



SHARING SCHOOL FACILITIES

How Collaboration can Increase Physical Activity in Communities



Kentucky Cancer Consortium and Kentucky Youth Advocates

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Background: What is shared-use?

Everyone needs safe and accessible places to exercise in their communities in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. However, some communities do not have safe opportunities to engage in physical activity. Access to safe places for recreation relies heavily on neighborhood characteristics like parks and recreational facilities.¹ Children with access to recreational facilities close to home have shown to be more physically active and have lower obesity rates than those without access.^{2, 3, 4}

The availability of safe places for physical activity in communities is significantly associated with race, income and geography. Lower-income communities and African-American communities typically face more barriers to physical activity, including a lack of parks, sidewalks and bike lanes and unaffordable access to recreational facilities.⁵ In 2007, 57 percent of Kentucky children living in urban areas lived in neighborhoods with recreation centers, community centers or Boys' & Girls' Clubs, while only 42 percent of children living in rural areas did.⁶

Shared-use is one way for Kentucky communities to increase access to recreational facilities.

Shared-use is one way for Kentucky communities to increase access to recreational facilities. Shared-use can be formal agreements between two entities, typically a school and another agency such as a city government or a YMCA, to share school facilities during non-school hours or they can be informal, in that a school allows community members to use facilities for exercise without a formal contract with another agency.

Shared-use allows spaces such as gymnasiums, tracks, cafeterias, athletic fields and other school facilities to be used for recreation by community members of all ages. Sharing facilities allows agencies to share costs, resources and increase physical activity opportunities for community members. Shared-use agreements are promoted nationally as a way to reduce obesity by increasing the availability of physical activity options in communities.

- 1 Committee on Environmental Health. (2009). "The Built Environment: Designing Communities to Promote Physical Activity in Children." *Pediatrics*, vol. 123, no. 6. Available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/123/6/1591.full.pdf>. Accessed September 2011.
- 2 Norman, J., Nutter, S., Ryan, S., Sallis, J., Calfas, K., & Patrick, K. (2006). "Community Design and Access to Recreational Facilities as Correlates of Adolescent Physical Activity and Body-Mass Index." *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*. Available at http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/JPAH_8_Norman.pdf. Accessed August 2011.
- 3 Farley, T., Meriwether, R., Baker, E., Watkins, L., Johnson, C. and Webber, L. (2007). "Safe Play Spaces to Promote Physical Activity in Inner-City Children: Results from a Pilot Study of an Environmental Intervention." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 97, no. 9. Available at . Accessed February 2012.
- 4 Scott M., Cohen, D., Evenson, K., Elder, J., Catellier, D., Ashwood, J., and Overton, A. (2009). "Weekend Schoolyard Accessibility, Physical Activity, and Obesity: The Trial of Activity in Adolescent Girls (TAAG) Study." *Preventive Medicine*, vol. 44, no. 5. Available at <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1978099>>. Accessed July 2010.
- 5 Powel, L., Slater, S., Chaloupka, F. (2004). "The Relationship between Community Physical Activity Settings and Race, Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status." *Evidence-Based Preventive Medicine*, vol. 1, no. 2. Available at http://impactteen.econ.uic.edu/journal_pub/pub_PDFs/EBPM-1-2-Powell%20et%20al1.pdf. Accessed September 2011.
- 6 Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health. (2007). *2007 National Survey of Children's Health*. Available at <http://www.childhealthdata.org>. Accessed September 2011.

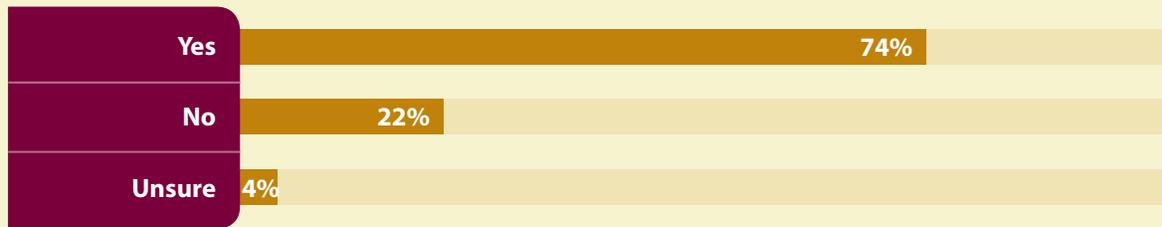
1.

