

**COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION**

**EXTENSION**  
FOUNDATION



**EXCITE**

Extension Collaborative on  
Immunization Teaching & Engagement

## **EXCITE ACTIVITY ONE (A1)**

**Final Report: June 2021-October 2022**

---

By: Dr. Michelle Rodgers, Extension Foundation; Laura Downey, Auburn University; and Isabel Osborne, Extension Foundation

## ATTRIBUTION

---

Title: Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE) Activity One (A1) Final Report: June 2021-October 2023

Copyright © Rodgers, M., Downey, L., and Osborne, I. 2023, Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). Published by Extension Foundation.

Publish Date: 9/25/2023

Citations for this publication may be made using the following:

Rodgers, M., Downey, L. and Osborne, I. (2023). *Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE) Activity One (A1) Final Report: June 2021-October 2023*. Kansas City: Extension Foundation.

Producer: Ashley S. Griffin

Editor: Rose Hayden-Smith

Graphic Design: Ellen Krugel

Technical Implementer: Rose Hayden-Smith

Extension Collaboration on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE) is a nationwide local response by U.S. Cooperative Extension made possible through an interagency agreement between United States Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and a cooperative agreement with the Extension Foundation in partnership with the ECOP Health Program Action Team.

On behalf of the Cooperative Extension System, the Extension Foundation serves as Principal Investigator, provides grant administration, fiscal, operational, and technological services, system-wide communication, innovation processes, wrap-around services for projects, data collection and dashboards, and partnership development for the EXCITE Program.

The EXCITE Program Team: Dr. Michelle Rodgers, University of Delaware and Extension Foundation; Dr. Katie Stofer, University of Florida; Dr. Beverly Coberly, Extension Foundation; Dr. Lindsey Haynes-Maslow, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill; Dr. Laura Downey, Auburn University; Isabel Osborne, Extension Foundation; Maggie Grandon, American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC); Dawn Burton, Prairie View A&M University; Dr. Linda Kirk-Fox, Extension Foundation; Ruth Hursman, AIHEC/Extension Foundation; Molly Immendorf, Extension Foundation; Melanie Pugsley, Extension Foundation; and Karl Bradley, Extension Foundation.

For more information please contact:

Extension Foundation  
c/o Bryan Cave LLP  
One Kansas City Place  
1200 Main Street, Suite 3800  
Kansas City, MO 64105-2122  
<https://extension.org>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Attribution.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Multiple Delivery Methods .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Partnerships .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Completion of Activity 1 Projects .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Evaluation and Findings .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Internal and External Partnership related to the Network for Collaboration Framework .....</b>	<b>16</b>
External Partners .....	16
Internal Partners .....	17
<b>Existing and New Partners related to the Network for Collaboration Framework .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Existing Partners.....	18
New Partnerships .....	19
<b>Partnerships Summary .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Project Summary .....</b>	<b>21</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

During COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recognized the capacity of Cooperative Extension (CES) as a national system to help provide education related to vaccination hesitancy. When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, there was not a vaccine to address the disease. The country shut down in all areas beyond essential services to minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus. A vaccine was in development and just becoming available.

By this point in time, however, use of the vaccine was greatly politicized, misinformation was being proliferated through various forms, and both availability and confidence in the vaccine were limited.

To address vaccine hesitancy, especially in rural communities and sparsely populated areas, the Extension Collaboration for Immunization, Teaching, and Engagement (EXCITE) project was created. It was made possible through an interagency agreement between United States Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and a cooperative agreement with the Extension Foundation in partnership with the ECOP Health Program Action Team. With funding from the CDC via an Interagency Agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and a cooperative agreement with the Extension Foundation, the EXCITE team set four goals:

- Decrease vaccine hesitancy among rural and medically underserved audiences.
- Increase connection and communication between priority populations and health care systems.
- Increase accessibility of vaccination clinics to priority populations.
- Help CDC, USDA-NIFA, Cooperative Extension System (CES), and health partners implement public health programs to reduce health disparities.

