



Engaging the Arts to Build Vaccine Confidence

IMPACT REPORT



JULY 2023

● ● ABOUT ● THE CDC FOUNDATION

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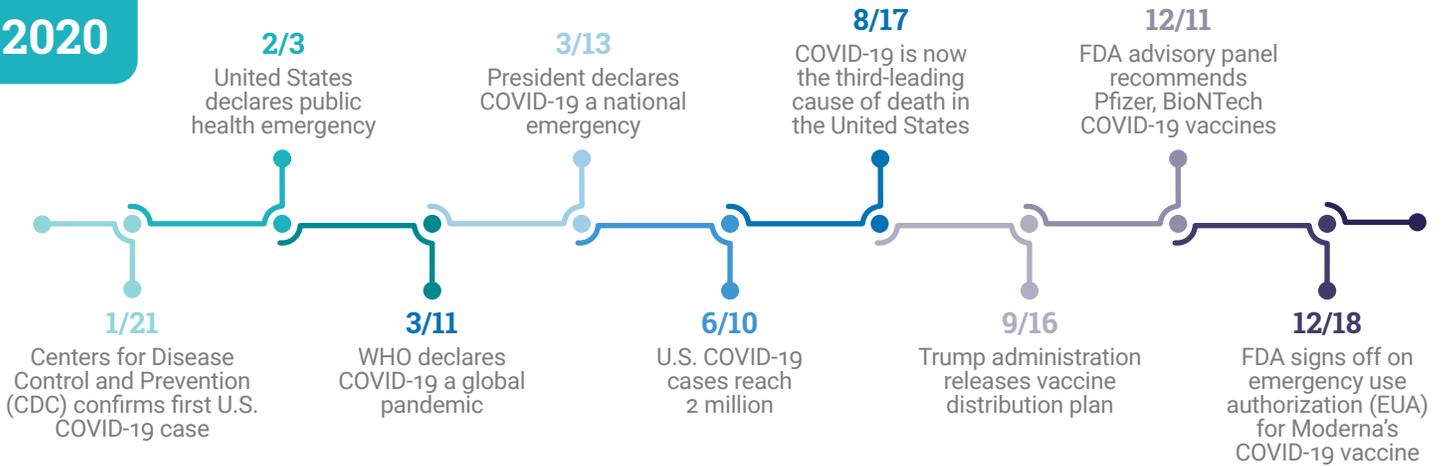


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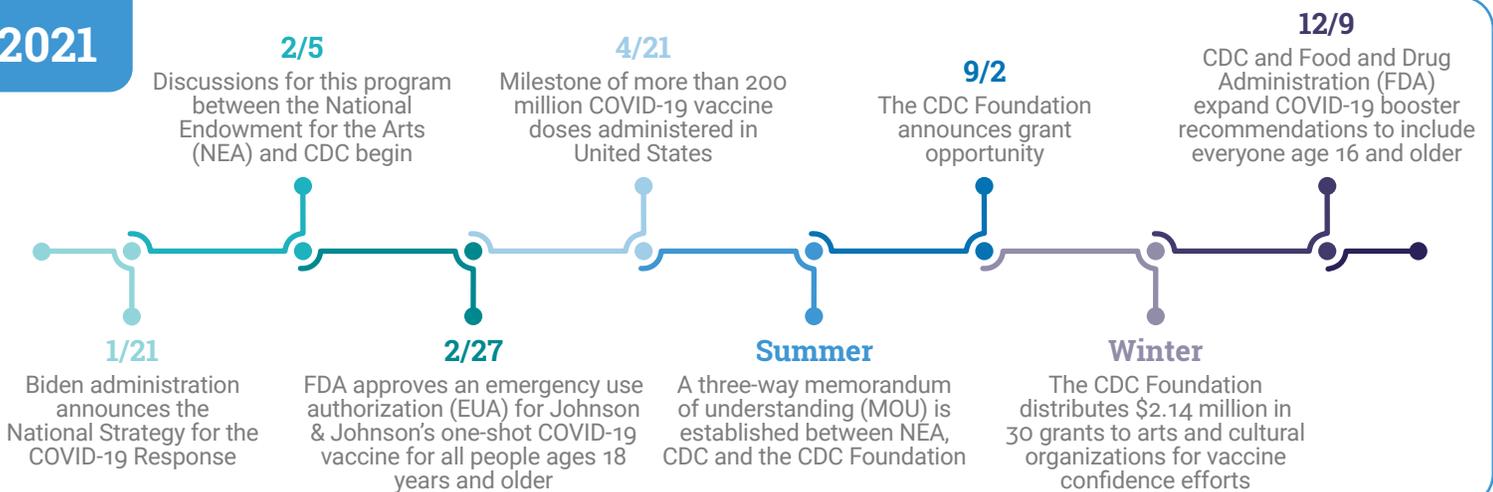
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TIMELINE

