Community Outreach and Engagement: Reimagined and Redefined in the time of COVID-19

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Methods

• Though CE pre-COVID was in person, CRLs were accustomed to working virtually with each other. Providing technical support for virtual meetings and collaboration came naturally as our first step.
• Next we worked with CBOs to adapt existing projects – reassessing focus, relevance and purpose.
• CE emphasized consolidating and sharing COVID information via websites, emails, virtual meetings and events.
• As CBOs began to understand their new needs and new environment CRLs received requests for identifying funding opportunities and writing grants.
• COVID health disparities and the coinciding emphasis on racial justice have underscored the need for improved understanding, support, and action around health equity. CRLs worked alongside CBOs to integrate health equity resources, education, and conversation into the work.
• An increased focus on providing and needing emotional support has added a new level of intimacy and connection to community relationships as we navigate national crises.

Results

COVID-19 Related Community Engagement Services by CRL Region

March 2020-October 2020

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Service</th>
<th>Central Oregon</th>
<th>The Gorge</th>
<th>Southern Oregon</th>
<th>North Coast</th>
<th>South Coast</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information sharing</td>
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<td>Program adaptation</td>
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<td>Grant support</td>
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<td>Virtual platform support</td>
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<td>Program development</td>
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Number of services

Projects addressing health equity (n=33)

March 2020 - October 2020

- 15% Projects with health equity component
- 85% Projects without health equity component

Conclusion

Advancing health research and improving health outcomes makes CE in research arguably more important now than ever. Thus, being able to find new and effective ways to engage with communities is essential to science and public health. The OCTRI Community Research Hub structure of CRLs has demonstrated to be effective at rapidly pivoting and supporting communities in responding to a national crisis.