

–PRELIMINARY–

# Vaccine Confidence Fund Insights Report

MAY 2022



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# FOREWORD

Understanding the drivers of vaccine confidence and, ultimately, increasing uptake, have been a focus of scientists, governments, and healthcare providers alike, dating all the way back to the first smallpox vaccines. Social media has become a valuable tool for the global health community to listen, understand, and more uniquely address the drivers of vaccine confidence at a scale not previously seen. If properly leveraged, we believe that online platforms can play an increasingly meaningful role in improving access to information, both for COVID-19 and beyond. Realizing this opportunity will require a whole-of-society approach, both by platforms and by other health and media stakeholders. It also requires us to effectively learn from what is working, so that we can replicate and scale these approaches, as well as learn what is not working, so that we can further innovate and approve.

This new pathway to building trust and increasing vaccine confidence is the focus of the Alliance for Advancing Health Online (AAHO). As the first initiate of the AAHO, the Vaccine Confidence Fund (VCF) and its preliminary report seeks to share initial insights from 15 of the 33 grantees, to rapidly increase knowledge in the global health community and beyond. We feel it is important to share the preliminary findings from this report widely so that marginalized and underserved populations, and the world at large, can benefit from this research.



Heidi Larson, PhD, Head of the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

## FUNDERS NOTE

by Kang-Xing Jin, Head of Health, Meta Platforms Inc. and Michael D. Fornwall, Associate Vice President, Vaccination Confidence, Merck & Co. Inc., Rahway NJ, USA (known as MSD outside the United States and Canada) ("MSD")

When Meta and MSD announced the Alliance for Advancing Health Online (AAHO) last June, we were excited to come together with key global health partners and stakeholders around the world with a mutual goal of leveraging social media to advance health outcomes. Today, we are delighted to see preliminary results from some of the Vaccine Confidence Fund's grantees. We are excited to learn from these results in our continued effort to better understand how social media and digital platforms can be used to positively impact people and communities around the world.

VCF is playing a crucial role in leveraging innovative research to demonstrate new ways in which social media platforms can play a positive role in societal health. It is about listening and understanding, engaging and educating, and then measuring impact. This new medium presents a multitude of opportunities, as well as challenges. As we still have much to learn, it also demands new science and novel approaches. Overall, VCF seeks to expand our collective knowledge of the role that social media can play in increasing vaccine confidence, and it comes not a minute too soon.

*The Vaccine Confidence Fund is managed by Global Impact and financially supported by Meta and Merck & Co. Inc., Rahway NJ, USA (known as MSD outside the United States and Canada) ("MSD"). Meta and MSD did not participate in the selection of grant recipients.*



▲ **VAXXED AND PROUD**

Participant shows off their vaccination card at a promotional event held by Mali Health 22/2/2022 in the community of Sabalibougou in Bamako, Mali.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been more than two years since the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. *Two years in, we have more information about COVID-19, its effects, and how to combat it (especially through highly effective vaccines), but the world is still at risk as new and more transmissible variants continue to emerge and the prevalence of conflicting information and uncertainty about the future continues to pervade our societal consciousness. Omicron took the world by surprise in November 2021 and now its BA.2 subvariant is rapidly spreading around the globe.*

The pandemic has had a huge impact on global health—and not just because of the direct effects of COVID-19. People *have* now experienced two years of [lessened physical activity](#) due to extended lockdowns and larger numbers working from home. People have missed annual check-ups with their general physicians or [ignored worrisome symptoms](#) because of limited access to health services or the fear of contracting COVID-19 at the doctor’s office. The world’s overall health, both physical and [mental](#), has suffered tremendously because of the pandemic and its many ripple [effects](#).

The biggest tool in our toolbox to fight COVID-19 and regain some semblances of normalcy are the many vaccines that have been developed and distributed around the world (albeit in a widely inequitable manner). Large populations still lack access to those vaccines and there are hundreds of millions of people who doubt the science and refuse to get vaccinated due to the prevalence of conflicting information.

There are many issues currently impacting [vaccine confidence](#), including continued debates on infection-induced versus vaccine-induced immunity; the public perception that COVID-19 is “over” and people are ready to start living normally; a myth about “Vaccine Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome”; and parental disappointment that vaccines for those under five years old still aren’t available.

