

CREATIVE USE OF FUNDING TO EXPAND OUTREACH EFFORTS: A CASE STUDY OF THE TOIYABE INDIAN HEALTH PROJECT



PROBLEM

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities have faced disproportionate COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and death rates. Their susceptibility to the virus is rooted in long-standing, systemic health inequities¹. Despite seeing an uptake in vaccinations, a report based on the American COVID-19 vaccination poll showed that **nearly half of the AI/AN population is unvaccinated.**²

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan (ITCM) received funding from the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) to implement the **Tribal Vaccine Equity Project**, a national infrastructure for mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on Native American and Alaska Native communities. ITCM utilized the reach of the National Native Network (NNN)'s communication channels to connect with tribal communities across the U.S. to support local vaccine efforts through multi-component interventions. ITCM provided funding and technical assistance to seven tribal health clinics to help with capacity building and vaccine education events implementation. Specifically, ITCM planned and implemented:



Healthcare provider training and technical assistance webinars to support healthcare providers in increasing vaccine confidence among their partners



Funding and technical assistance support for tribal health clinics to partner with trusted community businesses and organizations to host vaccine and vaccine education events



Create and implement a Culturally appropriate and tailored mass media campaign

This report focuses on the implementation and outcome of the **Toiyabe Indian Health Project** as they implement tribal-led, community-driven initiatives to continue the momentum they have created in mitigating the effects of COVID-19 through community vaccine events, vaccine education, and health promotion events.

We humbly acknowledge the clinic staff at the Toiyabe Indian Health Project for their review, edits, and collaboration for this case study report.



This project is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$5,177,000 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS through NNPHI. The contents of this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government.



COMMUNITY



Toiyabe Indian Health Project, Inc. (TIHP) is a tribal, nonprofit organization that offers medical services and preventive health programs for the Native American tribes and the surrounding communities. The TIHP clinic resides in Bishop, CA, serving seven federally recognized Tribes and one Native American community: Antelope Valley Indian Community (Coleville), Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley, Bishop Paiute Tribe, Bridgeport Indian Reservation, Fort Independence Indian Reservation, Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Reservation, Utu Utu Gwaitu Tribe (Benton), Timbisha Shoshone Tribe (Death Valley), as well as surrounding non-native communities.

Many residents are over 3 hours from the clinic, and travel is often limited due to large mountain ranges, harsh weather, and closed passes. In addition, grocery items and other goods in its service area are priced the highest in the nation. This decreases the likelihood of families purchasing costly healthy foods over less expensive carb-laden foods. Additionally, several communities have only high-priced corner markets and offer a poor selection of nutritious foods. Supermarkets and grocery warehouses are over 150 miles from the clinic.

UNIQUE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

As a grant-funded organization, services offered at the TIHP are restricted to the grants. As most grants are related to older adults and elder care, TIHP could not reach the entirety of their community. Flexible funding from the Tribal Vaccine Equity Project allowed them to utilize funding to extend their outreach efforts to their entire adult population in addition to their family members. The grant from the Tribal Vaccine Equity Project also allowed them to re-frame the vaccine and vaccine education events as family wellness events. For example, in partnership with a local apple farm, the TIHP hosted apple-picking events for the whole family. The family that came with grandparents received a \$50 voucher they can use to purchase healthy food, along with health promotion information, including vaccine education information. Funding from the Tribal Vaccine Equity Project was also used to host the family pool night, in partnership with local businesses, to address concerns about COVID-19 with native families.



PROGRAM OUTCOME/IMPACT



Toiyabe Indian Health Project was able to use the funding from the Tribal Vaccine Equity Project to successfully extend its outreach to communities. In partnership with local businesses, they hosted family wellness events and health fairs where community members and their families could come together and learn about general health, disease prevention, and vaccine safety. Through various outreach efforts between March and June 2021, the TIHP was able to administer 39 COVID-19 vaccines and provide vaccine education to 50 individuals. Hosting a family event and Family pool night enabled the TIHP to reach a population with higher hesitancy.

CONCLUSIONS

Flexible funding and simplified reporting from the Tribal Vaccine Equity Project supported the TIHP to build on its existing capacity to expand its reach within their service population. In partnerships with local businesses, including an apple orchard, pool, and community cultural centers, they could host vaccine education events, where participants benefit from incentives the local business provided. By reframing vaccine education as health and wellness promotion, they created a safe environment for vaccine-confident and vaccine-hesitant individuals to learn about and discuss vaccines.

¹ Hill, L., & Artiga, S. (2022, August 22). COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by Race/Ethnicity: Current Data and Change Overtime. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/covid-19-cases-and-deaths-by-race-ethnicity-current-data-and-changes-over-time/>

² Sanches, C. R., & Foxworth, R. (2021, July 29). Native Americans and COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy: Pathways. Retrieved November 21, 2022, from <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20210723.390196/>