

How Community Leadership and Trusted Relationships Contribute to Vaccine Confidence

In April 2022, a survey was completed regarding vaccine uptake and confidence by members of the Alliance for Healthier Communities.^{1,2} Here are some key survey findings:

Centres supported more than

225,000

individuals in receiving a COVID-19 vaccine



Centres reached more than

330,000

individuals through vaccine awareness initiatives

Successful initiatives to promote vaccine uptake



social media and advertising



hosting online and in-person events



operating a vaccine information phone line



on-site vaccination clinics



developing educational resources

Successful ways to remove structural barriers and improve equitable access



worked at shelters



hosted pop-up or mobile clinics



offered vaccines at home to those who were home-bound



provided targeted outreach to populations with low vaccine uptake

Cultural Ambassador program



- A community-led and community-driven approach focused in areas with high newcomer, racialized, or other high-priority populations
- Cultural ambassadors are:
 - Well-connected and hired by their community
 - Members from the community who reflect (look like, act like, and speak the same language as) the populations they serve
- Highly effective for relaying accredited vaccine info

Despite the diversity of innovations mentioned in the survey, the following common elements are key to addressing current and future challenges:

Establishing and building on trusted relationships

Having previously established trust relationships, Alliance members partnered with their local public health units, cultural community organizations and community members to:



share accredited vaccine information



hold vaccine clinics



use effective messaging to reach specific audiences



provide culturally safe services



Creatively and collaboratively adapting to community needs

Member centres listened deeply and responded innovatively with tailored approaches to advance vaccine confidence in communities with long histories of medical distrust and systemic barriers from historical underfunding.



Sustaining trust through investments, resources and support

Robust investments in community-led strategies are needed to help sustain and expand relationships of trust between the health system and marginalized populations, and reduce inequities that lead to poor health outcomes.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated inequities faced by marginalized communities and vulnerable populations. However, due to the community-led framework of how Alliance members provide care, centres were able to build on longstanding, trusted relationships with their communities to respond innovatively with tailored initiatives.

¹ In total, 45 centres completed the survey resulting in a 43% (45/104) response rate.

² Throughout the pandemic, members of the Alliance have provided hyper-local community level outreach and support to Black and racialized, Francophone, Mennonite, youth, Indigenous, rural, and low-income communities. Much of this work was done without any additional resources, funds, or personnel, however a subset of 11 centres did receive financial support ranging from \$35,000-50,000 from the Public Health Agency's Immunization Partnership Fund.



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Community Vaccination
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