



2021
TOGETHER
TOWARDS
HEALTH
REPORT

PREPARED BY

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Supporting trust, equity & accessibility in COVID response

Special thanks to the Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation for providing a “Together Toward Health” (TTH) project grant to Brighter Beginnings in the amount of \$127,000 to increase COVID-19 outreach and public education for vulnerable communities in East Contra Costa County. We are also grateful to Kaiser Permanente-Los Medanos Community Healthcare District for providing a \$10,000 grant in support of the TTH Project.

Project Background

In April 2021, Brighter Beginnings Family Health Clinics (BBFHC’s) collaborated with the East Contra Costa Community Alliance (ECCCA) to implement a COVID-19 grant award focused on East Contra Costa communities under the statewide “Together Toward Health” (TTH) initiative sponsored by the Public Health Institute.

The primary statewide objectives included:

1. Help California interrupt and reduce the community spread of COVID-19 by supporting and enhancing the capacity of state and local health agencies to perform testing, case finding, contact tracing and increasing vaccination rates amongst vulnerable populations.
2. Enhance health education, communication and public awareness for purposes of reducing the spread of COVID-19 amongst vulnerable and/or highly susceptible populations.
3. Facilitate new workforce development opportunities for culturally and linguistically competent Californians most impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Over a nine-month period between April – December 2021, the TTH East County project focused on increasing outreach, public education, and COVID-19 vaccination rates for vulnerable populations in the communities of Antioch, Oakley, Bay Point, Pittsburg, Brentwood, Concord, Knightsen, and Byron, amongst others. The targeted populations in these communities were Latinos who were predominantly Spanish-speaking, undocumented individuals, African-Americans, and the homeless population with an overall emphasis on low-income communities.

The purpose of this project was to ensure that these underserved populations who have been disproportionately impacted with increased exposure to COVID-19, due to lack of healthcare access and fact-based information were being reached and supported. We learned that different segments of vulnerable populations require different outreach strategies - that it is not a one size fits all approach.

From the start of the project, this awareness became clear from the ongoing feedback we received from the community leaders. Their feedback and insights helped us to further refine our approaches and strategies. As the project evolved, community leaders also discovered that a large majority of the targeted population were struggling with different social determinants of health, such as food insecurity, job loss or reduced work hours, housing and/or rental payment issues, along with childcare and transportation issues. Community leaders were able to provide resources for these needs, in addition to health related resources and referrals to community clinics.

The project also focused on providing exposure to community outreach health careers as part of a workforce development goal. To achieve this goal, we included training sessions and mentorship opportunities for the community leaders with experienced outreach professionals by utilizing the "Promotora" model that focuses on a culturally and linguistically competent approach. Additionally, two undergraduate students from CSU, East Bay were mentored on various components of the project.



Project Framework

An independent consultant was hired to manage the overall project and to assist with the development of the project structure that included a team approach. This individual managed communication between the leadership team and the partner organizations and tracked key components of the project to achieve progress. These responsibilities included coordinating weekly meetings with the TTH project leadership team and bi-weekly meetings with partner organization supervisors to discuss project items, share ideas and address challenges. The project manager also ensured that training and outreach materials were provided to the community leaders such as flyers and other referral hand-outs for healthcare and social services that addressed the social determinants of health residents were experiencing. The project manager also established a partnership with the County Ambassador Program responsible for countywide COVID-19 outreach resulting in an effective collaboration.

The theoretical framework for this project was grounded in uplifting the voices of underserved communities in East County, capturing their concerns regarding COVID-19 vaccines and providing fact-based information to encourage vaccination rates. By working with reputable organizations from East County who are viewed as "trusted messengers" in these communities, the TTH project helped to increase outreach in hard to reach communities and provide up-to-date information regarding COVID-19. These organizations were identified through the help of the East Contra Costa Community Alliance ([ECCCA](#)), an umbrella nonprofit alliance of 12 community-based organizations (CBO’s) and healthcare providers. All 12 of these organizations have a successful track record of providing essential community service and advocacy support to low-income and vulnerable populations.