One way to address issues associated with vaccine confidence and uptake is the use of social media.

“Social media is a powerful, constantly evolving tool that is shaping opinions and behaviors across the globe,” said Heidi Larson, PhD, Head of the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Alliance for Advancing Health Online (AAHO) collaborator.

**“Social media is a powerful, constantly evolving tool that is shaping opinions and behaviors across the globe.”**

–Heidi Larson, PhD, Head of the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Just under half of the world population, or 3.47 billion people, use social networks<sup>1</sup>. Millennials and Gen Zers are [“the most active online... averaging five digital platforms daily.”](#) Because the global population spends so much time online, it’s only natural that people seek out health information, and COVID-19 information, in the digital spaces they frequent. In fact, [“nearly 90% of all adults in the USA search for health information on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media sites.”](#)

With the above in mind, the Alliance for Advancing Health Care Online (AAHO) formed as an initiative to advance public understanding of how social media and behavioral sciences, can be leveraged to improve the health of communities around the world.

AAHO launched the [Vaccine Confidence Fund](#)<sup>2</sup> (VCF) its inaugural initiative, in June 2021. VCF’s goal is to support targeted research that addresses the primary research question of how best to utilize social media and online platforms to better understand and increase vaccination confidence and uptake both in the context of the current pandemic and beyond.

VCF is focused on supporting research that increases access and equity regarding vaccination confidence and uptake, particularly among historically marginalized or excluded communities globally.

The Fund’s key principles ([see Appendix](#)) are equity, community engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, external validity, actionable focus, and transparency and information sharing.

VCF sought applicants from interdisciplinary teams and cross-sectoral partnerships to develop truly transformative proposals that would address critical research gaps with creative solutions. Thirty-three teams received grants averaging around US\$220,000 for a total of over US\$7 million disbursed. The Alliance for Advancing Health Online is excited to share the VCF’s preliminary report that provides an overview of 15<sup>3</sup> grantees’ projects, key findings, and more detailed results.

## AAHO’s Mission

AAHO’s mission is to bring together actors from the technology, health, global development, and academic sectors to advance understanding of how social media and online engagement can best be utilized to better understand and increase health and resiliency of communities around the world. Given the urgency COVID-19 created, the first area of focus is on vaccine confidence, but longer-term, the AAHO will be looking across health topics more broadly with a stated goal of driving positive health action offline.



1 “44.6% of the total world population uses social networks.” eMarketer, November 2021. *Social Network Users Worldwide, 2021–2025 Forecast*

2 Meta and Merck & Co., Inc. are financially sponsoring the Fund, which is independently managed by [Global Impact](#).

3 In living AAHO’s core principle of rapid dissemination, this version of the report, released in May 2022, reflects initial insights from 15 of the 33 grantees that received funding through the inaugural round of grantmaking from the Vaccine Confidence Fund. A full version of the report including insights from all 33 grantees will be released in July 2022.

## BACKGROUND

The past two years have brought an unprecedented shift in the way we see the world and engage with others. The global COVID-19 pandemic has caused a reduction in face-to-face communication and an increased reliance on social media for sharing memes, news, and information about health and politics. Nowhere have we seen this more than in the conversation around COVID-19 and the vaccines that have been produced to combat its spread<sup>4</sup>. The pandemic has had a huge impact on global health—and not just because of the direct effects of COVID-19. People have experienced more than two years of lessened physical activity due to extended lockdowns and larger numbers of people working from home. People have missed routine immunizations and annual check-ups with their general physicians or ignored worrisome symptoms because of limited access to health services or the fear of contracting COVID-19 at the doctor’s office. The world’s overall health has suffered tremendously because of the pandemic and its many ripple effects.

The biggest tool in our toolbox to fight COVID-19 and regain some semblances of normalcy are the many vaccines that have been developed and

distributed around the world (albeit in an inequitable manner). Large populations still lack access to those vaccines and there are hundreds of millions of people who have doubts or anxieties and refuse to get vaccinated due to the prevalence of conflicting information<sup>5</sup>. So, what role does social media play? And, what insights can we derive from a more detailed exploration into data points and trends that can help individuals, researchers, healthcare practitioners, and governments make better choices about their own personal health, support decision making for others and better understand concerns?