The EXCITE project represented a high-speed initiative aimed at swiftly providing the public with up-to-date, evidence-based information. Its primary objective was to empower individuals to make informed decisions regarding COVID-19 prevention through the utilization of available vaccines.

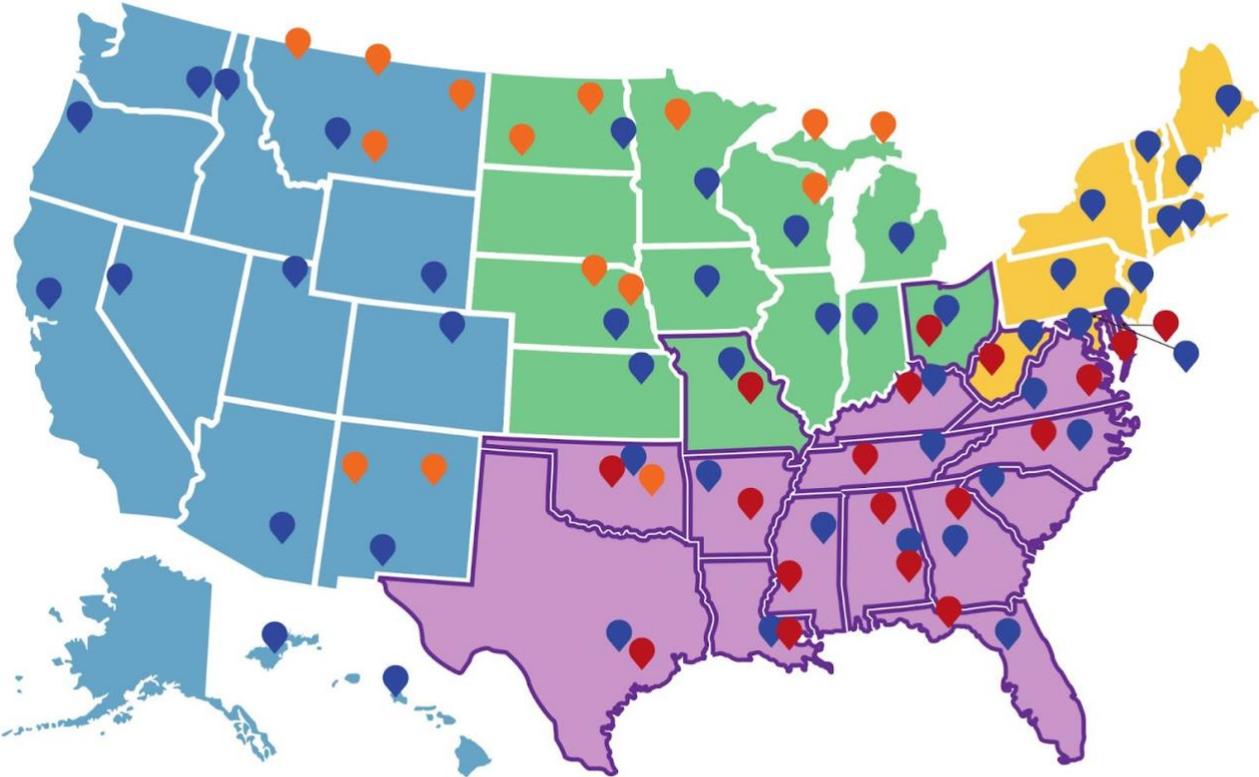
Activity One in this effort was the **COVID-19 Immunization Education Program (Vaccinate with Confidence)**, a one-year project to quickly roll out and test various messages about the vaccine in prioritized counties around the country. Informed by the CDC's Rapid Community Assessment Tools and other methods, EXCITE tailored its approach according to the populations it wanted to reach, using a variety of channels that included social media, faith communities, pop-up immunization clinics, and written or verbal messages.

All 111 Land-grant universities were eligible to apply to deliver the "Vaccinate with Confidence" campaign; 72 were awarded funding in a noncompetitive award process. Each application was reviewed for compliance by the Program Director, Operations Manager, and a representative of CDC. Activity One funds were contracted in sub-awards to all successful applicants and provided a set funding amount for all 111 LGUs (\$24,178 for 1862 and \$26,000 for 1890 and 1994 institutions). The slight increase in funding for 1890 and 1994 institutions was to help address some of the system inequities within the funding of these institutions.

