

Investing In Community-Based Organizations To Increase Access To COVID-19 Vaccinations



Above: CORE volunteers. Photo courtesy of CORE

Background

With funding from the federal Health Resources & Services Administration, PIH-US partnered with community-based organizations across the country to drive vaccine outreach and uptake through trusted messengers.

Our goal was to address COVID-19 related health disparities and advance health equity by supporting frontline vaccine education and outreach for vulnerable communities using a community-led approach.

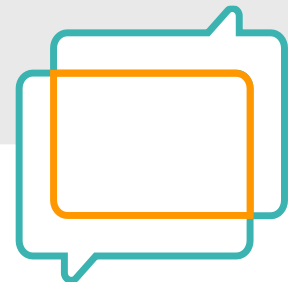
Our Objectives



Mobilize
Community- Based
Workforce



Reduce
Barriers to
Access

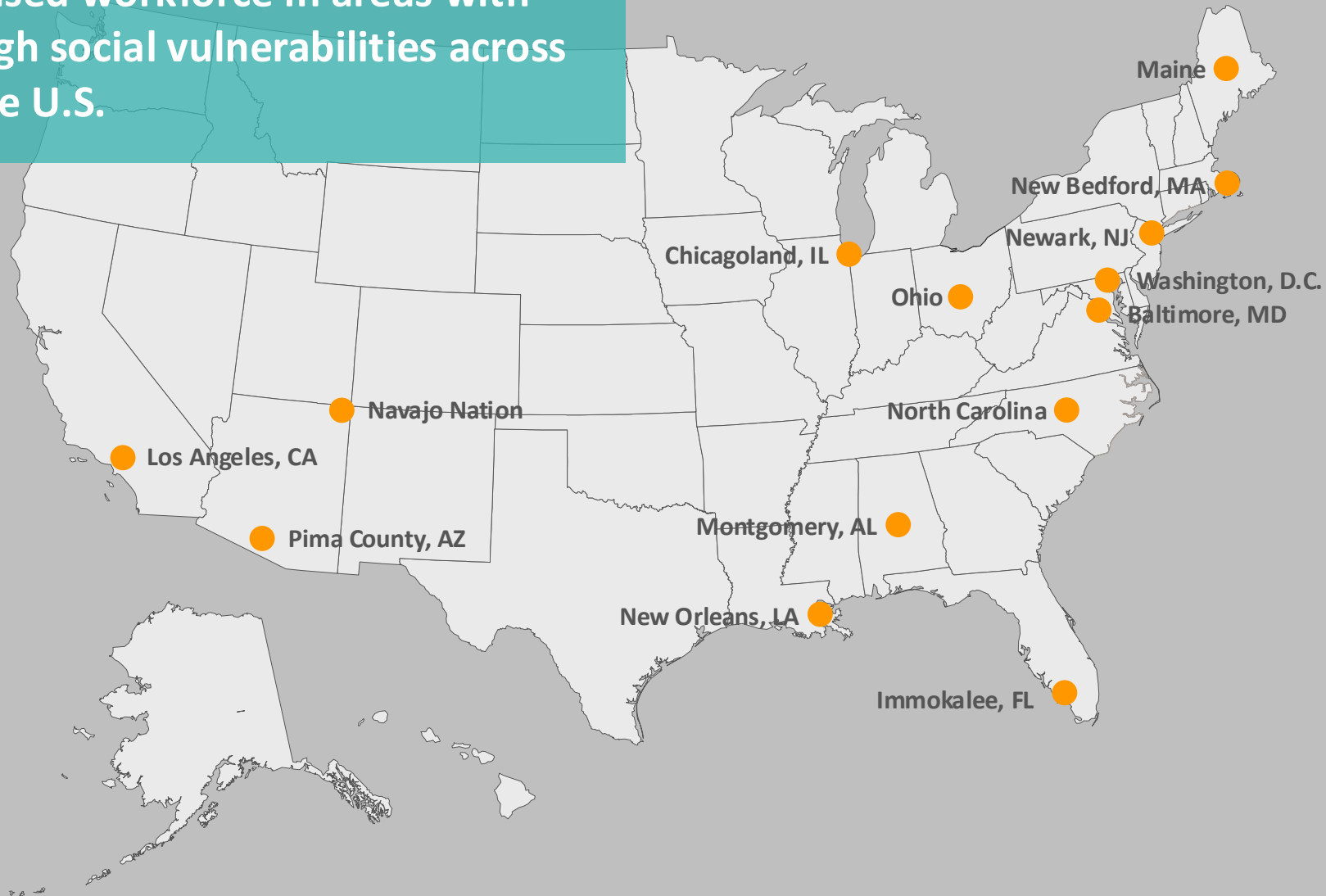


Dialogue and
Disseminate
Information



Strengthen
Coordination and
Learning

We focused our efforts on investing in the under-resourced but highly-effective community-based workforce in areas with high social vulnerabilities across the U.S.



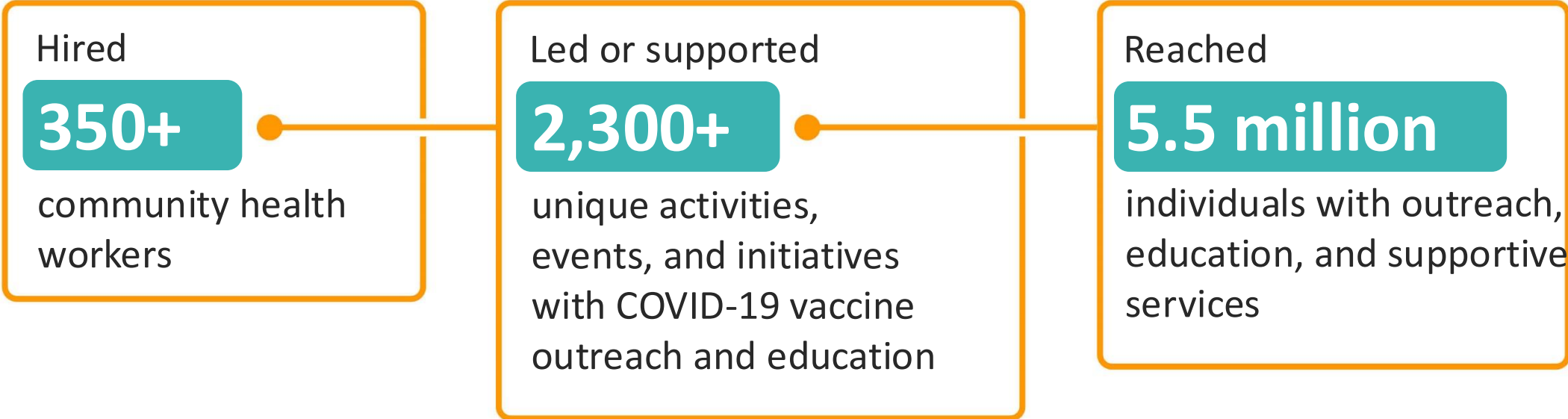
58

Community-based organizations

14

Different cities, states, or tribal nations working to increase vaccine confidence and uptake

Collectively, PIH and our partner organizations...



As a result of these efforts, nearly **40,000** individuals committed to getting vaccinated.