Sharing school facilities without a formal agreement in place with another agency is common in Kentucky.



Some 74 percent of responding principals allow some school facilities such as playgrounds and school tracks to be used by community members without any formal contract in place with another agency. (132 out of 178)

Are your school facilities open during non-school hours for community use in a “good faith effort” to the community (i.e. playground open for public use after school hours)?



(Respondents = 178)

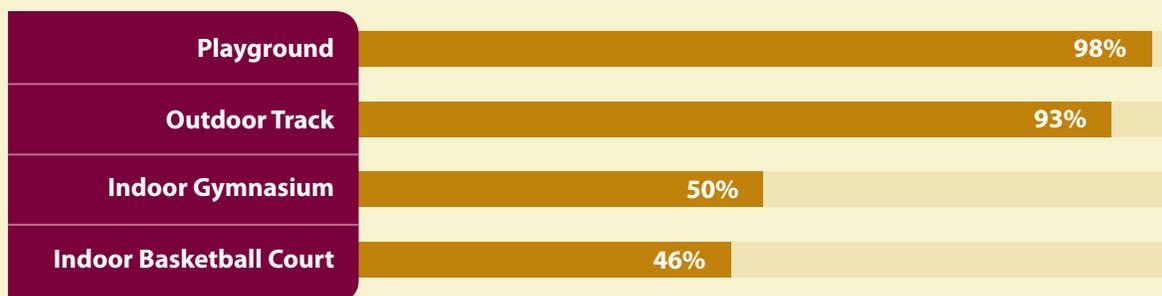
Of those who answered yes in the chart above:

- 70 percent allow organized programs and activities to occur such as organized sports, education classes, and exercise classes; and
- 86 percent allow community members to use facilities for recreation and exercise such as children using the playground or community members using the track. (Respondents = 128)

A higher rate of responding principals allow their outdoor facilities to remain open for community use than their indoor facilities when a formal shared-use agreement is not in place.

Responding principals more often reported that they allow community members to use outdoor facilities such as basketball courts, tracks and playgrounds than indoor facilities such as indoor gymnasiums and basketball courts when no formal shared-use agreement was in place. In follow up interviews, principals revealed they thought there was a smaller chance of school property being damaged when community members were outside than inside. In addition, school buildings contain expensive equipment such as computers which principals felt might be in danger of being stolen if the school building was kept open after school hours.

Which of the following facilities do you allow community members to use during non-school hours without a formal agreement in place?



Only 40 percent (78 out of 194) of responding principals had formal agreements with a community agency to share school facilities during non-school hours.

Formal agreements are a way to ensure that shared-use works effectively. A written formal agreement allows schools and community agencies to know the responsibility and expectations of each party. Yet, despite these advantages, less than half of principals reported having formal shared-use agreements.