Approximately \$3 million was budgeted for Activity One. As a component of the application, each LGU provided a COVID-19 Vulnerability Index for their selected geographic area as evidence that their project focused on rural and medically underserved communities. Documentation of the selected population was verified with input from public health departments and medical providers about areas with the greatest vaccine hesitancy. LGUs also

described their planned implementation strategy and budget. The application promoted conversations between institutions in the same state to help them coordinate the most effective use of the funding.

### Land-grant Institutions Participating in Vaccinate with Confidence



- Western Region
  - North Central Region
  - Southern Region
  - Northeast Region
  - 1890 Region
- TYPE OF LAND-GRANT INSTITUTION**
- 1994 Land-grant Tribal Colleges & Universities
  - 1890 Land-grant Universities
  - 1862 Land-grant Universities

Figure 1: Year One map of Land-grant institutions participating in EXCITE COVID Immunization Education Programs (Activity One).

*While each project was local, approaches and assets were developed and opportunities to adopt and adapt materials as a national system emerged. They are exemplified in the EXCITE projects described below.*

In **Arkansas**, Extension partnered with a Federally Qualified Health Center, ARcare, to create community-based education and mobile vaccine clinics serving lower-income adults 18 years old and older living in rural or sparsely populated areas, including people from racial and ethnic minority groups and hard-to-reach populations. And in a multi-state project in Illinois and Indiana, Extension professionals used survey data from rural, racial and ethnic minority groups, and agricultural workers to identify vaccine hesitancy facilitators and barriers. Once identified, those factors were addressed through tailored messages, community champions, and vaccine clinics.

**Oregon** State University Extension worked closely with partners in selected counties—verifying concerns raised by LatinX and rural white groups—to address fears and disinformation with educational materials distributed through print, mass media, and social media. Oregon Extension also worked with partners to help minimize logistical barriers to being vaccinated and assisted at vaccine clinics as requested.

The University of **Wyoming** EXCITE project, “Vaccinate Up,” focused on reducing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy through fact-based conversations, protecting family and community, and telling the stories of people who have had COVID-19 and/or decided vaccination was the right choice for them. Priority populations included the Wind River Reservation. This was primarily a marketing campaign that used billboards, Pandora advertisements, flyers, social media, and information talking points distributed through Wyoming 2-1-1. Stories such as these can be told for each EXCITE project.

## A1 - Vaccinate with Confidence, Activities and Reach

		ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES	CITIZEN REACH
DIRECT COMMUNICATION	 This includes: email, direct mail, Direct text, instant messages	35,286	277,160
IN-PERSON EVENTS		1,304	85,179
MASS MEDIA	 This includes: radio and TV	2,675	6,116,203
PRINT MATERIALS		90,897	810,000
PRINT MEDIA		6,404	934,580
SOCIAL MEDIA		2,692	3,334,955
VACCINATION CLINICS		301	14,776
VIRTUAL LIVE EVENTS		733	43,791
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>140,292</b>	<b>11,616,644</b>

Figure 2: Activity One total data activities and reach by method.

### MULTIPLE DELIVERY METHODS

EXCITE projects use a variety of activities that are a part of the traditional Extension methodologies to engage prioritized audiences. Figure 2 (previous page) shows the engagement activities and reach of EXCITE COVID Immunization Education Programs (Activity One).

The projects were reported monthly or quarterly to the program team as “assets,” available in the national registry. Figure 3 shows assets developed from COVID Immunization Education Programs (Activity One). Figure 4 shows assets adopted from COVID Immunization Education Programs (Activity One).

