



CommuniVax Implementation Toolkit



Introduction to the Toolkit

The CommuniVax Implementation Toolkit is a guide to help state and local jurisdictions set health equity efforts rapidly in motion, starting with a COVID-19 vaccination campaign that delivers systemic benefits to communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The toolkit is a product of CommuniVax, a coalition of community advocates, health experts, social scientists, and public sector leaders working together to strengthen state and local COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.

Comprised of 4 elements, the toolkit outlines what actions to take, how to develop an equitable strategy, where to seek financial support, and which partners to involve. These actions are interdependent. Taking action is not possible without proper funding and equal partners to support change. This toolkit contains strategies for making action plans, securing funding, and building enduring community alliances.

Rebalancing social and economic disparities is no longer an unfunded mandate: transformational federal support is now available and can be leveraged to rebalance social inequity and facilitate long-term recovery to improve the health and wellbeing of BIPOC communities.

The goal of the toolkit is to help local residents and groups lead their elected representatives to move from supporting debilitating health and social harms to enabling an equity-in-recovery movement. This toolkit maps out how to coproduce planning and implementation of community revitalization, create a successful equity funding strategy, and strengthen sustainable change through partnership across sectors.

This toolkit is one element of a group of implementation materials coming from CommuniVax. Additional elements will include more specific guidance for jurisdictions that need it, including an American Rescue Plan budget summary tailored for communities.

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Elements of the Toolkit

1

JumpStart Checklist

- What is it? This checklist is a guide for state and local jurisdictions to follow as they deliver the systemic benefits of COVID-19 vaccination to communities of color. Authorities should strive to reach as many of these objectives as possible through their COVID-19 vaccination programs.
- Who is it for? State and local elected officials in jurisdictions across the United States.

2

Equity Funding Strategy

- What is it? A high-level overview of how to strategize funding plans to be equitable, successful, and enduring. Having an equity funding strategy can put state and local entities on the path to completing items in the JumpStart Checklist.
- Who is it for? State and local elected officials and leaders of community- and faith-based organizations working together in COVID-19 response work.

3

Federal Funding for COVID-19 Community Work

- What is it? An overview of federal funding programs and mechanisms currently available in the United States for COVID-19 vaccination and long-term social recovery efforts.
- Who is it for? State and local elected officials and leaders of community- and faith-based organizations engaging in COVID-19 response work.

4

Partnering with Local Government

- What is it? A high-level overview on how communities can partner with local government to write successful funding applications.
- Who is it for? Leaders of community- and faith-based organizations, community activists, and others engaging in COVID-19 response work.

1. JumpStart Checklist

Introduction

As equitable vaccine programs proceed, partnering with frontline neighborhoods and institutions is essential. The CommuniVax Coalition is calling on state and local governments to rebalance power sharing with BIPOC residents, coproduce health equity actions, and ensure equitable decisions.

Specific objectives and sample actions in the checklist align with [CommuniVax's 5 principles for equity in vaccination](#): iteration, involvement, information, investment, and integration. Local government must act decisively to accomplish these objectives through COVID-19 vaccination programs, health equity building, and community recovery. Jurisdiction efforts must be adapted to advance COVID-19 vaccine uptake for BIPOC communities beyond short-term “rescue” assistance to an enduring resilience approach with lasting systemic benefits that reach beyond the pandemic.

To do this, establishing a durable infrastructure—anchored in the chief executive’s office, shaped by the health department, and fastened to community-based organizations—to partner with BIPOC communities and foster trust is crucial. With BIPOC individuals in decision-making and budget-authorizing positions, the community’s diversity can promote a healthier balance of power and collective recovery.