VCF is the first initiative of the Alliance for Advancing Health Online (AAHO). Guided by the principles of equity, interdisciplinary collaboration, actionable focus, community engagement, external validity, and transparency and information sharing, it sought to explore the primary research question:

**“How can social media<sup>6</sup> be best utilized to understand and increase vaccination confidence and uptake?”**

- 
- 4 Molla, Rani. “How Coronavirus Took Over Social Media: The Pandemic Quickly Became One of the Most Talked-About Things on the Internet” Recode, 12, March 2020”, <https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/3/12/21175570/coronavirus-covid-19-social-media-twitter-face-book-google>. “Sprinklr counted a record nearly 20 million mentions of coronavirus-related terms on March 11 [2020]. For context on just how big that number is, mentions of the newly canceled NBA games were under 2 million and mentions of Trump were about 4 million on that day.”
- 5 Hannah Ritchie, Edouard Mathieu, Lucas Rodés-Guirao, Cameron Appel, Charlie Giattino, Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, Joe Hasell, Bobbie Macdonald, Diana Beltekian and Max Roser (2020)—“Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)”. Published online at [OurWorldInData.org](https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus). Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus> “As of 1:46 PM on 4/14/22, 11.4 billion doses of COVID vaccines have been given, 4.6 billion people are “fully vaccinated,” and 59% of the world is “fully vaccinated.” [“64.8% of the world population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. 11.42 billion doses have been administered globally, and 12.23 million are now administered each day. Only 14.8% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose.”](#)
- 6 The Fund’s definition of social media is meant to be broad and inclusive. Our social media definition includes: traditional social media, (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, SnapChat); search engines (e.g., Google, Bing, etc.) and other online platforms that gather user data and micro-target users; and online chatbots. This Fund recognizes that social network data analyses and other big data analytical techniques may also be leveraged as analytical methods in prospective research proposals.



## VACCINE CONFIDENCE FUND OVERVIEW



### EQUITY

Focus on **historically marginalized or excluded populations globally** given the significant barriers those populations experience



### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Proactively and **authentically partner with communities they are working on** throughout project/research life cycle



### INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

Encourages **interdisciplinary collaboration and cross-fertilization of ideas** from non-traditional disciplines



### EXTERNAL VALIDITY

Surface insights that are more **universally valid and potentially scalable**



### ACTIONABLE FOCUS

**Immediately actionable and valuable** for the global health community



### TRANSPARENCY AND INFORMATION SHARING

Rapidly **disseminating insights, data, and learning as public goods** to contribute to ongoing or future vaccination campaigns and to advance the global agenda

With nearly 300 applications, the interest in exploring this new and growing area of research was clear.

More and more communities are relying on social media as a significant source of information about COVID-19 vaccines. With the scale of these digital and online platforms, it is vital that we improve our understanding of the role these platforms can play and effectively harness their capabilities to increase vaccination confidence and contribute to vaccine decision-making. The VCF is focused on supporting research to effectively increase vaccination confidence, particularly among historically marginalized or excluded communities globally.



### ▲ CAPTURING COMMUNITY VOICES

A Mayan health researcher interviews a study participant for the UCSF project exploring trusted messengers and social networks in indigenous communities in Guatemala.

# VCF RESULTS

## VCF DEVELOPMENT AND SELECTION

To identify a robust and diverse cohort of grantees to receive support through the VCF, the fund launched an open application process in the summer of 2021. The [VCF RFP](#) was open for eight weeks from June 10 to August 6, 2021, and in that time, received 281 applications from 48 countries across six continents.

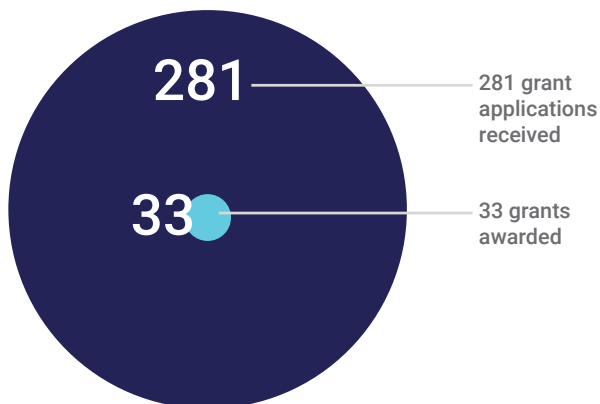
Each of the 281 applications received was reviewed in a preliminary screening by the Fund Manager. The top third advanced to one of thirteen Advisory Council members based on their respective expertise for a second round of review, in addition to further review by the Fund Manager.