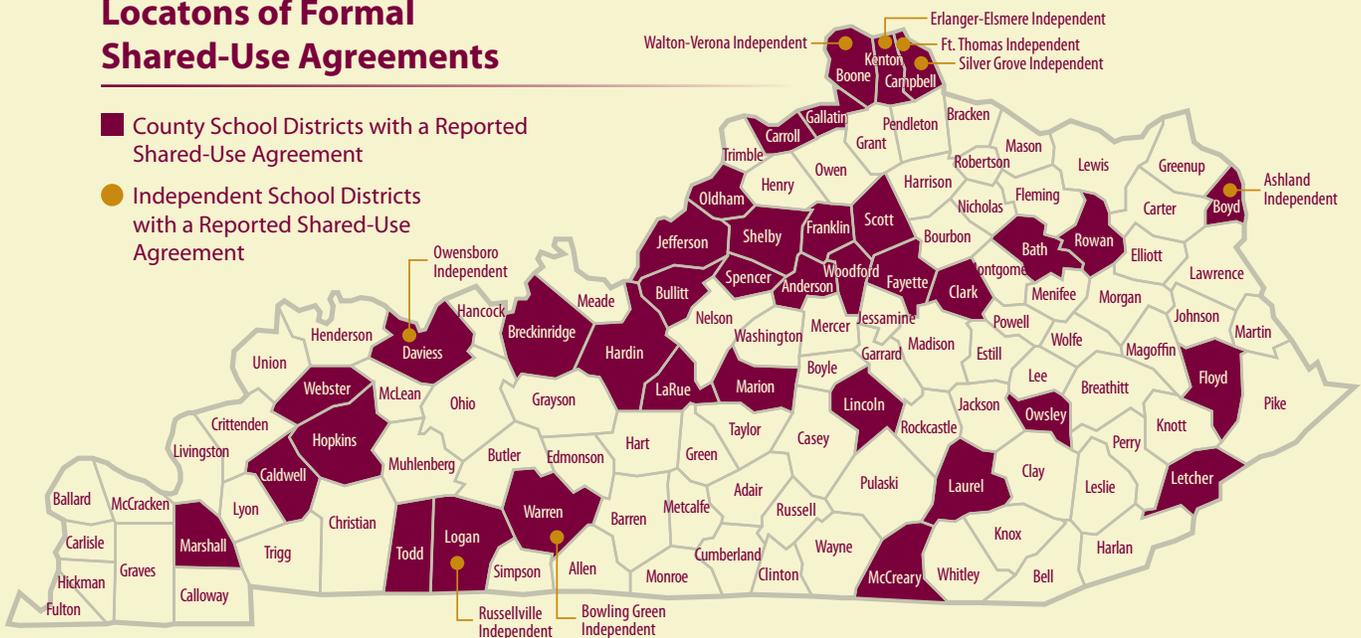
The majority of formal shared-use agreements reported were formed at the school district level in partnership with the school principal and the community agency. Some school districts handle all agreements and principals must allow their school facilities to be used. Other districts encourage principals to share their school facilities but do not require them to. Some respondents stated that their superintendents do not allow school facilities to be used by community agencies.

The most common agencies respondents reported to have contracts with include local parks and recreation departments, YMCAs, churches and city governments. Most written agreements cover insurance, liability, and procedures for sharing the building.

Formal shared-use agreements were reported in diverse regions of the state, including both urban and rural areas.

Shared-use agreements benefit small and large communities in urban, suburban and rural areas. Responding principals who reported having a formal shared-use agreement with another agency were located in school districts across Kentucky.

Locations of Formal Shared-Use Agreements



***Note:** Shaded districts and independent districts listed were reported to have one or more school with formal shared-use agreements in the district.

2.