ECCCA served as a valuable community resource to draw from in engaging CBO’s who have the critical community knowledge, wrap-around services and cultural competency to have the most effective impact for achieving the TTH Project goals. The participating partner organizations were Brighter Beginnings (the lead organization and grant recipient), Monument Impact, Village Community Resource Center, Mobility LABs, and Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa. These specific ECCCA organizations volunteered to participate given their overarching mission is to address a variety of challenges facing the East County region, as well as their staff who are culturally and linguistically competent about the target populations.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOU’s) were signed by each organization’s executive director outlining expectations, responsibilities and funding agreements. In turn, each organization selected varying numbers of individuals to serve as “community health leaders.” Funding from the TTH grant was allocated to each organization who provided stipends to the designated community leaders for the duration of the project to conduct outreach and public education about COVID-19 and vaccine information. They also provided referral resources to address healthcare access issues, along with other basic needs. The organizations also designated internal supervisors to provide oversight and guidance to community leaders to help ensure outreach progress and coordination of schedules.

The participating organizations and their mission are listed below.

Table 1. Partner Organizations & Mission Statement

Organization	Mission Statement	# of TTH Community Leaders
Brighter Beginnings <i>(Health clinics in Antioch, Richmond, and Oakland)</i>	To support healthy births and successful development of children by partnering with parents and helping to build strong communities.	2
Monument Impact <i>(Services in Concord and East County communities)</i>	To ensure that immigrants, refugees and low-income residents in Concord and surrounding communities have the voice, tools and relationships for an equitable share of the social and economic wealth in our region.	6

Organization	Mission Statement	# of TTH Community Leaders
Village Community Resource Center <i>(Services in Brentwood, Byron, and Oakley)</i>	Improve the quality of life for children and families in East Contra Costa County by promoting equity through education, wellness, leadership, organizing and partnerships.	*2
Loaves & Fishes of Contra Costa County <i>(Dining halls in Oakley, Pittsburg, and Antioch)</i>	Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa provides community based food programs and partner services that focus on basic needs for low-income and homeless individuals and families.	**1
RCF Connects/ Mobility LABs <i>(Antioch)</i>	Focuses on increasing mobility from poverty by providing a springboard up, rather than just a safety net. Focuses on effective measures of short-term predictors of mobility.	2
East Contra Costa Community Alliance (ECCCA) <i>(Pittsburg, Antioch, Oakley, Byron, Brentwood, and Discovery Bay)</i>	Improve the quality of life of all residents in East Contra Costa by recognizing the assets of community members, elevating their voices, and building a strong partnership with key stakeholders.	N/A

*One community leader chose to leave the project midway through the project.

**Provided a location for community organizations to table.

Profile of Community Leaders

Six of the twelve community health leaders were already skilled outreach liaisons, while for others this type of work was a first-time experience. For example, Monument Impact already has a very successful “*promotoras*” program that employs Latinas to conduct health outreach to monolingual Spanish-speaking residents. Other selected community leaders had never participated in this type of outreach, but lived in the communities in which outreach was being conducted and were viewed as “trusted messengers.”

Our TTH Project engaged community health leaders from East County who reflected the targeted population; 2/3 of community leaders were native Spanish-speakers and 1/3 were African-American. They were also members of the communities where outreach was conducted, and/or had similar cultural and socio-economic upbringings, were previously homeless, were single parents, and/or had GED’s or limited education after high school. The community leaders all had the community knowledge, the commitment, and the compassion to improve the public safety and lives of the residents who had been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 in common.

Sharing their life stories and reasons for getting vaccinated as they conducted their outreach was compelling on the hard-to-reach residents they touched. This connection allowed them to be viewed as “trusted messengers” which resulted in amplifying pandemic awareness, effectively increasing vaccination outcomes and decreasing the spread of COVID-19.