Finally, of those applications, 33 grantees (11.7% of total applications) were chosen based on the defined criteria by an independent panel of expert reviews from the VCF Advisory Council and the Fund Manager.

Each application was scored against twelve criteria and received a score of 1, 3, or 5 in each category with a maximum total score of 60. Criteria included:

- Importance
- Alignment
- Equity
- Experience
- Feasibility
- Novelty
- Engagement
- Urgency
- Collaborative partnerships
- Applicability
- Impact
- Budget

## GRANTEE SNAPSHOT



NUMBER OF GRANTEEES

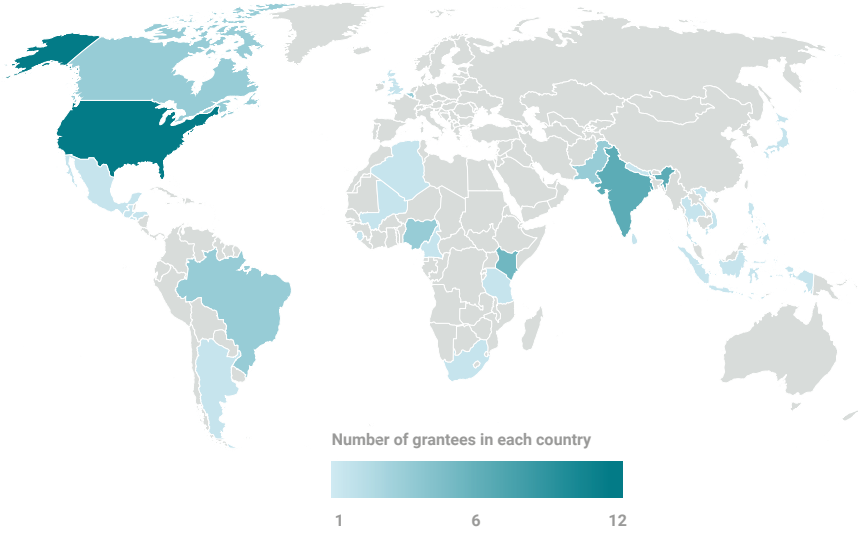
## AMOUNT AWARDED

Over

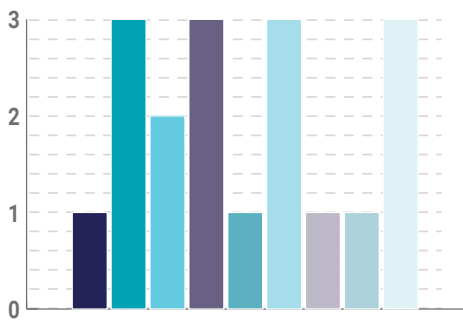
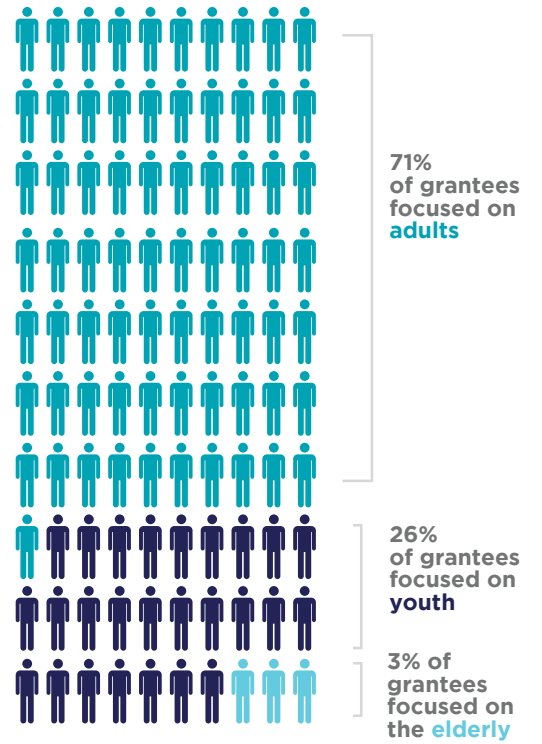
**\$7.3 million**