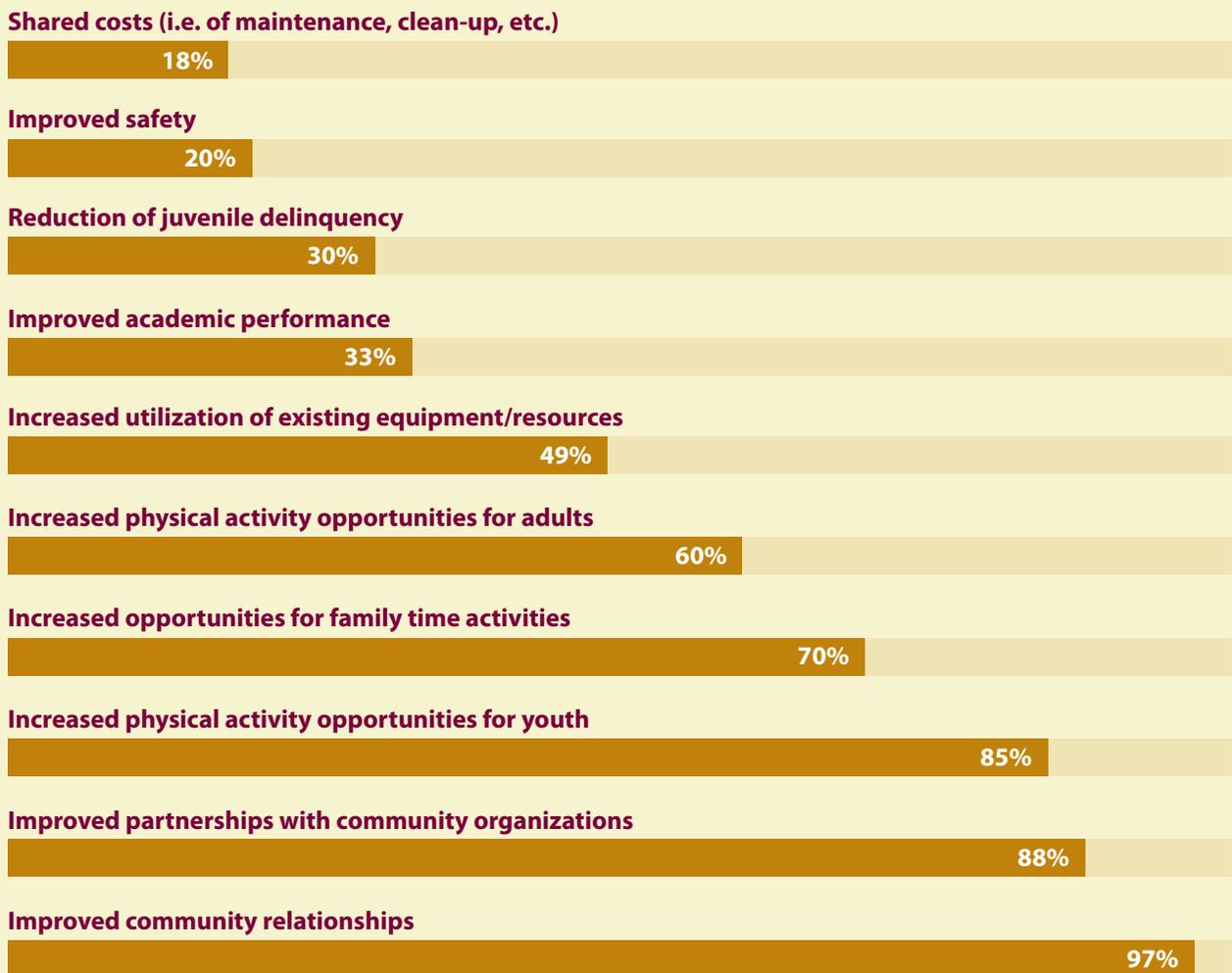
Responding principals noted numerous benefits of sharing school facilities.



Some 97 percent of respondents reported that improved community relationships were a benefit of sharing school facilities. Shared-use expands the use of school facilities including both indoor and outdoor facilities. Many respondents noted that the community sees the school as belonging to the whole community due to shared-use.

Interestingly, experts on shared-use point to sharing the costs of buildings such as maintenance as a major advantage of shared-use use; however, only 18 percent of respondents reported this as an advantage.

Which of the following do you see as benefits of sharing school facilities with the community?



(Respondents = 169)

3.

There are some obstacles which need to be addressed for shared-use to be effective.



A WIN FOR SHARED-USE IN KENTUCKY

Some school principals reported being fearful that they would be held responsible if someone gets injured while on school property during non-school hours. However, the recent passage of Senate Bill 110 by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2012 will encourage more schools to keep their facilities open after hours with less fear of liability. Senate Bill 110 extends the same immunities schools have during the school day to after hours, making liability protections clear.