Right: A resident in New Bedford, MA receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.
Photo by Zack DeClerck / PIH

Our partners implemented **hyperlocal strategies** to support equitable vaccination efforts by meeting people where they are, including:



Canvassing in neighborhoods, distributing educational information on the COVID-19 vaccine



Assisting with booking vaccination appointments for upcoming clinics



Providing transportation to and from vaccination clinics



Hosting vaccination clinics in partnership with local events, festivals, concerts, and sporting events



Staffing mobile primary care / outreach vans



Conducting social media outreach on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter



Sharing educational materials in food pantry deliveries



Facilitating podcasts and online and in-person educational events on the COVID-19 vaccine

We rapidly **deployed funding** directly to a diverse set of community-based organizations

\$8 million

invested directly into community-based organizations

\$98,000

median award size

80%

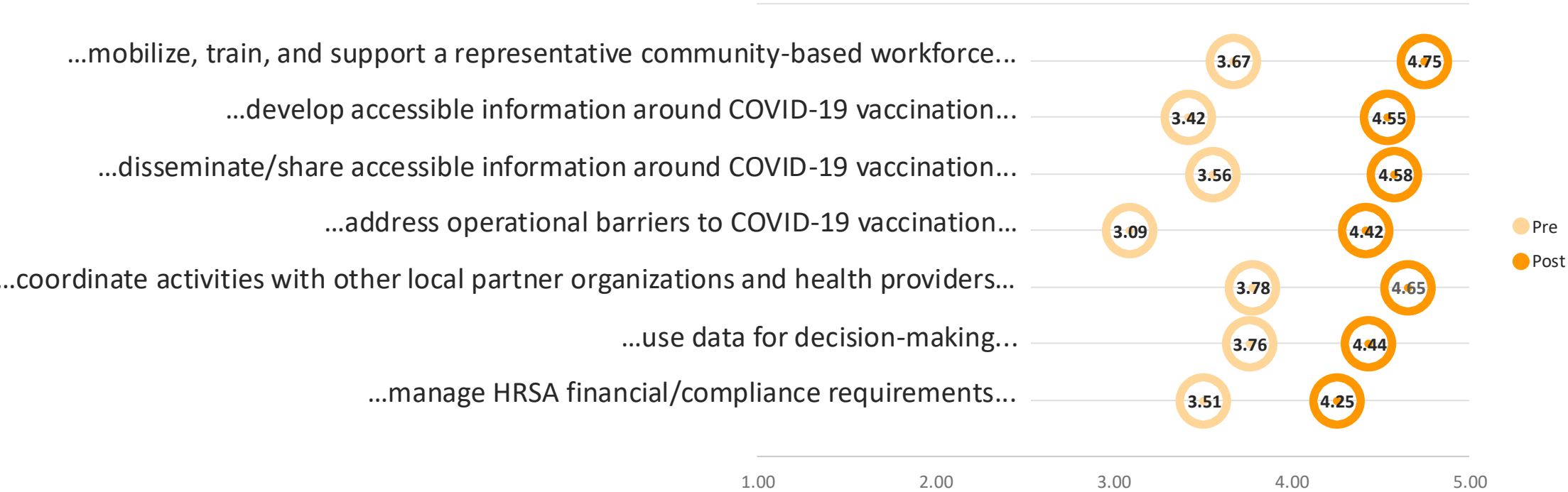
of community-based organizations had never received federal funding prior to our partnership



Right: A woman at a COVID-19 vaccination event in Henderson, NC. Photo courtesy of HAPE

We worked alongside our partners to **build lasting capacity.**

Over the course of our partnership, organizations indicated **an improvement in their ability to...**



Source: Average reported scores across all CBO's when responding to the pre- and post-grant survey prompt: "Please rate your organization's ability to..." A response of 1 corresponds to Low, and a 5 corresponds to High.

And through it all, our community-based partners **remained agile and led the way**

They led with **ingenuity and deep local knowledge**. Community health workers, community organizers, resource navigators, violence interrupters, peer educators, and many others worked tirelessly to meet the needs of their neighbors and advocate for their communities. In doing so, they **bridged gaps and began to rebuild community trust in local public health and medical systems** that have historically underserved them.

We know how impactful community-based organizations and the workforce they employ can be, not just to close gaps in vaccine inequity, **but to address the long-standing health injustices** that underpinned barriers to COVID-19 vaccination.

But too often, community-based organizations and their workers are **systematically excluded from critical resources and funding they need to support their communities**.