disbursed to the  
33 grantees

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION



## AGE



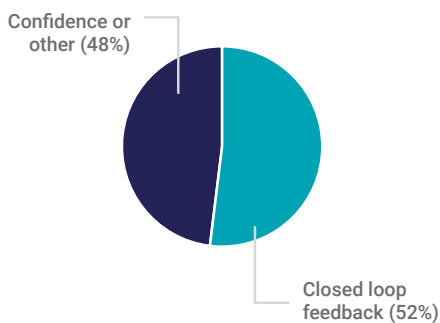
## SPECIAL POPULATION FOCUS

- 01 Black
- 02 Indigenous
- 03 Health Workers
- 04 Pregnant and post-partum women
- 05 Latinx
- 06 Women
- 07 Persons with Disabilities
- 08 LGBTQ+
- 09 Other

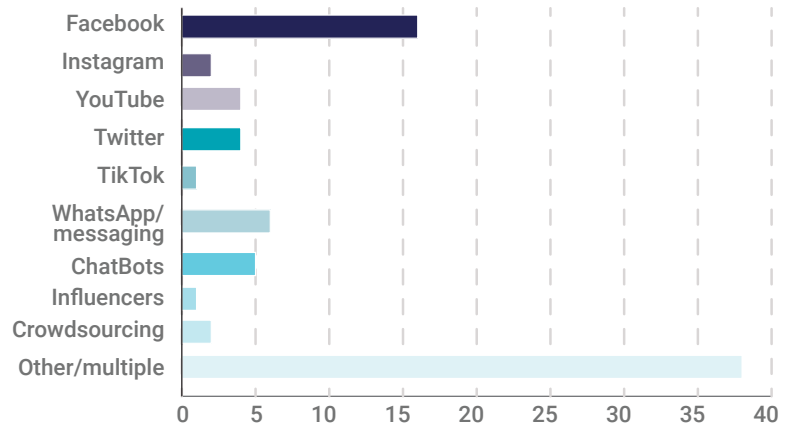
## ECONOMY



## MEASUREMENT



## TECH PLATFORMS



<b>CONTENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Importance:</b> Does the proposal contain a coherent and compelling problem statement?</li> <li>✓ <b>Alignment:</b> Do the proposal's research question(s) and research methods align with the Fund's primary research question?</li> <li>✓ <b>Equity:</b> Does the proposal aim to support focus communities, or address underlying drivers of disparities, especially in trying to achieve health equity?</li> <li>✓ <b>Experience:</b> Does the proposed research team have a proven track record of expertise in the proposed fields of study?</li> </ul>
<b>APPROACH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Feasibility:</b> Are the proposed research methods technically and methodologically feasible given time and cost constraints (see more details below)? Do the proposed research methods adequately and appropriately consider privacy – specifically do the methods design for user consent?</li> <li>✓ <b>Novelty:</b> Is the proposed line of inquiry novel and does it have the potential to fill an important knowledge gap?</li> <li>✓ <b>Engagement:</b> Does the proposed research incorporate engagement with the focus community before, during, and after the research?</li> <li>✓ <b>Urgency:</b> Does the approach reflect the immediate circumstances of the targeted community? Are there any risks that those circumstances may change in the immediate future?</li> <li>✓ <b>Collaborative partnerships:</b> Does the proposed research team reflect interdisciplinary areas of expertise? Does the proposed research team pursue partnerships across sectors/disciplines to generate bold and innovative solutions?</li> <li>✓ <b>Applicability:</b> Can the anticipated research results be used to shape and inform practical public health and technology interventions in the short-term? How can the results of this research be applied in communities beyond those studied?</li> </ul>
<b>MEASUREMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Impact:</b> Does this proposal articulate clear measures and their pathway to immediate or potential impact (i.e., vaccine uptake)? If impact data is not available (due to the project timeline), are there interim results that can be tracked?</li> </ul>
<b>BUDGET</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Budget:</b> Does the proposal include a budget and clear justification for key budget items?</li> </ul>

### ▲ SELECTION CRITERIA

Each application was scored against 12 criteria and received a score of 1, 3, or 5 in each category with a maximum total score of 60.