While shared-use expands opportunities for physical activity, principals reported obstacles to sharing school facilities.

Some of the top reported obstacles include:

VANDALISM – 84%

Fear that school facilities will not be left in the same shape as they were found

LIABILITY – 79%

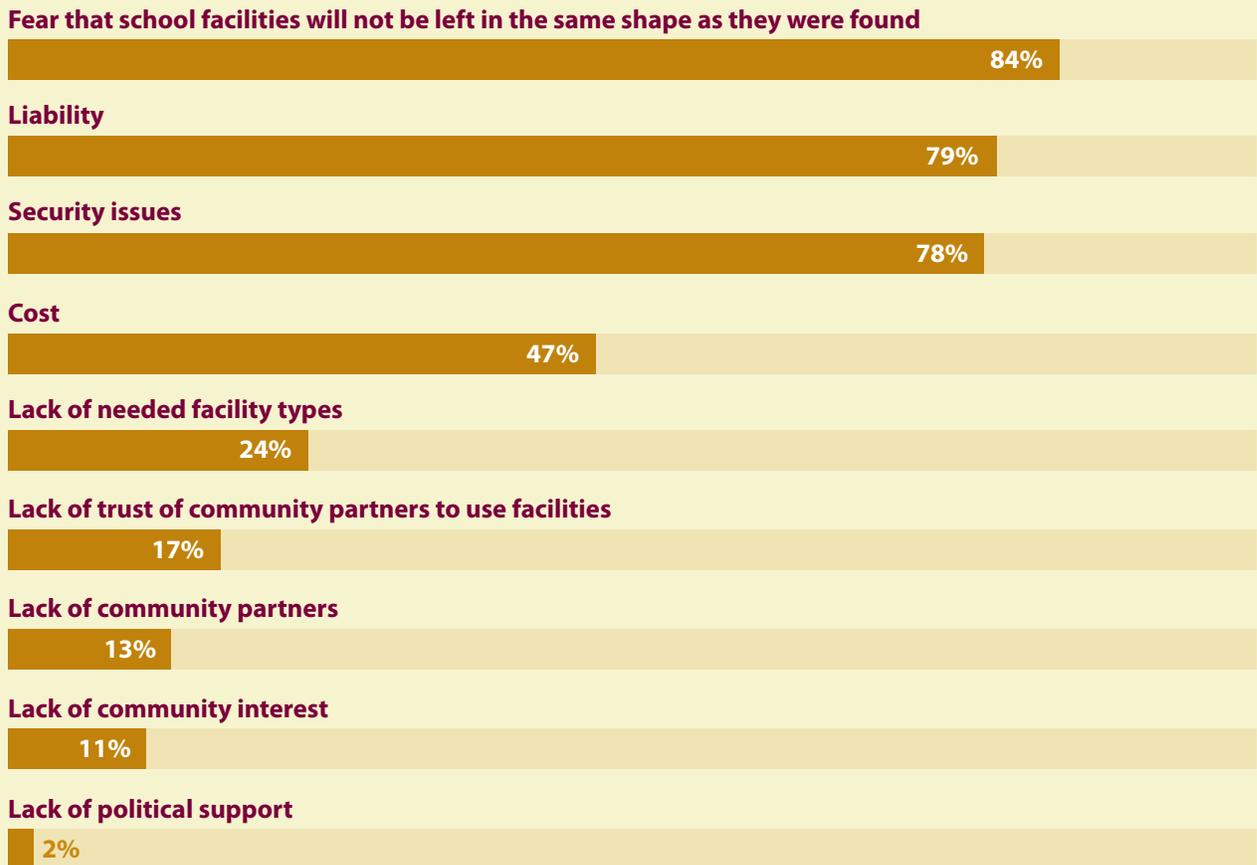
“It is the Superintendent’s opinion that allowing parents and students to use the school grounds after school hours poses a great liability issue.”

