

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

UI Extension collaborative on immunization teaching and engagement

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension educators and staff partnered with local health organizations and medical providers to help fill the gaps in education regarding COVID-19.

The Situation

Overwhelming health disparities across the country were highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In early 2021, Extension Foundation, in cooperation with Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP), announced an interagency agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture — National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to quickly respond to the needs of rural and underserved communities. Funding was offered to the Cooperative Extension System to form the Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE). The immediate goal of this first funded project was to partner with local health providers to expand reliable messaging regarding COVID-19 vaccinations. The long-term goal is to build a stronger immunization education model to address adult vaccine hesitancy, for not only COVID-19 but all immunizations.

Our Response

UI Extension educators and specialists from multiple disciplines in six counties formed Idaho's EXCITE team and received \$24,174 for this education campaign (Activity 1). County and statewide data, along



Lindsey McConnell-Soong, Joey Peutz and Tania Espinoza offer COVID-19 resources and educational activities at a local event.

with key informant interviews, indicated that Idaho's Hispanic agricultural community had been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and barriers to vaccine access. To reach this vulnerable population, the EXCITE team identified 10 priority counties in UI Extension's southern and central districts. The following county data points were considered: vaccination rates (by county and ethnicity), Hispanic population, rural population, health outcomes rankings and Social Vulnerability Index. The 10 priority counties were:

- Canyon, Cassia, Gem
- Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln
- Minidoka, Owyhee, Payette
- Washington

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The goal of this 12-month phase was to partner with local health organizations and/or medical providers to fill the gaps in immunization education efforts. Assessments resulted in consistent feedback that providers were overwhelmed and under capacity to invest staff and resources into community outreach education. UI Extension's expertise in community outreach and its reputation as a trusted messenger of evidence-based information was integral in supporting the efforts of our local public health partners.

Partnerships established during this project included the Idaho Immunization Coalition, Idaho State University College of Pharmacy and South Central Public Health District. In addition to participating in immunization trainings, Idaho's EXCITE team joined local Hispanic coalitions and the Idaho Health Equity Task Force to remain up to date on the needs of the priority population and continue collaboration with a variety of community partners.

Program Outcomes

The project goals of establishing partnerships and increasing access to reliable immunization information were met. Specifically, the EXCITE team:

- Collaborated with four external partners, expanding the reach of immunization education efforts and increasing the visibility of University of Idaho Extension as a valuable health equity partner.
- Integrated immunization education in 17 community events, reaching 1,547 individuals across 14 counties.

- Increased access to reliable immunization information for Idaho's Hispanic population and translated two public resources (online and print) into Spanish.
- Educated professionals within and outside of Extension through nine presentations across the state, streamlining collaboration and resource-sharing for immunization education efforts.

Brianna Bodily, public information officer for South Central Public Health district summarizes their partnership and success with EXCITE: "It's been a really great partnership between South Central Public Health District and EXCITE to help solve a gap, fix a problem that we've had for decades, and in the last couple of years when we've really seen that issue — that communication issue — hit Idahoans the hardest... EXCITE was amazing because they brought more people, they brought more resources and they brought a lot of enthusiasm, when quite frankly there was plenty of burn-out in public health in general."

The Future

Idaho's participation in Activity 1 laid the groundwork for receiving competitive funding for Activity 2— an innovative pilot project utilizing a three-step educational approach to mobile vaccine clinics through May 2023. Certain partnerships developed in the first phase of EXCITE have strengthened and expanded, with current proposals for a third funded phase.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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