

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN OUTREACH INITIATIVE EVALUATION SUMMARY



About the CDO Initiative

The goal of the Community-Driven Outreach (CDO) Initiative, within the Center for Community Relations & Equity (CRE), is to ensure that disproportionately impacted communities continue to have equitable access to COVID-19 information, resources, and vaccines while also addressing the social determinants of health amplified by the pandemic. The CDO Initiative helps to build community capacity for long-term recovery and resilience to better position communities for future public health emergencies. Using braided funding, combining multiple funding streams, and an equitable funding allocation methodology, \$21 million was distributed to communities through 10 community-based and social impact organizations who developed a network of and funded over 100 smaller community-rooted organizations.



To learn more about the CDO Initiative and program partners, visit [WA Portal](#).

About the Evaluation and Objectives

Between April 2023 and December 2024, CRE partnered with the [Center for Anti-Racism and Community Health \(ARCH\)](#), University of Washington, to evaluate CDO Initiative partnerships, with the following objectives:

- Describe how program-specific activities in the CDO Initiative impact community resilience.
- Describe how we consider and operate equity in activities related to COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery.
- Describe the implementation and impact of activities to support community outreach, engagement, and equity in public health.

Evaluation Methodology

- From April 2024 through August 2024, members of contractor organizations participated in structured interviews (n=9).
- The interview guide covered context and role, community resilience, and partnerships with sub-contractors, community, and Washington State Department of Health (DOH).
- Interviews were transcribed, de-identified, and analyzed using rapid qualitative analysis methodology by two coders.
- From June through September 2024, subcontractors participated in an online survey to gather quantitative and qualitative insights (n=14).

What is rapid qualitative analysis?

An analysis approach using a team to summarize key points from qualitative data into more manageable matrices to explore relevant themes efficiently and systematically.

Results

The results table reflects participant perspectives from in-depth qualitative interviews. These perspectives are organized into overarching domains. Within each domain, there are multiple themes that describe recurrent patterns or key ideas from participants.

Domains	Themes
Community Needs and Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial stability and education emerged as critical social determinants of health, with individuals often forced to choose between necessities like food and medicine. COVID-19 exacerbated these challenges. Communities want culturally relevant and respectful information. Major barriers come from systemic issues and poor communication, not from a lack of community interest. Participants reported that systemic barriers such as funding constraints, historical trauma, language challenges, and healthcare mistrust disrupted access and uptake of services.
Definition and Implementation of Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resilience ties deeply to cultural practices, ancestral roots, and long-term relationships. This enables communities to overcome challenges despite limited resources. Interviews revealed that many in marginalized communities express frustration with the expectation of resilience. They see it as a forced response to systemic inequities and express that it is imposed by structural failures. Instead, it's important to support communities to thrive without being constantly pushed to "bend without breaking."
Strengthening Partnerships and Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants shared that culturally tailored partnerships, built on trust, are essential for addressing health by providing community-specific solutions that resonate with historically underrepresented populations. Technical assistance, such as capacity-building webinars and administrative guidance, empowered smaller organizations to manage larger grants and increase their impact. Building strong relationships is critical for successful, culturally tailored outreach and sustained community engagement. Investing time and resources into partnerships unlocks greater potential for meaningful outcomes.
Partnership with DOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations successfully secured grants and flexible funding, which helped to build a trusting relationship with DOH. Partners found the relationship to be rewarding and beneficial in supporting equity in public health. Participants feel DOH has shown commitment to addressing community needs through various initiatives. This includes adding labor acknowledgements in meetings and improving access to vital resources during COVID-19. Participants also noted that siloed conversations and staff turnover at DOH created inconsistencies and communication gaps during the project. However, clear communication and quarterly meetings helped participants navigate obstacles and strengthen collaboration.

Participant Quotes

"Barriers with community? I don't really see it because our communities – they want this information. They are hungry for this information as long as it's presented in a way that makes sense and is respectful."

"And resilience is not a beautiful word. We shouldn't have to be resilient. We shouldn't have to see if the next time we are forced to bend, is it gonna break us or are we gonna bounce back?"

"Once the relationships are there and invested in, it unlocks a whole world of possibilities...We're like, you know what? We've got to spend these first few months building up relationships first, and you'll see these outputs. We know it's going to happen."

Recommendations

The CDO Initiative addressed inequities during COVID-19 through culturally tailored partnerships and community-driven outreach. Based on the interview and survey results, the following actions are recommended for ensuring these partnerships remain strong and community-rooted solutions remain a priority for DOH.

- Continue to invest, collaborate, and expand initiatives beyond COVID-19.
- Implement flexible funding mechanisms, sustain investment in partnerships, and enhance capacity building.
- Prioritize transparent communication, address staff turnover, invest in culturally tailored collaborations, and commit to long-term partnerships for lasting impact.

Looking Ahead and Further Resources

CRE is creating a strategic plan to ensure we hear the voices of communities most affected by health inequities and our agency prioritizes these recommendations. In the meantime, the Department of Health (DOH) commits to sustaining the [Community Collaborative](#) so practices, programs and policies reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes for all communities. This is especially true for communities experiencing disadvantage because of systemic inequities.

This evaluation happened at the same time as the Community Conversations series with CDO Initiative partners. This series happened from April to June 2024. The purpose of these events was to listen to partner insights, lessons learned, and identify potential next steps for equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. DOH can share a summary report that highlights learnings and recommendations for government partners working with community-based organizations. Request a copy of this report by emailing communityinvestmentsandengagement@doh.wa.gov.

For more information about this evaluation, please contact:

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