SECURITY ISSUES – 78%

“Our outdoor basketball court has become an area that we are having some difficulty with because of the lack of respect for property by some teens using the area and lack of police supervision.”

While barriers were reported, many principals who had formal shared-use agreements with other agencies stated that most obstacles can be overcome. For example, one principal reported that most issues were resolved by clearly laying out responsibilities of the outside agency in the formal shared-use agreement such as expectations for clean-up and maintenance.

Which of the following do you see as obstacles of sharing school facilities with the community?



(Respondents = 169)

4.

Most (74 percent) responding principals reported that funding would help them begin or continue sharing school facilities with the community.



Many principals reported that funding would help pay staff to stay late in the building for communities and other maintenance needs.

In addition to the items listed in the chart below, many principals stated that they would like permission from their superintendent to engage in shared-use. Some principals also reported that addressing liability issues would help them.

What would help you either continue allowing or begin allowing your school facilities to be available for community use during non-school hours?

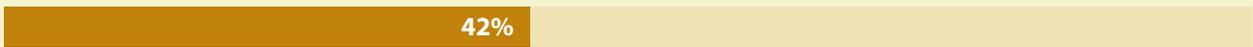
Funding opportunities



Learning about other schools' shared-use agreements



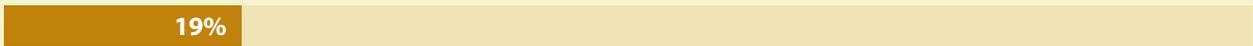
Samples of model shared-use agreements



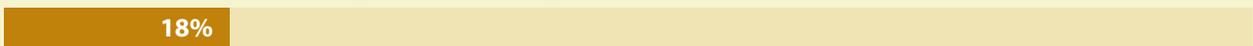
List of potential partners



Communications tools (i.e. help in advertising your shared-use programs)



Technical assistance in forming a shared-use agreement



(Respondents = 151)



Kentucky Examples of Successful Shared-use Agreements

MOUNT WASHINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL, BULLITT COUNTY

Bullitt County Public School District has had formal agreements with the YMCA and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball league to share school facilities during non-school hours for a number of years. Agreements were set up by the district to require agencies using school facilities to carry one million dollars in insurance, which is the amount most principals who had agreements reported as the insurance requirement. This protects the schools from liability if someone were to get hurt or injured on school property during non-school activities. There have been some issues such as facilities not being left clean and lights left on after community activities occur, yet Principal Denise Allen at Washington Middle School indicates that most problems are solved by ensuring a school staff person is always present when non-school activities occur. The YMCA pays a school staff person to supervise activities when they use the building. In addition, Principal Allen believes that sharing school facilities is of upmost benefit to the community. Community members see the school gym as “their gym” and the school as a “community school.” With a shortage of gyms available in the community, sharing school facilities with community agencies is an excellent example of sharing and utilizing existing resources in a community.

CLEAR CREEK ELEMENTARY, SHELBY COUNTY

Clear Creek Elementary in Shelby County is used by Clear Creek Parks (Shelby County Parks and Recreation) for volleyball and basketball leagues. There is a formal agreement in place with the Clear Creek Principal and the Shelby County School District and Clear Creek Parks. The agreement requires Clear Creek Park to have one million dollars in insurance and to pay a custodian when needed. In order for Clear Creek Parks to use the school, a school employee must be in the building. The school also has a formal agreement in place for a church to use the school building once a week. Principal Karen Downs of Clear Creek Elementary indicates that no problems have resulted from the shared-use agreements and recognizes that shared-use is of great benefit to the community. Principal Downs also indicates that the Shelby County School District is very supportive of the agreements and encourages cooperation with Clear Creek Parks. District policy only allows school facilities to be used by the community when formal agreements are in place.

Recommendations

There are many opportunities to help increase the sharing of school facilities. The following recommendations emerged from the survey results.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Schools should utilize current tools to engage in shared-use.