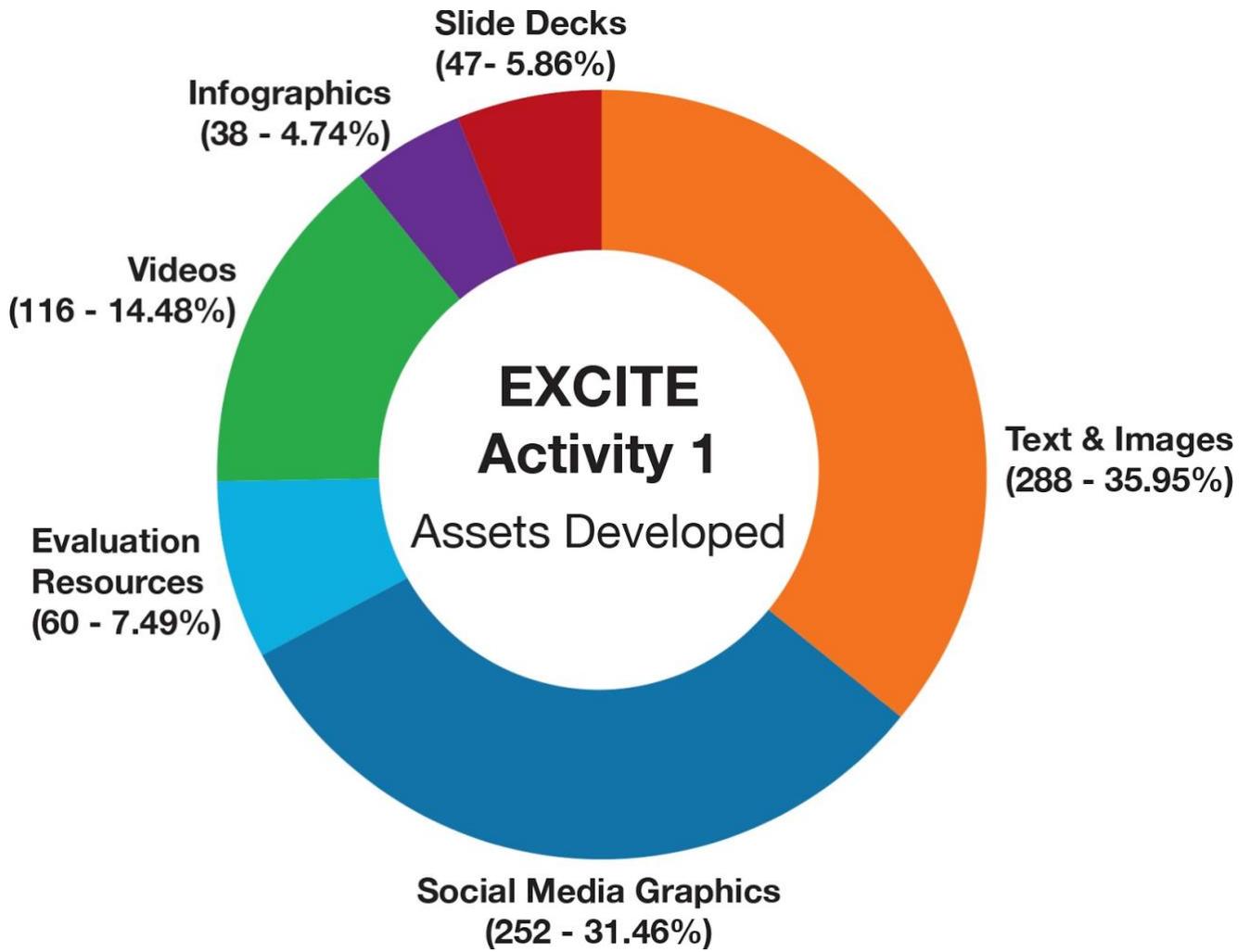


Figure 3: Year One assets developed from EXCITE COVID Immunization Education Programs (Activity One).