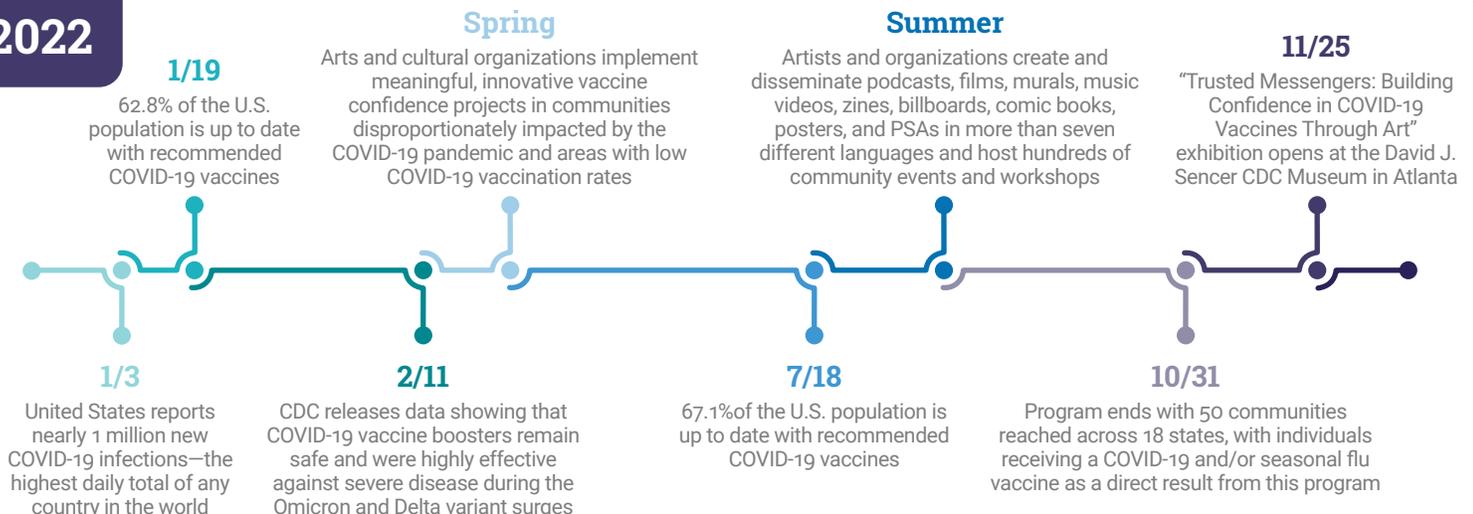
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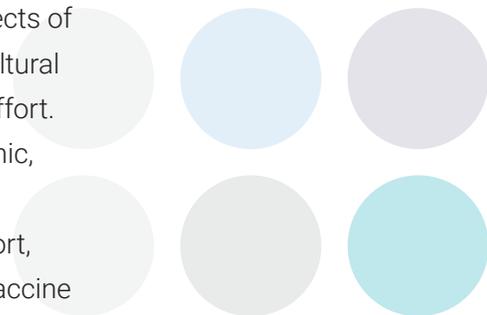
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BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on all aspects of life, including the arts and culture sector. However, artists and cultural organizations have also played a crucial role in the vaccination effort. Although vaccination is a key element in overcoming the pandemic, vaccine hesitancy and misinformation have become significant challenges to achieving high levels of vaccine uptake. In this report, we explore how arts and culture have been utilized to promote vaccine confidence, dispel myths and misinformation surrounding vaccines and support vaccination efforts in the United States.