Below: Youth leaders sharing COVID-19 information.
Photo courtesy of ABC2



Our experience has highlighted several lessons **for effective and impactful partnership with community-based organizations**. Policy makers, funding agencies, and national organizations like PIH must:

- **Support hyper-local strategies** to effectively reach communities with information and services
- Provide **rapid and flexible funding directly** to frontline organizations
- **Reduce the administrative burden of funding** by accompanying community-based organizations to build compliance, grant management, and monitoring and evaluation capacity
- **Facilitate access** to accurate and up-to-date resources and materials
- Invest in **staff wellness and professional development** for community-based organizations alongside programmatic activities
- **Operate from a place of trust** to build and sustain strong partnerships

We are committed to **applying these lessons in our longer-term work in the US**, while advocating for others to do the same.

Community-based organizations are closest to the challenges of their communities, have established trust, and deep local knowledge. **By continuing to invest in this critical workforce—and ensuring they have what they need to successfully support and advocate for their communities—we can build a public health system that truly serves those who need it most.**



Below: A mural in Phoenix, AZ. Photo courtesy of The Sunshine Foundation

Appendix

Gang Free Inc.

In North Carolina, a community-based organization focused on moving at-risk youth and ex-offenders forward leveraged existing outreach activities to educate their community on COVID-19, while also responding to material needs.

In March 2022 alone, Gang Free Inc. **served over 4,000 people** from majority Latinx and Black communities with food, PPE and emergency housing to address underlying resource challenges that inhibit peoples' ability to become vaccinated against COVID-19.



IMPACT

4 community health workers

hired, trained, and retained to work permanently at the local health department

32,400+ individuals educated

about COVID-19 vaccination

23,400+ individuals assisted

with vaccine appointment scheduling, case management, PPE, food, and/or gift cards

1,000 individuals reached

through radio and social media

Left: The 'Fantastic Five' at a vaccination event. Photo courtesy of Gang Free Inc.

MentorU

In Newark, New Jersey, a community-based organization that is focused on providing youth with the academic and social-emotional skills and mentorship to excel in college and life launched a **youth task force** to conduct community outreach, primarily focusing on their peers and families.

They mobilized grassroots support using tailored messaging through events and mass media, including a “Why I Got Vaccinated: Youth Edition” social media campaign meant to empower students to share their reasons for getting vaccinated and to encourage their peers to do the same.

IMPACT

35 youth outreach workers
hired and trained

15+ in-person events
including vaccine education

10,300+ individuals reached
with in-person educational
content

10,200+ individuals reached
through mass media and social
media messaging



Photo courtesy
of MentorU

Activities

Assistance with making vaccination appointments
 Billboards & Murals
 Collaborations with local organizations, hotels, housing authorities, government agencies, universities, food banks, churches
 Community forums
 Creating educational videos
 Distributions of meals, groceries, PPE, backpacks, and other household or seasonal necessities
 Emails
 Event tabling
 Face to face canvassing in the community and among local businesses
 Identifying & establishing partnerships with trusted community messengers
 Incentives for vaccinations
 Interviews and listening sessions to understand barriers to vaccination
 Know Your Rights trainings for farmworkers
 Mass texts
 Multilanguage outreach via all online and offline channels
 Newsletters
 Newspaper articles and op-eds
 Phone banking & COVID education hotlines
 SNAP/FEMA/Medicaid application assistance
 Social media outreach - Instagram, Facebook, Facebook live, Tiktok, Youtube, Spotify, etc.
 Testing support
 Translation support for vaccine events
 Transportation support for vaccinations
 TV, radio, and social media advertisements and interviews
 Vaccination campaigns: "This Shot Is Your Shield" "Why I got vaccinated: Youth Edition"
 Webinars/virtual forums
 Website updates
 Yard signs, flyers

Events

Bar/restaurant reopenings
 Black Community Vaccine Equity Collaborative
 Business Fairs

