

Closing Health Equity Gaps in Underinvested Communities in Washington

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated numerous health equity gaps in Washington State. Since 2020, Health Commons Project (HCP) has worked with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) to launch and support numerous COVID-19 response programs aiming to close those gaps. As an example, HCP provides subgrants to African-led community-based organizations and community media outlets to support the design and implementation of education and engagement campaigns related to COVID-19. Financing these projects is made possible by braided funding from OT21-2103 Health Disparities Grant provided to HCP by DOH. Through the Community Driven Outreach program, HCP community partners have implemented highly innovative and effective programs that close information and access gaps. Those strategies include:

Community Based Education and Outreach Strategies

- Engaging culturally and linguistically knowledgeable guest speakers/ambassadors at community events to discuss resilience and self-care coping strategies during and after the pandemic emergency.
- Created and expanding youth ambassador programs with K-12 students. These programs – like ‘Get Vaxx’d’ led by Pacific Northwest Black Business Coalition (PNWBBC) trains students to become public health ambassadors in their communities and support them to develop, create, and launch their own public health messaging campaigns.
- Created a secure space for youth to discuss mental health issues such as loneliness, loss, and family dynamics.
- Empowering African diaspora leaders in & outside of public health to lead vaccination education and outreach efforts when community members.



Mission Africa AHAP Event:

Student shares public health information at Africa's - African Health Advocacy Project event



Get Vaxx'D PNWBBC:

The Youth Ambassador Team at Pacific Northwest Black Business Coalition

Partnerships

These successful outreach and engagement activities are designed, led, and operated by a network of community-based organizations across Washington State. Those partners include:

- Black Women Housing Alliance
- Channel A TV
- Diaspora Family Healing Network
- KD Call Foundation
- Gifts for Hope
- Mission Africa
- New World International
- One Vibe Africa
- Pacific NW Black Business Coalition
- Somali Health Board
- The Firm Outreach
- Tri-Cities Diversity & Inclusion Council

To date, these partners have distributed thousands of free COVID-19 tests and PPE kits and generated millions of impressions related to COVID-19 vaccine information. Moreover, these partners have created no barrier spaces for community members to access vaccine services with culturally and linguistically appropriate providers.

ABOUT HEALTH COMMONS PROJECT

HCP coordinates closely with partners in schools, fire departments, and community organizations to: (1) identify the language & healthcare access needs of the community, (2) support the development of trans-created written content, (3) facilitate the connection to interpretation services, and (4) provide subgrants to community organizations to fund the development and operation of evidence-based health education programming. HCP also utilizes mobile and digital technology to facilitate shared-learning opportunities and provide technical assistance to a wide network of community-based providers.



Gifts of Hope Event:

Gifts of Hope Executive Director, Samona Burluson (second from left), and representatives from Boys & Girls Clubs of King County and Health Commons Project celebrate at Gifts of Hope's Back 2 School Event in 2023

“Partnering & providing funding to African-led community-based organizations has been at the core of closing COVID-19 related health information gaps. Through the Community Driven Outreach program we are energized each day by the resilience of our partners and the effectiveness of their programming and campaigns.”

- Hannah Rapp Brown



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