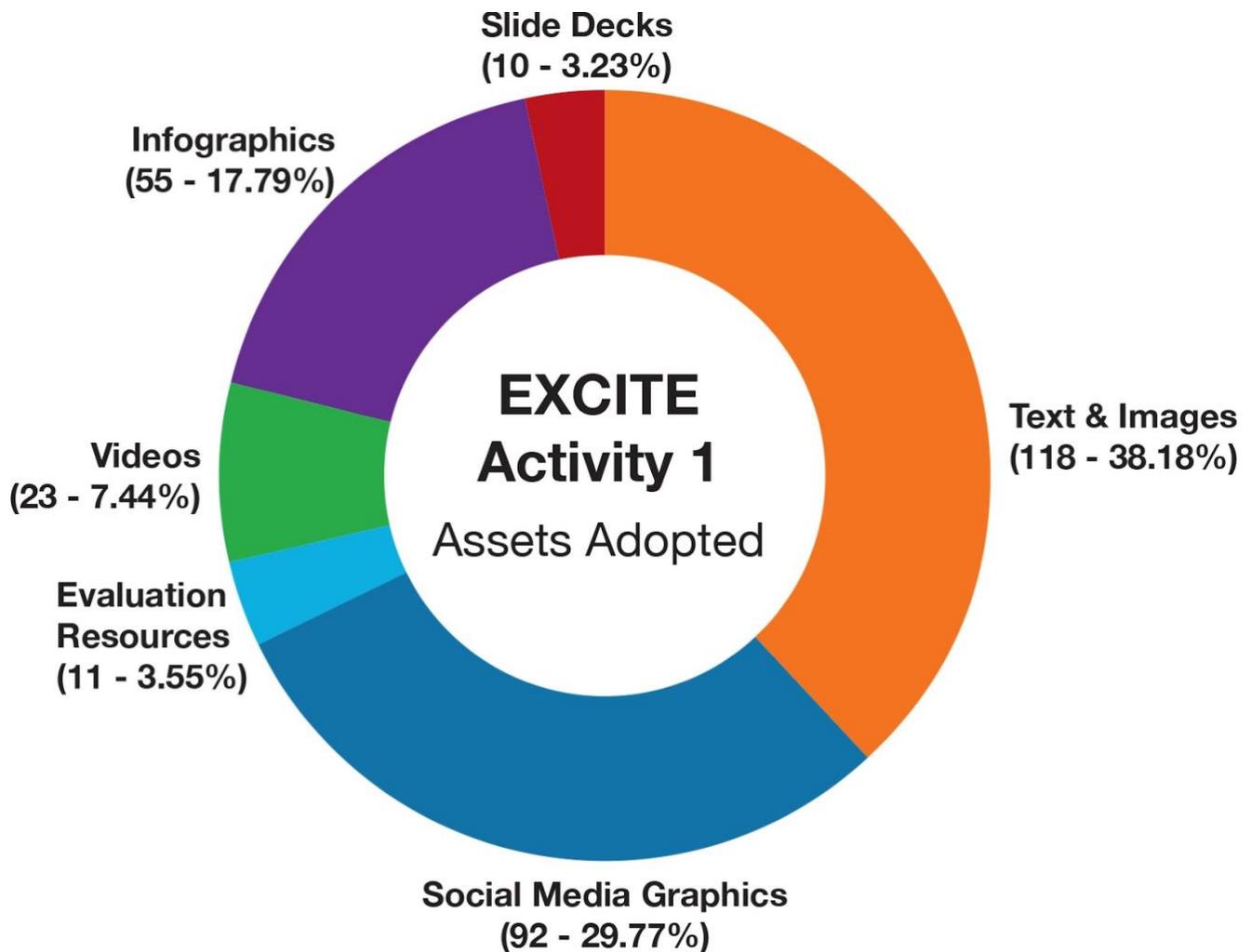


Figure 4: Year One assets adopted from EXCITE COVID Immunization Education Programs (Activity One).

In **California**, the EXCITE project focused on reaching under-resourced Mexican Indigenous migrant communities and Spanish-speaking Latinx families, living in several Southern California counties. Extension professionals, in collaboration with partners, developed culturally relevant, science-based messages for radio and TV spots and social media video posts. Once the messages were created, they were translated into four variants of the indigenous languages (Mixteco, Zapoteco, Purépecha, Triqui). 25- to 30-second TV and radio spots were produced. The radio spots in the indigenous languages were broadcast on Radio Indígena, a station that caters to Mexican indigenous migrant communities. From November 1, 2021, to January 31, 2022, seven 30-second radio spots in four indigenous languages aired, reaching a potential of 3 million listeners.