Grantees were informed of their selection in September 2021 and began work on their research projects shortly thereafter. Mid-term reports were submitted in December 2021 and presented to the Advisory Council, and final reports (for the majority of grantees) were submitted in March and April 2022. The limited window of time for grantees to implement their projects (less than six months) was by design, with the intention to get information out to the broader community as quickly as possible and to continue to iterate and build on the work. This report represents initial findings from some of the 33 grantees. Additional details will follow via a final VCF Insights report, to be published online in the coming months.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Customizing messaging:** Messages tailored to the intended audience have a higher chance of resonating. Larger mass information campaigns that focus on general information may be less effective than engagement activities and messages tailored for specific geographies and communities (e.g., language and cultural context). This finding has the potential to impact how government and healthcare providers fund and share information intended to increase vaccine confidence and decrease vaccine hesitancy.
- **Successfully reaching populations:** It is an exciting new way to engage many people for the betterment of their health. Social media presents a key opportunity to share tailored information, provide a neutral platform to discuss and engage around vaccines and vaccinations, and tap into the social power of influencers and trusted members of the community. As noted, these factors are key to impacting perceptions and behaviors around vaccines. At the same time, recruiting study participants and reaching the specific populations can sometimes be tricky. Continuing to expand our understanding of how best to harness social media for global health will be key when delivering appropriate messages to marginalized and underserved communities.
- **Providing safe spaces:** Many of the demographics studied, especially those who are vaccine hesitant, or in a position of responsibility (i.e., parents and healthcare workers), are more likely to engage in online conversations in small, trusted groups. Many of the studies in this report noted that either providing a “safe” online space to discuss concerns among the vaccine hesitant, gaining access to trusted physicians or medical professional who could answers specific questions, or being able to engage on platforms with other individuals from similar demographic backgrounds (i.e., mothers) often had significant impact in increasing vaccine confidence.
- **Engaging trusted voices:** A key finding was the importance of trusted community members. Hearing representations of themselves in communications was key for many communities. For many of the communities participating in the studies, there was mistrust of the government and health organizations. However, what the research does highlight is that while there was not necessarily consistency in who those trusted sources were, identifying them and having them play a role in sharing information and engaging the community was likely to have a positive impact on vaccine confidence. Finally, the influence of families, as well as concern for their health and wellbeing were common drivers both for and against vaccination.

“In the context of polarization and vaccine mandates, discussing COVID-vaccination has become problematic among healthcare workers in Belgium. Creating safe spaces for dialogue among healthcare workers is a multi-faceted effort that requires adapting to the changing pandemic context, offering multiple modes of communication, having active dialogue moderation, preventing an echo chamber of misinformation, and putting aside the aim of increasing vaccination uptake to promote trust.”

– [ITM Antwerp](#)

## DETAILED FINDINGS

This version of the report is the preliminary release. A full version including synthesis of the detailed findings of all 33 grantees will be shared July 2022. For details of the 15 completed projects, please see [grantee overviews](#).

## PROCEDURAL INSIGHTS

A key purpose of the und was to identify and share learnings from the process side from those who were conducting the research in order to help expedite and hone future projects. The procedural insights detailed below are some of the common learnings from research teams. For more detailed insights see the individual [grantee overviews](#).

### COLLABORATING WITH TRUSTED SOURCES

Whether engaging with local organizations that already have connections in the community, or using familiar platforms, researchers found they had greater success in engaging communities when community representatives on the research team. This was particularly relevant given the expedited timeframe of the research. Several studies also noted that participants were more receptive to information with transparent sources. Unbiased information was seen as particularly valuable, as hidden agendas were a common concern and cause for distrust.

