

Lincoln and Marathon County Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Welcomeness Study

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to develop and administer a survey to collect information from the people of Marathon and Lincoln Counties about their thoughts and beliefs concerning belonging, community welcomeness, and diversity.

Why are we conducting this study?

Discussions around the issues of diversity and inclusion are persistent throughout the country, and Central Wisconsin is no exception. Despite widespread conversation, there is a lack of concrete information on how the people of Lincoln and Marathon Counties feel about these topics.

This survey and follow-up focus groups provide an opportunity for more residents of Lincoln and Marathon Counties to express their beliefs about whether they feel like they belong in their community, whether their communities are welcoming to various groups of people, and their feelings towards people of different backgrounds and beliefs. The intent is to use these results as a “jumping off point” from which community conversations and future initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of all community members can begin.

Who is conducting this study?

The survey and follow-up focus groups are being conducted by the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS), a unit of the University of Wisconsin System, with generous funding from Church Mutual and the B.A. and Esther Greenheck Foundation. Key partners include the Aware and Active Citizen Group from Lincoln County and the Mosaic coalition from Marathon County. The research team is comprised of UW faculty and other professional researchers. A report and summary of data will be publicly available at wipps.org/LMdiversitystudy.

What are we NOT doing with this study?

We are *not* collecting data to label, malign, demonize, or denigrate any group or individual. We are *not* collecting data to prove or disprove any perceived notions of diversity, inclusion, or attitudes towards the people or communities of Marathon County or Lincoln County. Data will be collected in a way that ensures the anonymity of all participants. We hope this will encourage all participants to express their beliefs as honestly as possible.

What are the benefits of participating?

Individual – This survey is an opportunity for all residents in Lincoln and Marathon Counties to be heard, to share how they feel about the community they live in, and to share information that will help us better understand who we are and what we value. By participating in this study, residents are contributing to the potential development of the community’s culture, and to improving relations among people who live and work here.

Community – The results of this survey will help community leaders and the public gain a better understanding of strengths and challenges related to diversity, inclusion, and community welcomeness. This information can help initiate conversations or activities that seek to establish or improve the relationships between individuals living in the area.

What is the risk of NOT doing the study?

Tensions related to issues of diversity and inclusion persist in our region and our communities. Additionally, the Wausau community is accepting refugees which may increase the diversity of the community on the one hand, but may also raise concerns on the other. A lack of clear understanding about community thoughts and feelings related to these topics could lead to new tensions or unresolved concerns, further dividing the community at a time when it should be united.

If you have any questions, please contact us at info@wipps.org.