Another media partner was Entravision/Univision, a Spanish-speaking broadcasting network. TV spots and videos were broadcast on the network’s social media platforms, reaching California counties where a significant number of these community members live (Ventura, Santa Barbara, Riverside, Los Angeles, and San Diego). Their estimated daily audience is 25,000 viewers. Seven 30-second TV spots promoted vaccination during Spanish newscasts, and one ran during prime time. Their estimated daily audience is 75,000 viewers, so the campaign had a potential reach of 9 million views. A landing page associated with the campaign received 663 pageviews between November 2021 and May 2022, with an average time-on-page of nearly 2 minutes. By creating and implementing culturally relevant and translated campaigns, the team successfully reached thousands of Spanish-speaking Latinx community members to encourage them to be vaccinated.

**Virginia's** EXCITE team worked with the local health district and hospitals in Madison County to create a county-wide COVID-19 vaccine hotline registration system and vaccine clinic to target the county's under-resourced populations. By implementing a hotline telephone registration system, they decreased registration barriers, allowing farmworkers, older adults with limited or no internet access, and those with limited English proficiency to register for vaccines. As a result of this innovative and efficient effort, Madison County administered 4,466 vaccines at the clinic, with 28% of the registrants coming through the vaccine hotline. The Virginia Cooperative Extension will continue to build on its trusted relationship with the public to implement strategies to vaccinate hard-to-reach and hesitant populations.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

---

Fundamental to EXCITE (Activity One and Two) were partnerships to enhance community trust, outreach, and communication to their target population. Partnerships included:

- Professional schools and departments within their own institution;
- Collaboration with nearby institutions and universities;
- Healthcare providers;
- State and local health departments;
- Faith-based organizations; and
- Other community partners such as food banks and local non-governmental organizations.

Additionally, partnerships with public health organizations that could provide vaccination in conjunction with educational efforts were critical to meeting the goal of increasing immunization uptake. See Figure 5 below for a visual representation of the types of partners involved in COVID Immunization Education Programs (Activity One) projects.