Community Leader Outreach Approach

Community leaders conducted outreach in neighborhoods, local shopping areas, and community events that the targeted population frequented and were paired up for safety purposes. It was projected the community leaders would make contact with about 100 individuals every two weeks. This number was also quantified to include each member of an entire family since several families also have multigenerational living situations due to financial constraints. The number of hours worked every two weeks were determined by the partner organization supervisor and the community leader. A survey was prepared for the community leaders to complete via smartphone or laptop as part of



their outreach with handouts available for referral services and other culturally and linguistically appropriate materials. Additional outreach services focused on providing referral resources to service providers who could assist with health access and other difficult needs residents were experiencing.

Community Leader Training

Community leaders participated in a two-hour training session co-led by Brighter Beginnings and Monument Impact staff who framed the session on the successful “*Promotora*” outreach model for the Spanish-speaking and immigrant community, along with participation from county outreach staff who focus on outreach to underserved communities countywide. The session was also simultaneously translated in Spanish and included an opportunity for participants to participate via zoom.

The powerpoint presentation highlighted community outreach and public safety techniques for field teams working with underserved communities. The presentation included messaging of current COVID-19 information, outreach techniques for approaching strangers, review of the community leader script for consistent and accurate messaging and overview of the outreach data survey. The format also allowed for Q&A throughout the session. The interactive two-hour session provided many opportunities for community leaders to share successful outreach approaches, along with personal experiences of how to approach difficult situations when interacting with residents who did not approve of the COVID-19 vaccine.

On a separate occasion, two specific safety training sessions were scheduled for the TTH community leaders - one in English and one in Spanish. Both sessions were led by County Ambassador staff utilizing researched facts and messaging in a powerpoint presentation provided to their ambassador team.

Collaboration with Contra Costa Ambassador Program

Effective community-based, grassroots outreach cannot be done in isolation. The TTH Project also developed a partnership with the County COVID-19 Ambassador Program established under the Public Health Department to provide public education, frontline outreach and access to vaccinations directly in underserved communities.

The collaboration between the East County TTH Project and the Ambassador Program provided an opportunity to effectively strategize and coordinate our resources to expand our outreach and impact to similar populations. For example, the two programs worked together to maximize outreach at elementary school sites to provide parents with COVID-19 information while they picked up their children after school. Ambassador staff also worked with County departmental staff to provide the TTH Project with census tract maps of our target areas helping us to strategically focus our outreach in neighborhoods that had higher COVID-19 rates. The partnership also gave the TTH community leaders an opportunity to mutually learn and share outreach knowledge, increase the number of informed residents and allowed us to share printed bilingual materials that are consistent with well-researched information.

The County had the ability to provide mobile units to key places in targeted underserved areas where five or more residents were willing to be vaccinated. The TTH supervisors and community leaders could coordinate with an identified County staff member if they had multiple individuals who were willing to receive vaccinations at one location. A successful example of this grassroots partnership involves the Ellis apartment complex in Concord. During a neighborhood outreach visit, TTH community leaders were informed by the apartment manager that several of the residents were open to being vaccinated. Many had transportation and child care situations to consider which presented difficulties in getting to community clinics or other locations where vaccinations were being provided. A TTH supervisor contacted an Ambassador Program liaison to facilitate a request for a mobile unit to be dispatched to administer vaccines on site.

This community/county coordination resulted in vaccinating a total of 42 residents with 12 of those residents receiving first-time doses – all in one location. The mobile unit also made follow-up appointments with residents to schedule second doses.



Partnership with California State University, East Bay

From August - October, 2021, two undergraduate students from CSU, East Bay majoring or minoring in Public Health participated in the project as “TTH Career Path Coaches.” Through this internship, they applied classroom knowledge into practice and gained new skills through the mentorship of the Brighter Beginnings Clinic Director and the Development & Communications Manager. The students spent between 5-10 hours a week supporting outreach events and creating health posts/blogs for the TTH project. They also participated in weekly meetings and provided their insight on barriers to accessing COVID-19 vaccinations through a student lens. They concluded their internship with a presentation on their experience during the Together Towards Health "Celebration of Partnership" event hosted on October 29, 2021.