ITERATION - commitment, constancy, checking in, forward motion, marked advances

- Enact policy on the overall health and wellness of BIPOC communities, budgeting generously for health equity. Publicly acknowledge the history of BIPOC suffering nationally and reference any past or present harms in your city or state. Integrate these declarations into public communications on pandemic response and recovery.
- Convene and resource a health equity council to inform COVID-19 vaccination and recovery efforts and to identify opportunities to inform policy decisions and implementation for future health equity. Compensate BIPOC community members, leaders, and organizations for their time and effort in these and all other capacities mentioned in the checklist.
- Appoint an equity advisor on COVID-19 activities and postpandemic equity policies and program implementation. Coordinate community leaders, government leaders, and the media to interpret together the implications of vaccine data and to share findings and actions through participatory decision making on vaccination.

Click [here](#) for a detailed action plan on these 3 items.



INVOLVEMENT - partnership, joint problem-solving, representativeness, collaboration

- Convene BIPOC community advisory and/or planning groups to discuss and set priorities, share dilemmas and failures, and garner advice on COVID-19 vaccination initiatives.
- Enlist BIPOC residents to engage in an extended community dialogue that uses social asset mapping to connect committed, knowledgeable people and organizations.
- Engage public health, paid peer ambassadors, and community health workers to encourage BIPOC individuals to develop personal and family vaccination plans.



INFORMATION - communication, influencers, salience, cultural relevance, veracity

- Convey technical information about COVID-19 vaccines in basic language with appealing graphics/illustrations and design. Provide information in all major languages spoken in the jurisdiction to speed accessibility and message distribution.
- BIPOC communities can identify and connect with influential members to advocate for the COVID-19 vaccine. Influential members include cultural leaders, political leaders, faith leaders, ethnic grocery store owners, family matriarchs, meatpacking plant supervisors, community health workers, ethnic radio personalities, BIPOC-serving institution faculty and students, and BIPOC healthcare practitioners and their associations.
- Leverage social media campaigns, webinars, and virtual meetings to amplify BIPOC voices. Integrate with low-tech outlets—such as newspapers, public service announcements, church newsletters, and flyers—to share information and invite input from people without access to new technologies. Compensate local door-to-door campaigners, along with local poets, muralists, and singers to spread accurate information and counterbalance misinformation.



INVESTMENT - financing, tangible goods, human capital, dividends, appreciation

- Employ and compensate BIPOC community members in COVID-19 recovery efforts (both planning and implementation) and award contracts to BIPOC-owned firms. Review city, county, and state contracts to identify BIPOC-owned firms, businesses, and providers for involvement in the vaccination program and postpandemic community restoration. Employ community navigators at a living wage to give insight and input on BIPOC outreach.
- Secure other appropriate forms of public capital—such as community block grants and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) public assistance—for the COVID-19 vaccination program and other recovery efforts. Develop local procurement processes to increase grants’ eligibility with government and philanthropic funders. More on this in later sections of the toolkit.
- Adapt contracting mechanisms—such as securing a fiscal intermediary to convey funds promptly, amending existing contracts to cover COVID-19 services, and executing new memoranda of understanding for COVID-related activities—to finance community- and faith-based organizations and community health workers with cultural and linguistic roots in BIPOC communities.



INTEGRATION - big picture, whole person, holism, systems thinking, wellness

- Implement a holistic approach to recovery, jumpstarted by COVID-19 vaccination efforts—a health-in-all-policies initiative. Align public agencies around a “whole person” model of recovery to meet BIPOC communities’ self-identified needs and to multiply the benefits of vaccination encounters. Use vaccination visits and community health workers to build opportunities to address other needs within the social and health welfare system, such as chronic disease care, daycare, and housing.
- Convene a cross-sector council of stakeholders to assess the compound adverse effects of the pandemic—such as trauma, lingering medical needs, economic displacement, and disrupted educations—and to develop plans for addressing these issues. Establish public timelines and milestones to act on community concerns along with health and social disparities, and report progress regularly to demonstrate commitment to a lasting and transformational recovery.