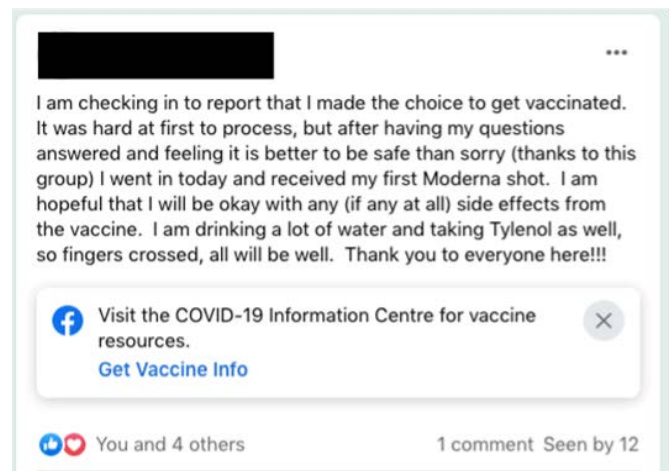
### ENGAGE COMMUNITIES EARLY

An initial phase of engaging communities directly and gathering input from the target population helped to ensure the later success of the project. In particular, this phase helped to avoid the extractive nature and ensured that they were relevant and took local socio-cultural factors into account. Identifying key narratives and motivations and defining specific concerns and

fears around vaccination and identifying trusted community members were key in many projects. It also helped to identify specific unmet needs or barriers in these communities. Collecting this early information also helped researchers to better assess how the interventions were received.

### MIXED-METHOD RESEARCH PROVIDED RICH FINDINGS

Many projects took a mixed method approach, combining qualitative interviews, human-centered design solution development, quantitative solutions and lever testing. This combination of approaches and research provided a much richer and holistic view of the challenge of vaccine hesitancy.<sup>7</sup> It also allowed researchers to create more persuasive narratives and demonstrate the effectiveness of identifying culturally situated discourses to amplify organic community narratives to boost vaccine confidence.



### ▲ VISIBLE RESULTS

“This post from a participant in trial 1 indicates that the participant chose to get vaccinated directly as a result of being part of the group and having their questions answered.” George Washington University

<sup>7</sup> Upstream Thinking, LLC, with Final Mile Consulting, “Redirecting existing demand for information towards vaccine confident interpretation by identifying online behavioral nudge interventions,” and Oklahoma State University, with the MESA Group, “Modeling Vaccine Confidence Interventions for Marginalized Migrant Communities: A Mixed Method Approach to Leveraging Social Media Narratives.”

## LACK OF INTERNET PENETRATION

While social media is a key tool for those who have access to technology and bandwidth, some communities remain hard to reach. When data in these communities was limited, researchers combined findings with additional, more traditional sources of non-digital information that helped to validate or expand findings. As one grantee noted, “though access to technology is increasing, it will continue to be a limiting factor for millions, especially for women with limited literacy and numeracy skills.”<sup>8</sup>

## GROUP MODERATION

As a further grantee noted, “moderating large groups is a full-time job. Not every comment requires a response and may be counterproductive.”<sup>9</sup> Several grantees noted the difficulty of striking the right balance between listening and sharing information, as well as when to ignore or even remove participants that may be introducing controversial or extreme viewpoints. Bringing in a professional facilitator was another approach to ensuring conversations were productive and a positive experience for participants.

## ENGAGING AND RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

The area of health-focused research in social media is a fairly new one, and our researchers encountered a few issues around social media accounts, blocked ads, data protection laws, ethics requirements, and navigating recruitment. Partnering with an organization that has experience in these areas, or creating multi-disciplinary teams is a useful approach to be able to include a variety of expertise. Reaching the right audience within the confines of social media platforms and social media advertising was also a learning process. For example, focusing on zip codes rather than demographics was a necessity given the tools available. Actual engagement that was relevant and motivating to those suffering from “COVID fatigue” was a key factor in participation. Finally, relevant narratives and understanding what drives local communities was an important way to surmount this issue.

### ▼ INFLUENCERS INFLUENCING

Posing at a Shujaaz event for the social media vaccination campaign, young influencers show off their vaccination status.



PHOTO: SHUJAAZ

8 Minority Rights Group, with Grand Synergy Development Initiative (GSDI), Verite Research Pvt Limited, Bytes for All, “Diversity: Impact on Vaccine Equality (DIVE).”