Communication/Messaging

To conserve our budget costs wherever possible, the County ambassador team shared their COVID-19 and bilingual service referral flyers (English/Spanish) that were prepared by their marketing staff and provided multiple copies for our team’s use. However, we did also revise the flyers to adapt to our specific needs. Brighter Beginnings staff also developed informational flyers for the team’s use that included the TTH Project partner organization logos. The primary flyer was designed as a one pager. The front side of the flyer consisted of the partner logos, a short COVID-19 vaccination FAQ, and QR codes and contact information for locations providing vaccines. The back side of the flyer was a COVID-19 vaccine mythbusters page. The flyer was created at a fifth grade reading level in both English and Spanish. Resource flyers, such as the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and others that provided a listing of CBO’s with contact information were given to address the commonly identified needs community leaders were hearing in their outreach efforts.

We also developed an outreach script for the community leaders to guide them in providing consistent messaging in both English and Spanish.

Data Framework and Analysis

Between August 2021 through December 2021, the TTH community leaders utilized a digital survey consisting of 15 questions specifically developed for the TTH Project to collect data after each interaction or outreach event. The survey data documents that the community leaders participated in **339 outreach events/activities, and reached 9,204 individuals** across East Contra Costa County.

The TTH supervisors coordinated with the community leaders to regularly input the survey results into a Google Form where a TTH Project team member analyzed and recorded the data on a weekly basis. Community leaders also developed a list of outreach locations and included that information in a shared Google Calendar. Data was reviewed by the project team and with organization supervisors on a bi-weekly basis. Analyzing the data on a consistent basis helped to guide subsequent outreach activities, specifically by allowing community leaders to redirect efforts towards communities that were receiving less attention.

A designated leadership team member analyzed the data from the google survey form and the google calendar highlighting outreach locations to develop a snapshot of the outreach impact and activity over the duration of the project. To confirm reliability in the analysis, a second member of the leadership team reviewed raw data and steps taken to develop figures and charts for this project.

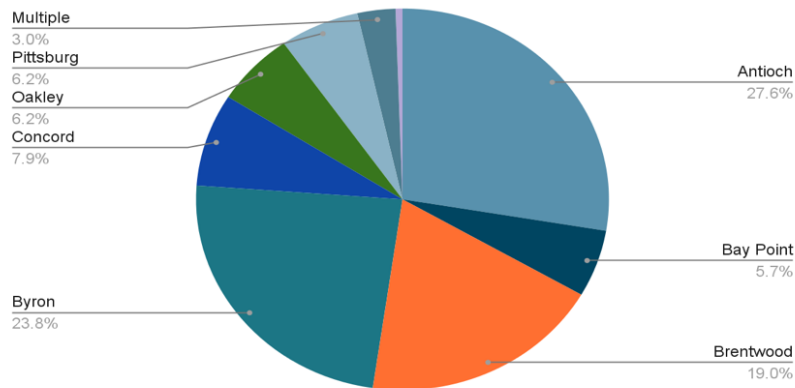
Below are tables and graphs that highlight the summarized data and all the outreach efforts in different categories.