Sample Detailed Action Planning

Below is step-by-step guidance to implement some of these recommendations:

- Enact policy on overall health and wellness of BIPOC communities, budgeting generously for health equity. Publicly acknowledge the history of BIPOC suffering nationally and reference any past harms in your city or state. Integrate these declarations into public communications on pandemic response and recovery.
 - Identify BIPOC community- and faith-based organizations and trusted partners.
 - In collaboration with the Office of Community Services, identify community- and faith-based organizations, community leaders, and influencers such as religious leaders, community influencers, and historically Black colleges and universities.
 - Convene a listening session with the group to identify the most important issues.
 - Conduct a joint review of current health and wellness policies.
 - Convene the group to identify and discuss current gaps in policy.
 - Co-design and develop an action plan including short-, middle-, and long-term actions to address identified gaps.
 - Secure required funding to implement gap remediation.
 - Co-develop an outreach and communications strategy that acknowledges past sufferings and includes a go-forward plan for remediation.
 - Execute communication plan and opportunities to strengthen ties within the community.

- Convene and resource a health equity council to inform COVID-19 vaccination and recovery efforts and to identify opportunities to inform policy decisions and implementation for future health equity. Compensate BIPOC community members, leaders, and organizations for their time and effort in these and all other capacities mentioned in the checklist.
 - Convene BIPOC community leaders, community- and faith-based organizations, and partners to launch search for appointees to the council.
 - Conduct community listen, learn, and act sessions on a broad range of policy, history, and practice issues.
 - Develop a policy and action platform for the council to complete in a 12-month period.
 - Appoint the health equity council members and set 2-year renewable appointments for their tenure.

- The council should identify 3 specific and feasible goals on achieving health equity action in city departments that include public health, housing, community services, and economic development.
- Develop a monthly action update to the community, mayor, and city council.
- Appoint an equity advisor on COVID-19 activities and postpandemic equity policies and program implementation. Coordinate community leaders, government leaders, and the media to interpret together the implications of vaccine data and to share findings and actions through participatory decision making on vaccination.
 - Designate an equity advisor, a person representing the community's diversity, in the mayor's/city manager's office as a direct report to the city's chief executive for initial 2-year appointment.
 - Develop the equity advisor's portfolio to include activities that span public health, housing, community services, economic development, and finance.
 - Assign a staff member to support the equity advisor, include line items in the departmental budget, and ensure cross-departmental authority to enact equity measures.

2. Equity Funding Strategy

Developing an equity funding strategy should be done in tandem with pursuing federal funding opportunities for COVID-19 community work. This section of the toolkit provides guidance on actions that leaders can take to engage the right partners, stay current on funding opportunities, and ensure successful funding applications.

- Partner with allies in local nonprofits, higher education, the private sector, and multiple levels of government. This should help develop and access social networks to support funding measures, budget allocations, and new equity revenues.
- Execute a memoranda of understanding among partner organizations pursuing equity action.
- Stay current on government policy developments: register for all public outreach on available grant funding application processes and proposal deadlines.
- Check policy and funding updates from the National League of Cities, the National Association of Counties, and other advocacy groups for urban and rural communities.
- Contact the state and county offices of emergency services and federal agency grants teams. Invite them to visit local partners and community leaders to present equity planning efforts and funding needs.
- Showcase equity initiatives for state and federal agencies, such as FEMA and US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and all potential funders at quarterly briefings with the community's state and federal legislative delegations to ensure the support of elected representatives.
- Schedule community equity tours to demonstrate the need for funding and resources.
- Attend meetings of funding agencies and organizations, and establish a jurisdictional presence and speak at meetings about the jurisdiction's equity action work.
- Track relevant state and federal equity, resilience, and recovery legislation, and budget processes to identify potential equity funding. Submit comments through the jurisdiction's governing body and legislative representatives on regulations and funding allocations.
- Encourage inclusion of equity policies and actions as eligible funding activities in the development of state regulations for tax-funding measures.

3. Federal Funding for COVID-19 Community Work

Overview

In March 2020, the US government declared the COVID-19 pandemic to be a federal disaster nationwide, including the District of Columbia and Tribal nations and territories. The COVID-19 Emergency Declaration covered over 90,000 units of local government. FEMA is typically the agency on disaster response and a specified period of postdisaster recovery; HUD is the long-term recovery lead. States and federal regional hubs manage most of the disaster response grant funding and facilitate funding flow from federal agencies to local jurisdictions.

The CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) and HEROES (Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions) acts and American Rescue Plan provide significant support for pandemic relief and response. Using these funds to provide community services through local jurisdictions may be more easily accomplished than using conventional disaster assistance programs. The American Rescue Plan provides billions of dollars for community, state, and national pandemic response and recovery support. The National League of Cities has [resources](#) on the local allocation of this funding.

The following is an overview of the process for submitting a public assistance grant application for funding through FEMA or with local government. Successfully securing an agreement, contract, or grant depends on developing a support strategy to ensure success.

FEMA Funding Opportunities

The Stafford Act is the umbrella statute for FEMA's disaster readiness, response, and recovery authorities, programs, and funding. Generally speaking, FEMA has broad authority under the Act to address the impact of disasters and to coordinate with other federal agencies and departments.

FEMA Public Assistance Program

- Emergency Protective Measures in the Public Assistance Program address COVID-19-related activities such as public communications and education, community-based test sites, alternate care sites, food distribution, and staffing for vaccination sites.
- A qualifying attribute for community organizations can be that their services are unique to this particular, unprecedented federal disaster.
- Programs and activities are administered via a reimbursement process that FEMA manages and calls for meticulous recordkeeping by the funded organization.

Pathways to Disaster-Related Funding

The following options are ways to seek Public Assistance Program funds. These call for a strong partnership with local government as the fiscal agent for FEMA monies. If a community organization has an existing contract or service agreement with the jurisdiction, a simple contract amendment and pandemic-related scope of work can be developed and approved. Local governments typically have expedited approval processes in place during the response phase of a federally declared disaster.

1. Apply directly for FEMA Public Assistance Program funds as a community- and faith-based or nonprofit organization. Here are the initial steps to take:
 - As soon as a federal disaster declaration is published and/or in effect, monitor announcements on federal and state disaster agency websites and focus on links to the disaster response grants.
 - Start with: <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public/apply>
2. Establish a new contract or memorandum of understanding as a service provider with the local jurisdiction; the local jurisdiction then pays the organization using Public Assistance Program funding or reimbursement (through an existing grant).
3. Use an existing vendor contract with the local jurisdiction and get paid to provide services that the jurisdiction seeks for community pandemic-related response and recovery work. The jurisdiction can fund such contracts via existing Public Assistance Program grant monies.

4. Partner with Local Government

All pathways to disaster-related funding require strong partnerships with local government to be successful. Follow the prime directive to connect and engage. Stakeholders ranging from neighborhood leaders, community- and faith-based organizations, city councilors, city managers, and county administrators must work together as equal partners and advocates.

- Work together, with the community leading the way. Informed residents invested in safeguarding community health and diversity and ensuring economic vitality can galvanize political officials.
- Enlist community stakeholders and active local groups. Build on community initiatives and link with other local initiatives to anchor equity in daily community life.
- Cultivate local government allies. Local boards and commissions, along with the mayor and city council/boards of supervisors, authorize budget decisions, approve grant applications, and develop new revenue streams.
- Develop a fiscal plan to ensure equity implementation; a multisectoral approach is practical and provides a range of sources to leverage local funds.
- Enact participatory budget processes. Private and public discussions about community disparities can lead to solid results in community confidence and partnership.
- Develop a briefing plan for senior decision makers to establish program and funding priorities, and work with the city/county executive team to craft recommendations to present to the jurisdiction's governing body.

The CommuniVax Coalition is an alliance of community advocates, social scientists, and public health experts working to strengthen national and local COVID-19 vaccination efforts in the United States by elevating the voices of people of color, advancing health equity aims, and carrying community-driven public health into the future. Local teams were engaged in the development of this toolkit. For more CommuniVax resources, see <https://www.communivax.org/>.

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