There are many tools available to schools which can help them get started on shared-use. The Kentucky School Boards Association helps interested districts form shared-use agreements. In addition, the National Policy and Legal Analysis Network (NPLAN) has many resources available online to help with shared-use (NPLAN uses the term joint-use instead of shared-use) such as model agreements, checklists for starting the process, liability assessments and other useful documents. Kaboom! is a national non-profit that helps schools build and improve playgrounds to be used by schools and communities and provides many relevant resources.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Kentucky leaders should help schools identify resources that would help them engage in shared-use.

While shared-use has been shown to be a low-cost way to pool resources in a community, there are sometimes costs associated such as school personnel needing to stay late in the school building to monitor activities or paying custodians to stay during non-school hours. Some states have found ways to provide resources to help schools create and implement a shared-use agreement. For example, Arkansas has a competitive application process made possible and supported by the Arkansas Tobacco Excise Tax created by Arkansas Act 180 of 2009. These funds aid schools in adoption and implementation of shared-use policies and forming collaborative partnerships with local community resources. Kentucky leaders can also look for innovative ways to provide support to schools in adopting shared-use agreements.

RECOMMENDATION 3: School officials should create a venue for schools and districts to hear how others have created successful partnerships with community agencies.

Multiple comments from the survey indicated that school principals would like to hear from other schools on how they formed successful shared-use agreements and worked through barriers or obstacles. There may be opportunities within the Kentucky School Boards Association to further help schools interact with and learn from one another on creating effective shared-use partnerships.

Appendix A: List of Districts Represented in Survey Responses

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Anderson County | 31. Grant County | 61. McCreary County |
| 2. Ashland Independent | 32. Graves County | 62. McLean County |
| 3. Bath County | 33. Hancock County | 63. Meade County |
| 4. Boone County | 34. Hardin County | 64. Mercer County |
| 5. Bowling Green Independent | 35. Harlan County | 65. Middlesboro Independent |
| 6. Boyd County | 36. Harrison County | 66. Morgan County |
| 7. Breathitt County | 37. Hart County | 67. Muhlenberg County |
| 8. Breckinridge County | 38. Henderson County | 68. Oldham County |
| 9. Bullitt County | 39. Henry County | 69. Owensboro Independent |
| 10. Caldwell County | 40. Hopkins County | 70. Owsley County |
| 11. Campbell County | 41. Jackson County | 71. Paducah Independent |
| 12. Carroll County | 42. Jefferson County | 72. Pendleton County |
| 13. Carter County | 43. Kenton County | 73. Perry County |
| 14. Casey County | 44. Knott County | 74. Pike County |
| 15. Christian County | 45. Knox County | 75. Pulaski County |
| 16. Clark County | 46. LaRue County | 76. Robertson County |
| 17. Clay County | 47. Laurel County | 77. Rockcastle County |
| 18. Corbin Independent | 48. Leslie County | 78. Rowan County |
| 19. Cumberland County | 49. Letcher County | 79. Russellville Independent |
| 20. Daviess County | 50. Lewis County | 80. Scott County |
| 21. East Bernstadt Independent | 51. Lincoln County | 81. Shelby County |
| 22. Edmonson County | 52. Livingston County | 82. Silver Grove Independent |
| 23. Elizabethtown Independent | 53. Ludlow Independent | 83. Spencer County |
| 24. Elliott County | 54. Lyon County | 84. Todd County |
| 25. Erlanger-Elsmere Independent | 55. Madison County | 85. Trimble County |
| 26. Fayette County | 56. Marion County | 86. Walton-Verona Independent |
| 27. Floyd County | 57. Marshall County | 87. Warren County |
| 28. Fort Thomas Independent | 58. Martin County | 88. Webster County |
| 29. Franklin County | 59. Mayfield Independent | 89. Whitley County |
| 30. Gallatin County | 60. McCracken County | 90. Woodford County |



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