Figure 1. Community Outreach Map



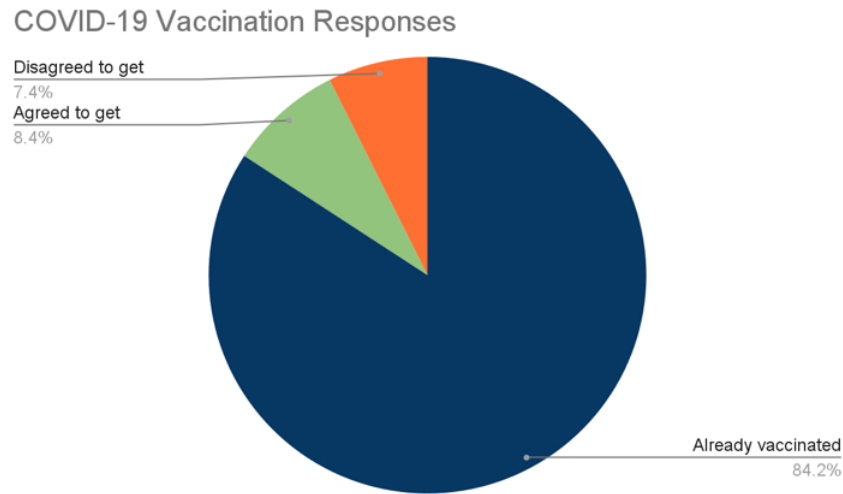
* Highlights the locations where TTH activities and events took place and were identified by the 12 community leaders and their supervisors. These locations are identified as “community assets” because our targeted population views them as valued resources.

Figure 2: Outreach Cities



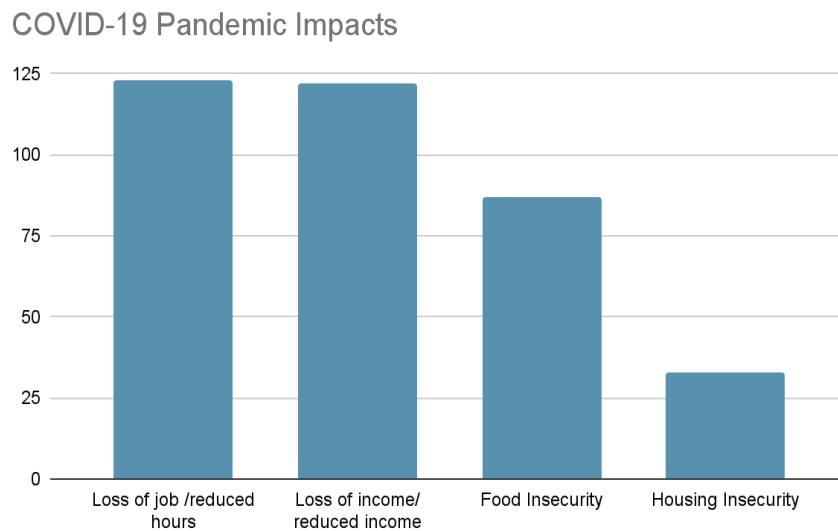
* Targeted cities included Antioch, Bay Point, Brentwood, Byron, Concord, Oakley, and Pittsburg. **The top three cities with high outreach frequency were Antioch (30.1%), Byron (26%), and Brentwood (20.6%)** {These cities were identified as cities with high rates of COVID-19 cases by the County during the time of data collection.}

Figure 3. COVID-19 Vaccination Responses



** Among the individuals who were willing to participate in answering COVID-19 related questions, 84.2% informed community leaders that they had already received at least one COVID-19 vaccine, 8.4% agreed to get one after speaking with a community leader, and 7.4% indicated they were not interested in getting the vaccine.*

Figure 4. COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts



** 39.7% (n=123) indicated job loss/ reduced hours; 39.4% (n=122) indicated income loss/reduced income; 28.1% (n=87) indicated food insecurity. Other concerns included support needed for mental health services, legal services (immigration status), and lack of utilities.*

Project Modifications

Overall, the TTH Project maintained a consistent and stable course throughout its duration despite occasional challenges from our partner organizations, in addition to changing state mask mandates and COVID-19 regulations and, at times, the lack of vaccine availability.

