



RESEARCH BRIEF

Acceptability and Usability of the Community Voices Program

BACKGROUND

Community Voices is a program where communities can voice their health concerns and bring research ideas to the forefront by submitting a request to be matched with academic researchers working on those health issues with the community. The Institute of Translational Health Sciences at the University of Washington and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center created this program to better align researchers and community members research ideas and to facilitate collaboration. This report presents the community's perspectives on the acceptability and usability of the Community Voices Program.



METHODS

We held 4 focus groups with representatives from community-based organizations. Two focus groups were with community-based organizations located in the Seattle Metropolitan area, and 2 focus groups were conducted in Yakima County. The focus groups were done from November 2018 to February 2019. To participate, the individuals needed to be employed at a community-based organization with interest in collaborating with academic researchers. Of the 42 scheduled, 31 individuals participated in the focus groups (18 rural, 13 urban).

Demographics of Participants (n=31)

Characteristics	n	%
Mean Age (SD)	48.4 (14.2)	
Gender		
Male	4	12.9
Female	27	87.1
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	19	61.3
Non-Hispanic	12	38.7
Insurance		
Private	21	67.7
Public	4	12.9
Other	7	22.6
Mean Education (SD)	16.2 (3.2)	
Organization Affiliation		
Clinic Organization	11	35.5
School	6	19.4
Social Service Agency	10	32.3
Other	11	35.5

RESULTS

Characteristics of the Focus Group Participants

Participants' mean (SD) age was 48.4 (14.2) years. Most were female (86.7%), and over half identified as Hispanics (61.3%) (Table 1).



Focus group participants thoughts on the Community Voices Program

Participants saw the Community Voices Program as a culture shift in collaboration and potentially creating successfully matched partnerships between the community and the researchers.

I think that's awesome. I wish we would have had this a while back, uh, because ... a lot of researchers come out and see if they can do this research here instead of seeing if it's a match with the community. ... this matching is... awesome and a way that you can get to know the researcher and see if [it will] benefit the people...

I think it's important for community organizations to partner with academic researchers to create... that link between the community and the researchers...help our community be part of [research] from the beginning and not just to have the researcher come and decide...the needs of our community.

Usability. Participants believed the program to be highly usable for a diverse group of community organizations and interest and demand for the program could build fast.

... there are so many different people within any type of organization at any level...that can be the voices to introduce this program to the community and get it really moving.

I think this would be phenomenal in our type of organization because it really gives [us] a voice... somebody to work with, with the knowledge on how to steer them and use their voice... to get the information that we need and to spread the word ...

Equitable partnership, compassion, and communication. CBOs shared that their aspirations of successful community-academic partnership are built on equity, compassion, trust and constant flow of communication.

... many times there is no equal partnership...from the budget to the decision-making, [and] everything that involves research...we have researchers coming to our community and say, "I want to do this project" and ... we have resources to put on the table, but ... they [researchers] should bring them to the table too [for] an equal partnership.

I need you to be able to talk with me...we're going to sit and have a meal together; this is a part of our culture and the way we begin to build that trust... being able to be humble enough to know how to approach us.

Once they get our trust, they ... become part of the community that we can't wait to see when you come over that hill. I really like that researchers are now seeing that the road comes [east] from Seattle just as much as it's going that way, and I'm really happy to know it goes both ways."

DISCUSSION

Both rural and urban CBOs found the Community Voices Program to be acceptable, and usable. They also provided input on the importance of building partnerships based on equity, trust, compassion and communication. Adaptation of the program was based on the findings from the focus groups, including training in building partnership agreements, roles and responsibilities, and communication plan. The revised program was launched in July 2019.

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