 Church events
 Community clean up events
 Community events
 Community Resource Fairs
 Cultural fairs
 Diaper distributions
 Education events related to other health issues, wellness, crime
 Fall Fest Stop the Violence Health & Resource Fair
 FEMA/SNAP/Medicaid outreach & assistance
 Food and Clothing Distributions
 Health Fairs & Screening Events
 Hurrican Ida Relief & Vaccination Event
 Mobile Vaccination Clinics
 Movie night at the park
 NENC Regional Connections Meeting
 PPE distributions
 Puerto Rican Day Parade
 Pumpkin Paint and Pizza Vaccination Event
 School Vaccination Events
 Seasonal Festivals (Dia de los Muertos, Back to School, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.)
 Sports leagues/events
 Static Vaccination Events
 Swap Meets
 Town hall meetings
 Toy, coat, turkey, Christmas tree giveaways
 World AIDS Day Event
 World Homeless Day
 Young Leaders Roundtable Meeting

- In **New Orleans, LA**, in the wake of Hurricane Ida, **CORE** supplemented education outreach to combat vaccine hesitancy with support signing up for FEMA, SNAP, and Medicaid assistance programs, as well as resources for people in the city experiencing homelessness.
- In **Enfield, NC**, **ABC2** launched the Young Leaders Roundtable, a group of rural, Black and Latinx youth who held weekly meetings to plan for solutions to issues in their communities, including creating COVID vaccine educational materials and a TikTok campaign specifically for their student peers.
- In **Montgomery, AL**, **Metropolitan United Methodist Church's** leadership had a weekly spot on several local Christian radio stations to promote COVID vaccination and discuss other community needs, specifically targeting adults and elders in their majority Black community.
- **National Association of Community Health Workers** provided early access to free rapid test kits for partners as part of the White House's push to increase at-home testing. This effort helped disseminate information to more hard-to-reach communities, particularly those in vulnerable zip codes.
- **Center for Popular Democracy** released a Vaccine Outreach Training Manual for Canvassing, Door-to-Door, and Event-Based Outreach and held workshops for outreach support.
- Many community-based partners combined vaccine education and administration with other health services needed within their communities. **Centro San Bonifacio** in **Chicago** offered COVID-19 vaccine education and administration with blood glucose screenings at the Mexican and Guatemalan consulates.
- Several others worked with employers to support workers to offer vaccine education and administration. **Helping All People Excel** in **North Carolina** provided education and vaccination on-site at factories and manufacturing plants.
- Multiple community-based organizations were able to roll outreach efforts into existing community events such as sporting events, community clean-up events, and pageants.

Our experience working alongside our partners has highlighted **several lessons** that can be applied to address long-standing health disparities.

- Access to high-quality data can help identify vulnerable areas with low vaccination coverage and help to design coordinated, tailored interventions
- Trust and tailored communication is critical to the success of community-based organizations
- Community-based organizations must be agile to changing guidance and community needs
- Effective vaccine outreach meets people where they are and includes wrap-around services that address material needs such as the provision of food, PPE, rental assistance, and other social supports
- Community outreach workforces need access to professional development and well-being services to prevent burnout, increase motivation, and foster a shared sense of community



Above: A COVID-19 care package from the Sunnyside Foundation in Tucson, AZ.
Photo courtesy of The Sunnyside Foundation

We've identified best practices from our efforts to better engage with community-based organizations.

- Communication, transparency, and trust-building are essential components to building strong partnerships
- Investment of human, financial, and training resources for community-based organizations help to improve compliance, grant management, and monitoring and evaluation capacity
- Close collaboration with community-based organizations to design projects and adapt solutions to the operational realities on the ground help to ensure successful implementation
- Local presence of funder staff facilitates collaboration and understanding of the community
- Data collection, analysis, and reporting systems should be co-created and tested with community-based organizations to maximize usability and buy-in

Right: Youth leaders sharing COVID-19 information. *Photo courtesy of ABC2*