The Role of Arts and Culture in Building Vaccine Confidence

Arts and culture have been used to promote public health messages for decades. Posters, music, and public performances all have been employed to raise awareness of health issues and encourage healthy behaviors. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, artists, and cultural organizations around the world used their platforms to promote vaccination and address vaccine hesitancy.

One example is the “I’m Vaccinated” campaign, launched by the Ad Council in the United States. This campaign featured a series of public service announcements by celebrities, musicians and athletes which encouraged Americans to get vaccinated. The campaign was widely successful, with more than 75 percent of eligible adults in the United States reporting they saw or heard the ads.¹

Art has also been used to counter misinformation and promote vaccine education. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) partnered with the character, Mr. Bean, to produce a public service announcement that explains the importance of getting vaccinated and dispel myths about vaccines. The video was widely shared on social media and has been praised for its effectiveness in communicating important vaccine information in an engaging and accessible way.²

Music has also been used to promote vaccine uptake. In 2021, the UK, the “Vax Because” campaign featured a song by artist Dave called “In the Fire.” The song addresses the reasons why some people may be hesitant to get vaccinated and encourages listeners to get vaccinated to protect themselves and their communities. The song was widely shared on social media and helped to increase vaccine uptake among younger people. Museums and theaters have also played a role in promoting vaccination. For example, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City offered a free admission ticket to anyone who gets vaccinated at their on-site clinic. The Sydney Opera House in Australia has also hosted vaccination clinics, providing an opportunity for members of the public to get vaccinated while enjoying a cultural experience.

Moreover, art installations and exhibitions have been used to raise awareness of the importance of vaccination. For example, the Museum of Science in Boston, MA, hosts an exhibition entitled, Project Vaccine: Our Best Defense, which includes interactive activities designed to educate the public about the development of the COVID-19 vaccines. The exhibition explores the different types of vaccines, viral transmission and the role of vaccines in preventing disease and future pandemics.³

The use of arts and culture to promote vaccine confidence has been effective for several reasons. First, cultural institutions and artists have existing platforms and audiences that can be leveraged to promote vaccination. Cultural institutions are often seen as trusted sources of information and have the potential to reach a wide audience.

Second, the creative use of art and music can make vaccine information more engaging and accessible. The use of celebrities and public figures in public service announcements can also increase the appeal of vaccine messages.

Third, cultural institutions and artists can provide a sense of community and social responsibility around vaccination. For example, museums and theaters that require proof of vaccination for entry can create a shared sense of responsibility for public health. Similarly, music festivals that require attendees to be vaccinated can create a sense of community around the importance of vaccination.



References

1. The Ad Council (2021). The History of Our COVID-19 Vaccine Education Initiative. <https://www.adcouncil.org/our-impact/covid-vaccine/our-covid-19-vaccine-retrospective>
2. World Health Organization (2020). Mr. Bean helps WHO spread the word on how to protect yourself from COVID-19. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFCDu-F-YI>
3. Museum of Science, Boston (2023). Project Vaccine: Our Best Defense, Permanent Exhibition. <https://www.mos.org/exhibits/project-vaccine-exhibit>

● ● STAGE I

● COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

As COVID-19 cases surged across the United States, public, private and government organizations sought to find new ways to cut through skepticism towards COVID-19 vaccines and communicate information about the safety and effectiveness of vaccination and overall public health efforts.



Photo Credit: Kathleen Holmes

Discussions for this project between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began in February 2021. The NEA and CDC very quickly established a shared vision for the role of the arts in public health. Much of the weekly conversation for the next several months was around the tactics and specifications for moving federal investments in a way that felt innovative, especially within capacity-constrained federal agencies. Several NEA/CDC partnership models were explored before the breakthrough idea to include the CDC Foundation for a 3-way memorandum of understanding (MOU).



The MOU outlines specific roles for each organization: the NEA to bring its knowledge of the arts field and strong connections to the state arts agencies and regional arts organizations; CDC to bring its investment and public health expertise; and the CDC Foundation to create and manage the grant program.



