

Case Study: Highlights

Lifting Community Voices through the Equitable Funding Allocation Methodology

The Issue:

COVID-19 disproportionately impacted disadvantaged and marginalized communities within the state of Washington. The Washington State Department of Health (WADOH) recognized that community-rooted and community-led organizations are better positioned to respond to the community. Through their COVID-19 Community-Driven Outreach Program, WADOH wanted to position themselves as listeners, and in-turn, uplift community voices by inviting them to be a part of equitable funding decisions.

“Let them pull us in from the get-go, not to make decisions or personal decisions, and involve us from the get-go. They need to be able to involve us from the get-go and seek our thoughts, our feedback on what they want to do. I mean nothing about us without us. Yes, nothing about us, without us. Let them take the feedback. Let them try to break those systems if they want to be successful, because none of us is safe until we are all safe, and the disparities are huge.”

- Community voice represented by a Thought Partner

Program Description:

The COVID-19 Community-Driven Outreach Program aimed to equitably fund a minimum of five contracts responding to priority communities and intersectionalities. To do so, they developed a novel Equitable Funding Allocation Methodology that incorporated five data-informed elements and one element that centered the community voice by seeking their thoughts and feedback. Throughout the development of the Methodology, WADOH sought out individuals with expert knowledge and community experience to weigh in. WADOH also leveraged its existing partnerships with community-rooted organizations to prioritize community voices that have a first-hand understanding of the impact COVID-19 was having on their community. WADOH thoughtfully chose individuals to sit on their Thought Partners and RFQQ Evaluation Committee so that these teams were diverse and included a variety of expertise and perspectives. WADOH incorporated insightful feedback, revising the Methodology itself and how to apply it.

“And then also (this) was more focused on the stakeholders really driving this process. What do the stakeholders have to say? What is it that they really want to be addressed? What are the issues that they feel? The Evaluation Partners need to really make it a priority. So it was really designed by, based on the issues that were raised by these stakeholders, you know. These were the emerging issues, and these were the areas that the community felt the Department of Health still really needs to support more going forward. ”

- From a WADOH Employee

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Impact Statement:

WADOH was able to help address COVID-19 health disparities that were disproportionately impacting historically marginalized populations and BIPOC communities, by including them in the conversation about how to equitably fund priority populations and how to develop a Methodology on how to do so. Many partners of the COVID-19 Community-Driven Outreach program recognized that WADOH's valiant efforts to engage the community and uplift their voices were successful. Collaborative processes were well executed, ensuring communities were represented in every step.

"And I believe I added a lot of perspective. I mean to it, especially for the BIPOC community, for I mean the immigrant community, and how this could have reached us. In terms of organizations that they were going to empower to make sure that they empower organizations or institutions who will be directly impacting the communities who are on the ground and that the funds will end up not just sitting in the hands of big organizations who already have the infrastructure, who are barely interacting with the communities, who don't know anything about the communities and the problems of the communities, I mean. And I think they paid heed to that."

- From Thought Partners & RFQQ Members

Summary:

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated health disparities across the U.S., including Washington State. The need for an equitable approach to address these health disparities was vital. WADOH collaborated with community representatives during the development and implementation of the Methodology, resulting in community members feeling heard and involved.

"I think one great feedback that really came through was that the community partners were really, you know, grateful for us for this piece, for them to engage directly with the Department of Health, you know. So that spirit of collaboration people felt that it's a strong foundation that led to the immediate response and addressing some of the key emerging concerns from the COVID-19 pandemic."

- From a WADOH Employee

Action Suggestions:

Seen through the positive gains of involving community members in decision-making surrounding funding in Washington, they must continue to have a seat at the table. Having community representation and diversity seen throughout all aspects of an initiative allows for a variety of perspectives enabling agencies to make informed decisions about addressing health inequities.

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