## A1 - COVID Immunization Education Program Partners

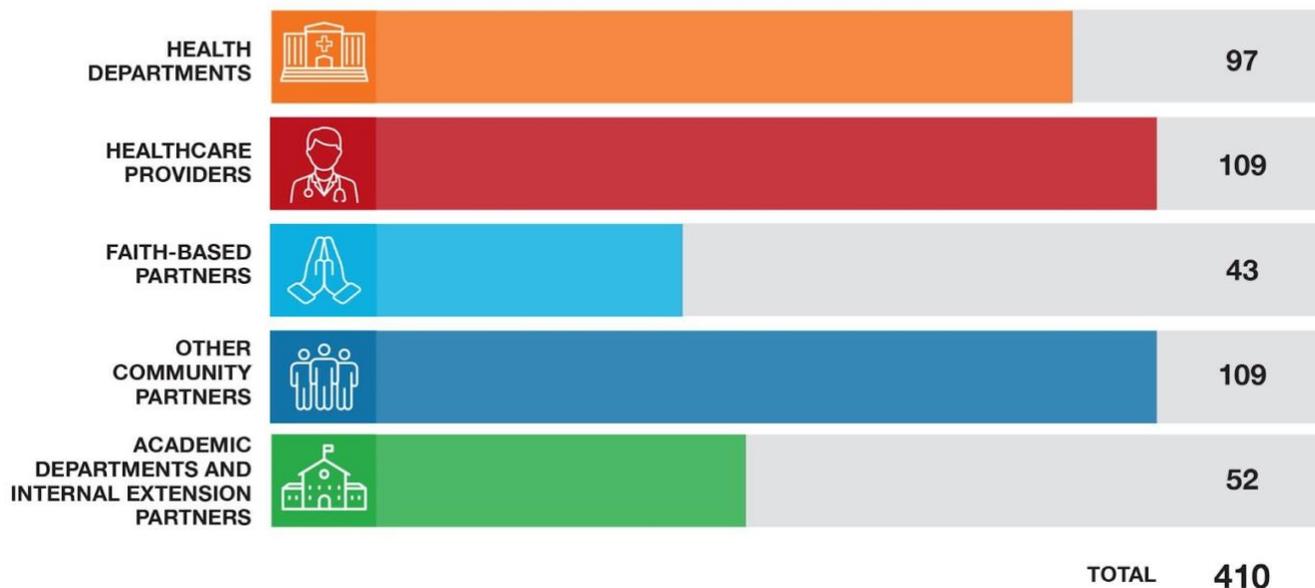


Figure 5: COVID Immunization Education Program partnership breakdown (Activity One only)

When asked to describe major successes of their partnerships the following responses were received:

*“The major successes of these partnerships provided an opportunity to reach a larger audience, to share resources, and to provide culturally appropriate learning and sharing experiences.”*

- Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College

*“Partnerships through our EXCITE project have led to the creation of a framework for a train-the-trainer outreach model...[and] also led to the creation of a framework for health webinar programs for our extension work. Our partnerships through this project were integral in reaching the masses with research-based information about the COVID-19 vaccine.”*

– Louisiana State University

*“One of our PIs on this project was recognized in the state for the work she was doing with grandparents and children in kinship care. The state government, through her efforts, provided incentives for grandparents who receive COVID-19 vaccines. Our collaboration with WVSU has opened up conversations around the co-creation of programs. At our administrative team level, discussions are ongoing on how both institutions can continue to work together. This project brought both Extension systems together in a unique way.”*

– West Virginia State University

The EXCITE team in **West Virginia** includes Extension professionals from West Virginia State University and West Virginia University. This team partnered with West Virginia State Extension’s Healthy Grandfamilies initiative and utilized the Grandfamilies’ network to deliver their “Don’t Wait, Vaccinate!” campaign in the state.

The Healthy Grandfamilies initiative was selected as an internal partner because it was a well-established initiative that aims to assist older adults in raising their grandchildren or great-grandchildren. Participants in the eight-week Healthy Grandfamilies course received educational materials and a health journal to track their health history, including vaccinations, as part of the program's instruction on health literacy. Additionally, a portion of the Grandfamilies monthly segment on the West Virginia Library Network was used to distribute immunization education.

The team also hosted informational community meetings for grandparents in four priority counties to hear medical providers discuss COVID-19 vaccinations. These four counties were deemed a high priority because of poor health outcomes, income, diversity, and presence of the county Extension staff. In West Virginia, participants' understanding of and trust in the COVID-19 vaccination increased by attending community education workshops or participating in Healthy Grandfamilies.

EXCITE efforts in **Michigan** focused on reaching members of three Michigan tribal communities. Michigan State University Extension and two land-grant tribal colleges—Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College and Bay Mills Community College, collaborated to ensure that culturally relevant and impactful immunization education and messages would reach tribe members of all ages in the state. The EXCITE project built capacity and increased trust within the Michigan Inter-Tribal Land-Grant Extension System (MILES) team and Land-grant universities by providing an opportunity to work together on a shared project with a specific focus.

Michigan State University, Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College, and Bay Mills Community College shared educational messages they had jointly developed. During a challenging time of working remotely or with restricted and limited in-person events, the MILES team benefited from the EXCITE project by allowing tribal nations and community members to congregate in virtual spaces and to see other tribal nations and community members engaged in educational programming. Although the project initially relied on past connections, the EXCITE project gave Michigan State University Extension a purpose for reaching out to collaborate and deepen relationships with tribal nations. Strengthening these partnerships was a success for the Michigan State project.

Ultimately, the EXCITE project expanded awareness of Michigan State University Extension and MILES and increased the visibility of Michigan State University's Tribal Extension Educators across all tribal Nations and communities in Michigan. The team stated that the Inter-Tribal Council collaboration of the EXCITE project shows how project funding can help organizations or entities work together for a specific cause to build true lasting partnerships. The team noted that they could accomplish impactful events by working together.



