



Striving for Equity: Strategic Outreach Tactics



Action Brief

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Photo: Outreach workers from Universidad Popular and Asian Health Services

What Is Equity-Centered Outreach?

Communities impacted by complex social issues must be centered in solution strategies for policies and programs to achieve their desired impacts. Equity-centered outreach is a powerful approach for reaching vulnerable communities. It is about knowing who to reach and how best to reach them. Consider these practical suggestions to help you capitalize on engagement opportunities and increase outreach effectiveness, especially when targeting historically marginalized and underserved populations.

5 Building Blocks of Equitable Outreach

- 1. Trust.** Relationships are built on trust, which takes time, respect and consistency to develop. Know the community's history. Keep showing up. Watch your words (they matter). And when you make a promise, keep it.
- 2. Trusted messengers.** These are influencers, opinion-leaders and local champions who provide critical connections to their community. They speak the language, know the culture, and are experts through their own experiences. Get them involved. Invite them to help identify key needs and priorities. Encourage them to disseminate information and connect people to resources.
- 3. Location.** Identify places where people gather. Pay special attention to places that are familiar, convenient and trusted (e.g., churches, schools, barbershops).
- 4. Language.** Hire staff from within the communities you serve and have in-language material and interpreters available, as needed, so EVERYONE has access to the information, care and resources they need and are legally entitled to. Assistance in-person and over the phone is especially important in monolingual communities where digital access is limited.
- 5. Data.** Gather data and use it to select the most effective outreach tactics. Disaggregated data can help highlight disparities, identify hotspots, and pinpoint specific neighborhoods for targeted efforts. It can also confirm what you anecdotally know.

This **Action Brief** is a product of the series "**Learning Labs: From Discovery to Action.**" It is based on the second session, held on February 9, 2023, and features excerpts from a discussion with Arcela Nuñez-Alvarez (Ph.D., Co-Director, Universidad Popular), Pastor J. Edgar Boyd (Sr. Minister and CEO, First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Los Angeles), and Thu Quach (Ph.D., President, Asian Health Services). Recordings are in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and ASL.

What Partners are Saying and Doing

Who are trusted messengers and what role do they play in outreach?

Arcela: Individuals who are deeply rooted and connected historically, culturally, politically, spiritually to our community...These are individuals who have been at the forefront, who have really been given a gift, which is to be able to communicate, to engage, to respect and to understand one another.

Pastor Boyd: We were able to partner with clinics located in Black communities, those specialized in reaching hard-to-service or hard-to-reach populations and communities (there are many!)....They really taught us how important and how valuable they are to any kind of effort on the part of the Black community in getting the message of medical services out to them.

How have you used data to inform your equity work?

Thu: Often you see Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders lumped together. It really masks the disparities faced by specific communities...The disaggregated data showed that Pacific Islanders were dying more from COVID. They were getting COVID at higher rates often because they were on the frontlines working. In Alameda County, we were able to work with our partner, the Regional Pacific Islander Taskforce, and provide funding to them so that we had folks there [at COVID testing sites] who spoke the language. And the county did a lot of contact tracing to minimize the spread. They contracted to many CBOs, and we worked with their county team directly to contact COVID cases and contact their contacts...We were able to assemble a team that included Asian languages and several Pacific Islander languages. The stories of lives saved through that contact tracing was amazing.

Arcela: [When setting up vaccination sites] we were very intentional, strategic, and kind of surgical in our approach...We identified down to the actual location, being in a hotspot, being in a neighborhood that was accessible, that was walkable, welcoming, that had a respectful relationship with our community...Even now, our team continues to be at the sites...Community members still are showing up. They're coming to ask questions, to pick up COVID tests, masks, all these resources that they wouldn't have access to anywhere else. And we would not have been able to do this work without access to the data.

What's one thing you'd add to a playbook on equity-centered outreach?

Pastor Boyd: We are all players. Because we're so intricately involved, we all make up this thing...The interconnectedness of each of us becomes important to all the rest of us.

Thu: I look at the ecosystem of who helped, who is part of our community, who helped lift up our communities, and it was community-based partners. It was other communities knowing that we were also hurting. But it's also those who are in government...People we work with at the county and state level, they championed us from within...It's knowing the playbook and knowing everyone is a player and that everyone can help out and help out all of the communities and it's not a competition between communities. **It's not "us" versus "them." It's a "WE."**

The Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications,

housed within the Office of Planning and Research, initiates and executes campaigns related to the state's highest priority public awareness and community outreach efforts. The intent of a single state entity coordinating California's most important campaigns is so that the state can realize more inclusive and effective outcomes while preventing equity gaps in statewide outreach

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