMALL)

2. CHANGE IS CONSTANT (BE LIKE WATER)

3. THERE IS ALWAYS ENOUGH TIME FOR THE RIGHT WORK.

THERE IS A CONVERSATION IN THE ROOM THAT ONLY THESE  
PEOPLE AT THIS MOMENT CAN HAVE. FIND IT.

4. NEVER A FAILURE, ALWAYS A LESSON

5. TRUST THE PEOPLE

(IF YOU TRUST THE PEOPLE, THEY BECOME TRUSTWORTHY)

6. MOVE AT THE SPEED OF TRUST

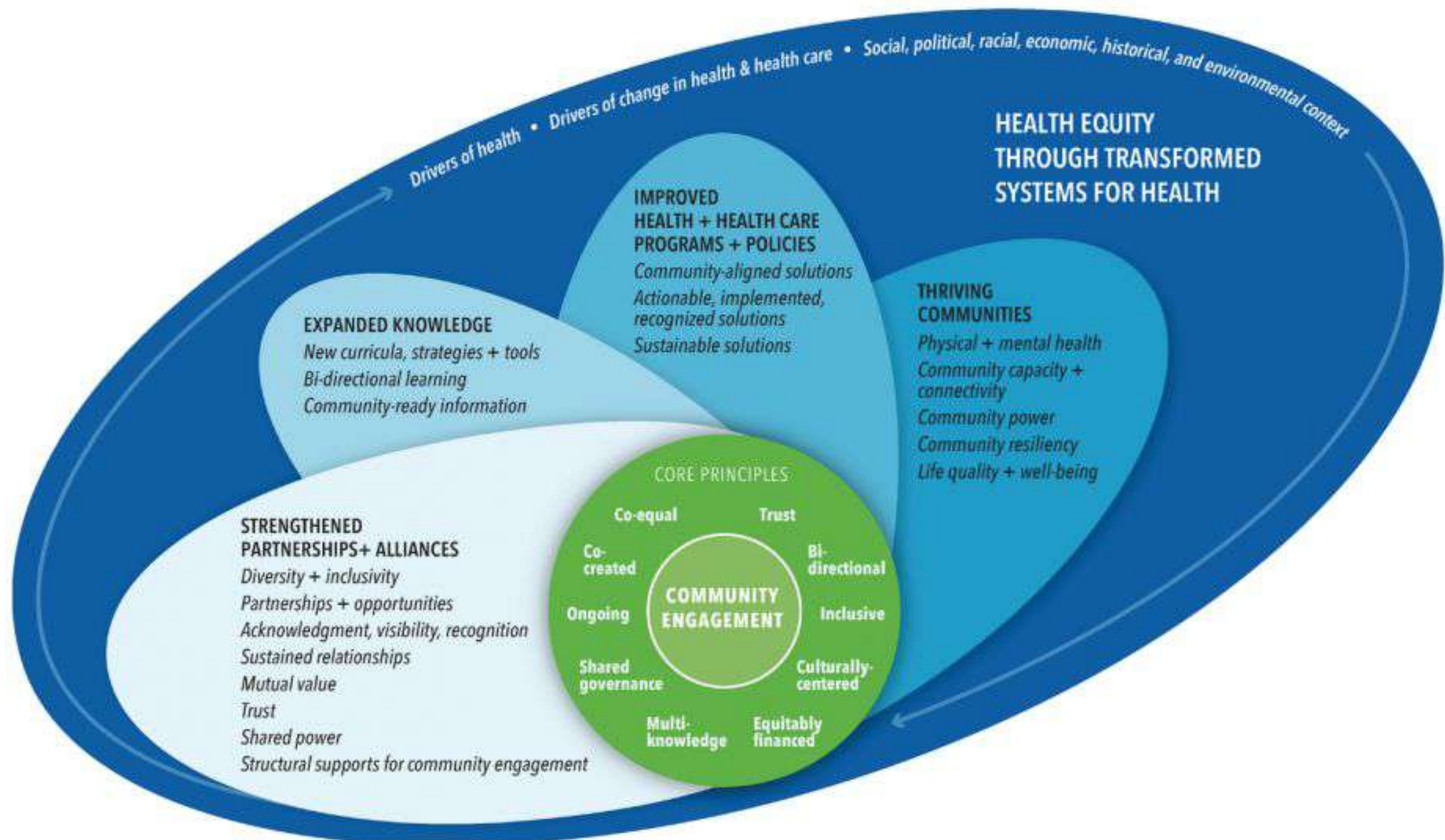
7. FOCUS ON CRITICAL CONNECTIONS MORE THAN CRITICAL MASS

BUILD THE RESILIENCE BY BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS

8. LESS PREP, MORE PRESENCE

9. WHAT YOU PAY ATTENTION TO GROWS





Organizing Committee for Assessing Meaningful Community Engagement in Health & Health Care Programs & Policies. 2022. Assessing Meaningful Community Engagement: A Conceptual Model to Advance Health Equity through Transformed Systems for Health. *NAM Perspectives*. Commentary, National Academy of Medicine, Washington, DC. <https://doi.org/10.31478/202202c>.