Photo credit: Jenn Chang

These three areas of expertise were on display throughout the program. Through this successful collaboration, we saw additional momentum between our agencies at the intersection of the arts and public health. *Examples include:*

August 24, 2021

the “Trusted Messengers and Trusted Spaces: Engaging Arts and Culture for Vaccine Confidence in Your Community” webinar was held to announce the CDC Foundation funding opportunity and to publicize the field guides, hosted by the University of Florida.

April 14, 2022

the Boosting Vaccine Confidence through the Arts webinar and workshop co-hosted by the CDC Foundation and the National Academy of Sciences was held, including CDC Foundation grantees, NEA staff and CDC staff.

December 2022

the *Trusted Messengers: Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines Through Art* exhibition opened at the David J. Sencer CDC Museum in Atlanta.

August 2021

two *field guides* about the arts and public health, were published by CDC and University of Florida, with NEA advisors/input.

February 2, 2022

the COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Bootcamp webinar hosted by CDC was held, including CDC Foundation grantees and other CDC-funded museum and library grantees.

June 2022

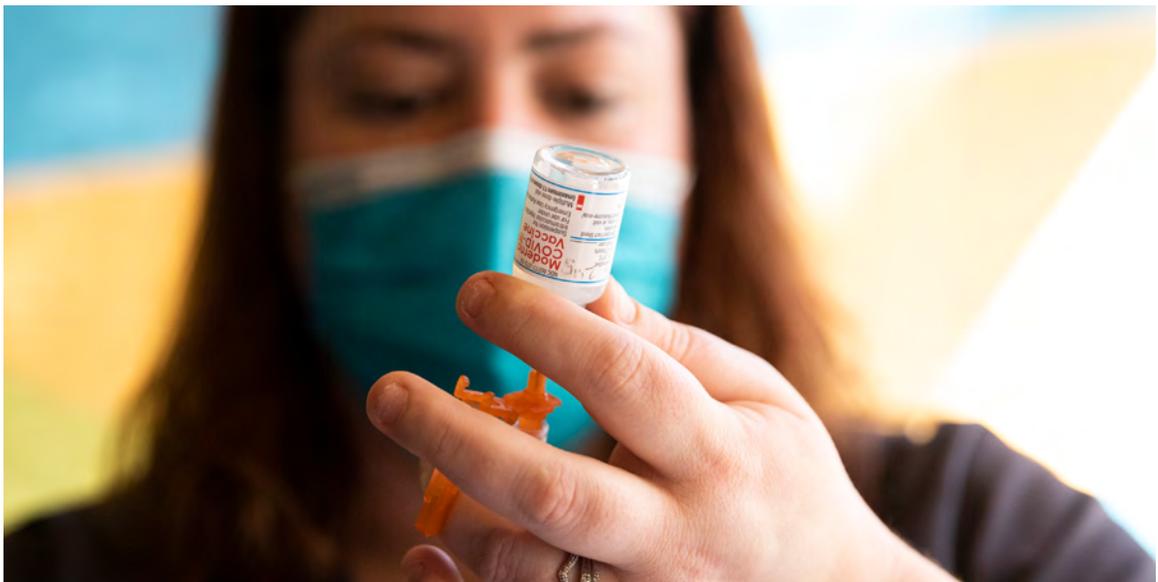
CDC Foundation projects were added to the University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine’s online *Vaccine Confidence Arts Response Repository*.

● ● STAGE II

● HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE ARTS

With \$2.5 million in funding from the CDC, the CDC Foundation announced it would provide up to \$75,000 per organization for up to 30 arts and culture organizations to use their chosen art forms to educate their communities and encourage vaccination for COVID-19 and seasonal flu.

To provide an opportunity for organizations to apply for this funding, the CDC Foundation on September 2, 2021, released the Engaging the Arts to Build Vaccine Confidence request for proposals. The announcement inspired more than 100 arts and culture organizations, community-based organizations, universities and art councils to apply.