9 David A. Broniatowski and Lorien C. Abrams, “Empathetic Engagement with the Vaccine Hesitant in Online Spaces”

# THE WAY FORWARD

## WHAT CAN STAKEHOLDERS DO?

Aligning vaccine interventions with the needs of the vaccine hesitant and unvaccinated is key in increasing vaccine confidence and uptake. Governments, health authorities, researchers and other stakeholders can play a key role in increasing vaccine confidence through social media.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Involve communities, or local organizations, particularly those in hard-to-reach or marginalized communities, at every step, including in the study or technology design as well as implementation. To be most effective, these should be adapted to the realities of each community or population it is trying to serve. This should include the language and images used, but also the social-cultural and gender norms, the kinds of misinformation circulating, and the specific concerns of the community.
- Researchers can also pair with policymakers from the beginning of their projects to ensure that their findings get translated into policy and become actionized at the local, state, and if appropriate, national level.
- Partner with local organizations to help plan, understand and implement programming.
- Consider amplifying existing expressions of vaccine confidence from within the community as hearing from individuals trusted in the community can have a more significant impact.

### LISTENING TO NEEDS

- Provide information to help individuals make their own decisions rather than seeking to instruct. This can mean sharing positive and negatives in an unbiased fashion that is still supportive of vaccines.
- Where possible, provide a platform for small group dialogues and peer support for targeted communities and provide relevant moderation.
- Where distrust exists between local populations and health authorities or government, extra efforts should be made to involve trusted figures to convey key information and rebuild trust.
- Seek to understand social and accessibility barriers to vaccination.



**Have You Discussed The Jab Yet?**

PHOTO: INTERNATIONAL LONGEVITY CENTRE

### ▲ PEER CONFIDENCE

Targeting Older Generations? Screen capture from a social media campaign from the International Longevity Center exploring intergenerational relations in increasing routine vaccinations.



## AREAS OF NEEDED RESEARCH

VCF represented a first step for much of this research, but further exploration is needed. AAHO disseminated a survey to grantees and valued partners to collect external input to help sharpen the second research program. Areas of needed research, as identified by survey respondents, have been detailed below.

- Two primary research themes emerged when respondents were asked what research focus would be most conducive to advancing AAHO's goal of increasing the understanding of the impact social media has on health outcomes and resilient communities:
  - » Influencing social norms, and
  - » Driving community and health care provider engagement.
- Furthermore, two additional underpinning priorities were articulated and should be considered across all research:
  - » Equity -better target and measure impact related to reaching and impacting under-served groups and ethnic minorities, and
  - » Closed-loop feedback -vaccine message exposure should be casually linked with actual vaccine uptake.
- Respondents were split about 50/50 on whether the next research program should focus on idea generation or implementation science, with several emphasizing that there is a strong need for both.
- Respondents agreed that the next round of research should support closed-loop feedback. To ensure closed-loop feedback can be collected and measured, participants recommend:
  - » Rigid requirement for causal identification strategies,
  - » Real-time involvement and engagement of key stakeholders and experts,

- » Agreements with local or central governments or entities to integrate or share data in order to help validate uptake and/or vaccinations from research.
- » More time to run focus groups before and after campaigns, such as representative samples, quick surveys to ask about action, and better links to book vaccinations.

## PATH FORWARD FOR THE ALLIANCE FOR ADVANCING HEALTH ONLINE

The Vaccine Confidence Fund was the AAHO's first program to meet the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our goal with the VCF was to help accelerate a body of research and insights that would inform mass vaccination campaigns and seek to address vaccine confidence amid the need to vaccinate the global population. We were also committed to moving quickly and simultaneously working with key partners to disseminate evidence and insights on this topic to ensure vaccination campaigns were more impactful. This commitment further assists in increasing vaccine confidence within underserved and underrepresented communities.

Looking forward, AAHO is announcing a new call to action with another round of funding to support research on vaccine confidence with a strong emphasis on routine immunizations. The call for proposals will focus on two target populations, healthcare workers and local communities, and will seek to improve understanding on how they can be supported to drive positive health actions via social media engagement and build vaccine confidence around COVID-19 vaccines and routine immunizations.



▼ **VACCINATING YOUTH CHAMPIONS**

A vaccination is given by a Kenyan Ministry of Health nurse at a vaccination drive by Shujazz.



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