

# Using Meaningful Community Engagement Methods to Advance COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Uptake in Underserved Communities



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## BACKGROUND

- The NIH heavily invested in community engagement research efforts to eliminate disparities in testing, clinical trial participation, access to care, and vaccination in response to the alarming health disparities experienced by underserved communities related to COVID-19.

## OBJECTIVE

- To describe a Theory of Change (ToC) process to engage community members in two projects (CO-CREATE and STOP-COVID-19-CA) promoting equitable access to COVID-19 testing and vaccination for underserved communities in San Diego between December 2020-April 2021.

## STUDY CONTEXT/POPULATION

- CO-CREATE and STOP COVID-19-CA focused on underserved Latinx, Black, and immigrant and refugee communities in South/Central San Diego and/or individuals accessing care at a federally qualified health center (FQHC) near the US/Mexico border.

## METHODS

- Two Community Advisory Boards (CAB) were established that included community organizers, promotores, clinic providers and administrators, and public health researchers (Table 1 describes the composition of CAB members for each project).



# Co-creating a Theory of Change was a meaningful community engagement practice that yielded necessary conditions and actionable strategies to advance equitable COVID-19 testing and vaccine equity in underserved communities.



Take a picture to see the Theory of Change report for CO-CREATE.

## METHODS

Table 1. CO-CREATE and UC San Diego STOP COVID-19 CA CABs

CO-CREATE	STOP COVID-19 CA
<b>9 Community Partners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotores Coalition</li> <li>Latinos y Latinas en Acción</li> </ul>	<b>11 Community Leaders/Organizers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comite Organizador Latino de City Heights</li> <li>Karen Organization of San Diego</li> <li>Kupanda Kids</li> <li>Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans</li> <li>Refugee Health Unit/Center for Community Health</li> <li>Somali Bantu Community</li> <li>South Sudanese Community Center</li> <li>The Humanity Movement</li> <li>Unity in the Community</li> <li>Youth Will</li> </ul>
<b>6 Public Health Researchers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UCSD</li> <li>SDSU</li> <li>Loma Linda University</li> </ul>	<b>2 Policy Partners (non-voting)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>San Diego City Council, District 9</li> </ul>
<b>7 FQHC Partners</b>	

- The Global Action Research Center guided the CABs through a 6-session ToC, focused on identifying necessary conditions for equitable COVID-19 testing and vaccination, actions to create those conditions, and a blueprint for assessing efficacy.
- Each session lasted 2 hours over Zoom and was augmented by interactive web-based activities.
- Each CAB member was offered \$100/meeting.

## RESULTS

- Nine necessary conditions were identified related to:
  - accessible and available services,
  - culturally and linguistically competent programming,
  - investment in trusted community and faith leaders,
  - social safety nets to provide ancillary services.
- Corresponding actions to create these conditions and measures to indicate success in creating these conditions were operationalized by the CABs.

## CONCLUSIONS

- While resource-intensive, a CAB-led ToC process yielded a rich opportunity to engage diverse groups that typically are not invited to inform these processes.
- Dedicated funding and technical support for community engagement are crucial for successful and sustained public health interventions.

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