While this project’s target population was the American public, applicants were encouraged to highlight their strategies for reaching young adults, rural communities and other populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Applicants could utilize any art form in their projects and were encouraged to partner with organizations offering vaccination services. Individual artists who were interested in supporting these efforts were encouraged to look to partner with a nonprofit organization in their community. Applications prioritizing counties and states that had less than 50 percent of their eligible population vaccinated for COVID-19 were prioritized for funding. Hospitals, state health departments, school districts or their fiscal agents were not eligible to apply. Funded partners would work toward the following overall project goals:

- Increased availability of accurate information about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccines delivered in innovative and creative ways drawing on the strengths of the arts community nationwide;
- Increased acceptance of COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccines; and
- Increased number of people who are vaccinated against COVID-19 and seasonal flu.

“

We learned so much from other grantees through the opportunity to hear about their efforts. We gained ideas that we will carry forward in future efforts. If you all do more work like this, it might be valuable for current grantees to hear from some past projects for inspiration and planning.

– Spirit of Youth

”

During the eight-week period when the CDC Foundation accepted grant applications, a cross-departmental team comprised of CDC and CDC Foundation staff with backgrounds in art and public health reviewed each application to ensure consistent and equitable scoring. Additionally, a technical review was provided to both funded and non-funded applications. Funding announcements occurred in late October and the project implementation for the 30 funded organizations began December 1, 2021, and concluded on October 31, 2022.





CDC Foundation Support:

The CDC Foundation recognized arts and cultural organizations potentially did not have extensive previous experience in public health programming or managed federal funding. Additionally, due to the constantly changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic, funded organizations would need to continuously adapt their programming, so it was essential to layer in support for capacity building and technical assistance throughout the project.

Support from the CDC Foundation included the following:

- Organizational needs assessment;
- Free Basecamp platform subscription that included resources, free webinars, announcements, event calendar and discussion board;
- Mid-year 1:1 technical assistance meeting;
- Additional technical assistance meetings as requested;
- COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Bootcamp hosted by CDC;
- Monthly cohort meetings that included COVID-19 updates and peer-to-peer networking; and
- Boosting Vaccine Confidence with the Arts webinar hosted by National Academy of Sciences and CDC Foundation.

Prior to this project,

40% of funded organizations indicated public health initiatives, education, and/or activities were not a focus of their organization's programming

90% of funded organizations had never worked/partnered with the CDC Foundation before

Following this project,

80% of funded organizations felt better prepared to apply for government funding in the future

100% of funded organizations plan to continue incorporating public health initiatives, education and/or activities in future programming

● ● STAGE III

● BUILDING TRUST

The projects were as creative as they were diverse. Narrative film, live theater, podcasts, dance performances, street art, poetry and quilting are just a few examples of the unique ways in which these organizations engaged their communities.

Blue Sky Sustainable Living Center built creative, resilient living models in the Cuyama Valley of California. Through “Superbloom,” a community theater production, they also provided an opportunity to help community members heal from a time of division over COVID-19 and vaccines. Community members with diverse backgrounds, ages, political preferences and divergent views on immunizations had the opportunity to engage in meaningful and honest conversations, renewing connections despite differences.



Photo Credit: Blue Sky Sustainable Living Center

A non-profit Latin American art museum, Museo de las Americas, located in Denver, CO, has celebrated the artistic and cultural achievements of their communities since 1991. They contracted a filmmaker to create a film, “My Community/Mi Comunidad,” in line with their values of representation and authenticity. The film included all local Latino artists who shared their experiences with the COVID-19 vaccine. The museum held a film screening where staff and volunteers distributed flyers and surveys to visitors, and 81 percent of respondents answered they were likely to receive the COVID-19 vaccine or booster after viewing the film.

“Something that we believe had a great impact was the focus on community and getting vaccinated not only for yourself but for others,” said Claudia Moran, Director of Operations. “The Latino community is characterized by strong cultural ties that center around families and neighborhoods.”



Photo credits: Vermillion Cultural Association

“The Barn Quilt Project: South Dakota Strong” reached nine communities across South Dakota, including rural areas with lower vaccination rates and predominantly white populations, as well as tribal reservations. Quilt making is a cross-cultural tradition in South Dakota that represents comfort, home and family, and painted barn quilts are popular throughout the state. Participants were able to reflect on the years of the pandemic and paint individual geometric barn quilt designs. The Barn Quilt Project thereby connects familiar symbols and self-written narratives of resilience to trusted messengers for vaccine information, promoting equity and transparency in the vaccination campaign.