One of the challenges we encountered in the project involved one of the community leaders who left her position after her first day in the field due to a negative outreach experience regarding an aggressive resident. Two community leaders were tabling in front of a supermarket and one of them approached a shopper before entering the store to ask



the resident about COVID-19 and whether she had been vaccinated. The resident immediately became upset and resorted to displaying aggressive and confrontational behavior. The community leader felt violated and feared for her safety and ultimately chose not to continue with the project. For both safety and data gathering purposes, the project stressed that at least two community leaders should always be in the field together.

Through the cooperative collaboration we established with the County Ambassador team, we were able to team up with ambassadors to provide the support and safety net for community leaders when necessary. This relationship also evolved into a workforce learning experience for first-time community leaders who became aware of paid outreach positions under the County and gained expanded outreach knowledge from experienced ambassadors.

We also had not originally envisioned having a project manager when the project was conceived. However, that was the best decision we could have made. This individual provided the glue that held the entire project team together, supporting and clarifying issues and questions that emerged from the field. Overall this approach helped to provide a clear pathway and direction on the successful implementation of our project.

Importance of Flexible Funding

85% of our \$127,000 grant funding was allocated to the five partner organizations to pay the stipends of the community leaders and related project costs. The flexible funding allowed the East County TTH Project to leverage an existing community coalition of nonprofit organizations who are already providing services to the same underserved and low-income populations. The TTH Project was viewed as a complimentary addition to their organizational mission and gave their outreach staff an opportunity to grow professionally by enhancing their COVID-19 training and network expansion with the County ambassador team and the other community organizations. Through their supervisors, community leaders also had an opportunity for ongoing input in helping to shape the outreach efforts as the project continued to evolve.

Additional Project Funding

New clinic open houses coordinated by Brighter Beginnings provided opportunities to invite elected officials and community leaders to view the new facilities. The Antioch Mayor who also serves as the Executive Director of the Los Medanos Community Healthcare District (LMCHD) attended one of these events and became aware of Brighter Beginnings' administration of the TTH Project and its focus on COVID-19 outreach. The LMCHD had COVID-19 funding designated for outreach to some of the East County communities our TTH Project was targeting. Upon learning of our project focus and outreach efforts already underway, we were invited to submit a scope of work and our submission resulted in a \$10,000 contribution to the TTH project which was very helpful in being able to expand outreach hours for our community leaders.

Key Takeaways

Some of the key lessons learned from the TTH Project in East County that are essential to addressing issues in underserved communities:

- It is essential that community projects are financially resourced to provide operational and staffing funding; otherwise this falls on the shoulders of volunteers, which ultimately cannot be sustained in achieving effective solutions.
- It is critical to engage “trusted messengers” who represent the ethnic demographics of the vulnerable communities and neighborhoods being targeted and who have the cultural and linguistic competency to be effective in these outreach efforts.
- It is important to develop partnerships between philanthropic foundations, community-based organizations, governmental entities, and public/private organizations to work collaboratively in addressing issues that affect all these sectors.



This project demonstrated that by “working together” across sectors and diverse communities is the effective framework of a successful model to finding long-term solutions to some of the most pressing issues facing our vulnerable populations today.

Partner Organizations



Dr. Barbara Bunn McCullough, PhD - CEO
Doreen Moreno - TTH Project Manager/Consultant
Lucy Rios, MPH - Communications/Development Manager
Alison Hodge - Supervisor
Amy Ortiz - Community Leader
Lauren Price - Community Leader



Lorena Cruz - Supervisor
Elba Velasquez - Supervisor
Alma Jimenez - Community Leader
Azucena Torres - Community Leader
Azucena Virgen - Community Leader
Blanca Colin - Community Leader
Maria Palestino - Community Leader
Mayte Rubalcava - Community Leader



Deborah Robertson- Supervisor
Crecia (CeCe) Campbell- Community Leader



Karina Martinez - Supervisor
Tersila Blanco - Community Leader



Kacey Carterelliott - Supervisor
Ivelisse Narvaez - Community Leader
Rhonni Gibson - Community Leader



Solomon Belette, MBA - ECCCA Coordinator