



Mercer County: Better Together

Success through collaboration.

#MCBT

History of Mercer County: Better Together

Exploratory Phase (October 2015 - February 2016)

- Looser-Flake Charitable Foundation asks Mercer Foundation for Health & University of Illinois Extension to arrange a meeting of Mercer County 'champions'
- Group indicates interest in countywide work to LFCF trustees
- Group identifies individuals & organizations not 'at the table' who should be invited to participate
- 3 meetings held, one centering on a 'network analysis' of connections

Establishment Phase (March – April 2016)

- Steering Committee established, comprised of an elected official & a community organizer/leader from each Mercer County population center
- LFCF invites MCBT to submit a proposal for a 4-month civic engagement process
- Mercer County Family YMCA selected to serve as fiscal agent for MCBT
- Steering Committee reviews various planning models, before choosing *Community Heart & Soul*

Pilot Civic Engagement Phase (May - September 2016)

- Two part-time Communications Coordinators hired to conduct four pilot countywide forums
- Forums held across Mercer County, gathering feedback on a countywide scale
- LFCF invites MCBT to apply for a grant to conduct a long-term planning process

Countywide Participatory Planning Process (September 2016 – February 2018)

- Through support from Mercer County, communities, businesses and individuals, MCBT meets LFCF Challenge Grant to accomplish the following –
 - Conduct 18-month *Community Heart & Soul* process countywide to identify county & community priorities
 - Build a countywide strategic plan to accomplish priority work
 - MCBT transitions from countywide planning process to 501c3 nonprofit community and economic development organization, to serve as backbone organization to accomplish priority work identified through the *Community Heart & Soul* planning process and outlined in countywide action plan
-