Out of Hand Theater's Vaccine Confidence Program, "The Time Has Chosen Us," brought artists together to create a narrative and educational film developed from interviews and insights from community focus groups around concerns and barriers that rural citizens of Georgia faced when accessing COVID-19 vaccines. The resulting narrative film, "Comfort," reflected the differing viewpoints and concerns that many people have experienced in dealing with COVID-19. The film was followed by an educational video that dispelled myths about COVID-19 vaccines and provided accurate information about COVID-19. To supplement the films, a team created materials, take away cards and an electronic survey to direct individuals to resources and relevant information about COVID-19 vaccination. Events were held in partnership with local community leaders in parts of Southwest and North Central Georgia and included opportunities for vaccination against COVID-19.



Photo Credits: Out of Hand Theater



From December 2021 to October 2022, these 30 organizations across the nation collaborated with more than 600 artists to create innovative work that delivered accurate, science-based information about COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccination to communities in 18 states, using 15 different art forms in seven different languages. They spoke directly to their communities' concerns with a variety of formats including 29 murals, 28 podcasts, 49 films, four animated videos and 13 music videos. Communities were inspired to get vaccinated at more than 160 events and performances, and 768 people received COVID-19 and/or seasonal flu vaccines at these events. The estimated potential reach of all the content created from these projects, including communication products, campaigns and events, was roughly 6.5 million people.

The success and impact of these projects were also captured through stories and other narrative analysis. Given the significant differences in cultures, strategies and tactics aimed at encouraging people to get vaccinated, success should not focus solely on the number of vaccines administered, but on the ability to build trust and confidence in vaccines, now and in the future. Providing a safe space for people to discuss their questions and concerns is a critical first step in the roll out of any public health initiative.

Kids in the Spotlight, a funded arts organization, shared: “One of the most impactful findings in our listening sessions was the extent to which community and relationships were driving vaccine confidence or hesitancy. Our youth producers, who are all vaccinated, approached the listening sessions with previously unidentified biases that were rooted in a lack of compassion and empathy for unvaccinated members of their community. The adjustment in their thought processes, and inevitably the final product, were in direct relation to them listening and considering the complexity of the individual experiences of others. The safe spaces that were created by the listening sessions enabled everyone to be vulnerable, open and set aside preconceived notions, enabling all involved to connect on a level that allowed for meaningful change.”



Photo Credit: Erick Wonderly

Another funded arts organization, Whiteaker Community Council, also reported: “In tandem with our community vaccine clinic, we empowered artists of underrepresented voices to create vaccine confidence art made into colorful yard art signs. The project was wonderfully successful, and the yard signs became take away gifts at the clinic. Soon, our neighborhoods became populated with community minded matching yard signs that

stirred conversations about public health with neighbors, who were once very divided, and increased the likelihood of more community members receiving vaccines.”

There are many variables that motivate individuals to get vaccinated, and it may be difficult to isolate the influence of these artistic programs and interventions as the causal factor when individuals ultimately choose to get receive a vaccine. While these projects were able to directly support community members receiving COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccines, their creative outputs undoubtedly reached so many more.

“Our talented partner organizations created meaningful, innovative projects that engaged and informed community members and demonstrated the crucial role the arts can play in communicating about important public health issues,” said Catherine Zilber, MSc, Vice President for Infectious Disease Programs at the CDC Foundation. As a result of this project, 373 partnerships were developed, with groups including health departments, schools, medical clinics, other community-based organizations, pharmacies, faith-based organizations, governments and provider groups. In the end-of-year assessment, funded organizations were asked if they planned to continue incorporating public health initiatives, education and/or activities in future programming, and 100 percent of the organizations responded yes.



369 artists employed by the projects

15 different artforms utilized in different **7** languages

29 murals
28 podcasts
49 films
04 animated videos
13 music videos
CREATED

More than **50** communities reached across **18** states

768 individuals received a **COVID-19** and/or seasonal flu vaccine

26,737 posters
25,407 comic books/zines **DISTRIBUTED**

373 partnerships

developed between arts and health departments, schools, medical clinics, other community-based organizations, pharmacies, faith-based organizations, governments and provider groups

160 More than 160 events and performances held
143 including 143 community art workshops

“

This work is so essential, and it made a huge difference to have CDC Foundation’s commitment, support and validation of it. It carries a lot of weight with other funders, both in terms of the value of approach and the commitment of resources. This project enabled us to try out new things within the context of the proven elements of our health communication and health education model. The structured connection with other grantees was fantastic – we learned from each other and made new connections for potential future projects.

– Hip Hop Public Health

”

The success of this project also inspired a new exhibition at the David J. Sencer CDC Museum in Atlanta, *Trusted Messengers: Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines Through Art*, featuring original art from six of the funded organizations. Originally scheduled to run from December 2022 through May 2023, the exhibition was extended through August 25, 2023, after receiving an extremely positive response from visitors. On March 2, 2023, a private reception was held by the CDC Foundation to celebrate this tremendous accomplishment. The event included remarks from NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, CDC’s Director of the Centers for Preparedness and Response, Henry Walke, the President and CEO of the CDC Foundation, Judy Monroe and Vanessa Ford, Program Director of the Trust Transfer Project. Several of the funded arts organizations were also in attendance and had the opportunity to discuss the impact of their work with the project partners, donors and other attendees.



Strengthening Organizational Capacity:

The CDC Foundation has and continues to be deeply committed to increasing the organizational capacity of all our funded organizations. Over the course of the project, the CDC Foundation partnered with several organizations, including the National Academy of Sciences. The National Academy of Sciences hosted a webinar that provided a peer-to-peer learning forum for the funded organizations to address challenges, share ideas and understand how to maximize the impact of their efforts. Additionally, the CDC Foundation provided numerous other capacity building and technical assistance tools, trainings, webinars and resources throughout the entire project. At the conclusion of the project, all 30 of the funded organizations indicated that they felt appreciated, recognized and valued by the CDC Foundation for their efforts and contributions to this project.



97%

of funded partners indicated that implementation of their project has positively impacted their partnerships



87%

of funded organizations have experienced increased capacity to partner and support artists and culture bearers to develop and create innovative work to increase vaccine acceptance



90%

of funded organizations have experienced an increased capacity to create and engage in community dialogue about COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccination



83%

of funded organizations indicated that because of their organization's work on this project, their community has increased access to culturally competent health messages and education to make informed decisions regarding vaccinations



90%

of funded organizations indicated that because of their organization's work on this project, their community has experienced an increase in the range of trusted community voices supporting COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccine education and delivery





CONCLUSION

To combat vaccine misinformation, it is important to provide accurate information about the safety and efficacy of vaccines. Arts and culture play a crucial role in building vaccine confidence and combating misinformation. By leveraging their platforms and creativity, artists and cultural institutions can help promote vaccine uptake and public health.

The efforts of the arts and culture community are an important part of the collective effort to end the COVID-19 pandemic. By using the power of the arts in vaccine outreach, the CDC Foundation and our partners have delivered accurate, science-based information with real impact. The arts, with its ability to connect at an individual, community and societal level, will continue to allow us to tell the story of resilience and prepare for public health crises yet to come.



Appendix:

ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED

This alphabetical list includes organizations supported via the CDC Foundation.

Amplifier Foundation	Saint Louis Story Stitchers Artists Collective
Arts Alliance Illinois	Sing for Hope
Asian Media Access, Inc.	Somali Health Board
Blue Sky Sustainable Living Center	Spirit of Youth
Community Music School of Springfield	Springboard for the Arts
CONTRA-TIEMPO	Spy Hop Productions
Corner Health Center	Studio Two Three
Dad's Garage, Inc.	The University of Alabama
Hip Hop Public Health Inc.	Tidewater Arts Outreach
Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, Inc.	University of Georgia
Kids in the Spotlight, Inc	University of Houston
Migrant Clinicians Network	Vermillion Cultural Association
Museo de las Americas	West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology
Olympia Family Theater	Whiteaker Community Council
Out of Hand Theater	Wyoming Arts Council





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