*Figure 6: Evaluation highlights reach, engagement activities, partners, and assets developed and adopted.*

## **COMPLETION OF ACTIVITY 1 PROJECTS**

---

50% of the Activity One projects completed their work by the original deadline of May 31, 2022. A no-cost extension was offered. 25% of the projects completed their work by August, and the remaining 25% of the projects completed their work by October 31, 2022.

The challenges of identifying partners, changing PI's, and institutional grant processes were barriers and are the primary reason for these no-cost extensions. The blessing is that the delayed expenditures and programs enable these institutions to have funding when new messages are communicated, and projects remain very relevant.

## EVALUATION AND FINDINGS

---

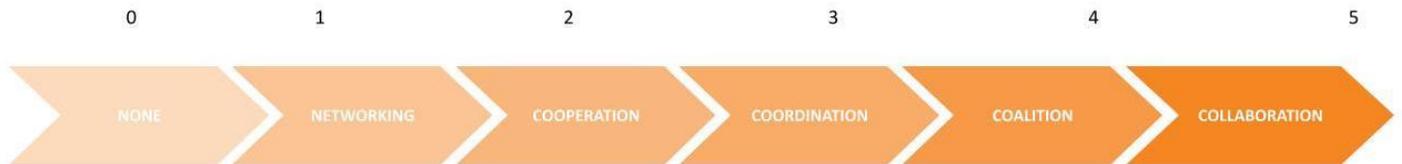
A summary of the final reports from the Vaccinate with Confidence EXCITE project has confirmed the value of partnerships in this work.

The [National Network for Collaboration Framework](#) was identified at the beginning of the project as a way to evaluate the partnership goals. The National Network for Collaboration Framework distinguishes various types of partnerships in the following way. (The numbers are added for EXCITE initiative evaluation purposes and sharing results).

0. None
1. Networking
  - No shared leadership
  - No shared resources
  - Informal communication
2. Cooperation
  - No shared leadership
  - Limited sharing of resources
  - More communication ensures tasks are done
3. Coordination
  - No shared leadership
  - Emphasizes sharing resources
  - Frequent and clear communication
4. Coalition
  - Shared leadership and clearly defined roles for group members
  - Generate new resources (human, fiscal, or technical)
  - Communication is frequent and is a priority to those involved
5. Collaboration
  - Leadership high, high trust level, productivity high
  - Ideas and decisions equally shared
  - Highly developed communication

The framework - as used by the EXCITE initiative - is illustrated below.

## National Network for Collaboration Framework\*



\*Bergstrom, A., Clark, R., Hogue, T., Iyechad, T., Miller, J., Mullen, S., . . . Thurston, F. (1995). *Collaboration framework: Addressing community capacity*. Fargo, ND: The National Network for Collaboration. Retrieved from <http://www.uvm.edu/crs/nnco/collab/framework.html>

Figure 7: National Network for Collaboration Framework (as used by the EXCITE initiative).

Partnerships were evaluated by Cooperative Extension using two different classifications: Internal or External and Existing or New. Internal partnerships were defined as those partners that were within the Land-grant university, such as other colleges, departments, medical schools, or clinics. External partnerships were those that were with organizations or groups that were external to the Land-grant, including nonprofit and for profit.

EXCITE institutions were also asked to identify whether the partners were existing, indicating that they were units within the University structure that Cooperative Extension was already working with in some other capacity, or new, indicating the opposite.

In addition to indicating whether the partnerships were existing or new, internal or external, for the final report, Vaccinate with Confidence projects were asked to retroactively indicate the type of partnership they had with various organizations at the onset of the project, and the type of partnership at the end of the project.

In Figure 8 (see following page), the two graphs demonstrate the status of all relationships before and after the EXCITE project. Before the project began, the most common categories were “None” and “Networking.” After the EXCITE project, there is a significant realignment, with the most frequent category being “Collaboration.” Relationships identifying as 2, 3, and 4 increase post-project. There was a significant decrease in 0 and 1 relationship types, including a 100% decrease from the relationship classification (“None”). There was a 14.9% difference from the relationship classification (“Networking”).

# Relationship Comparison

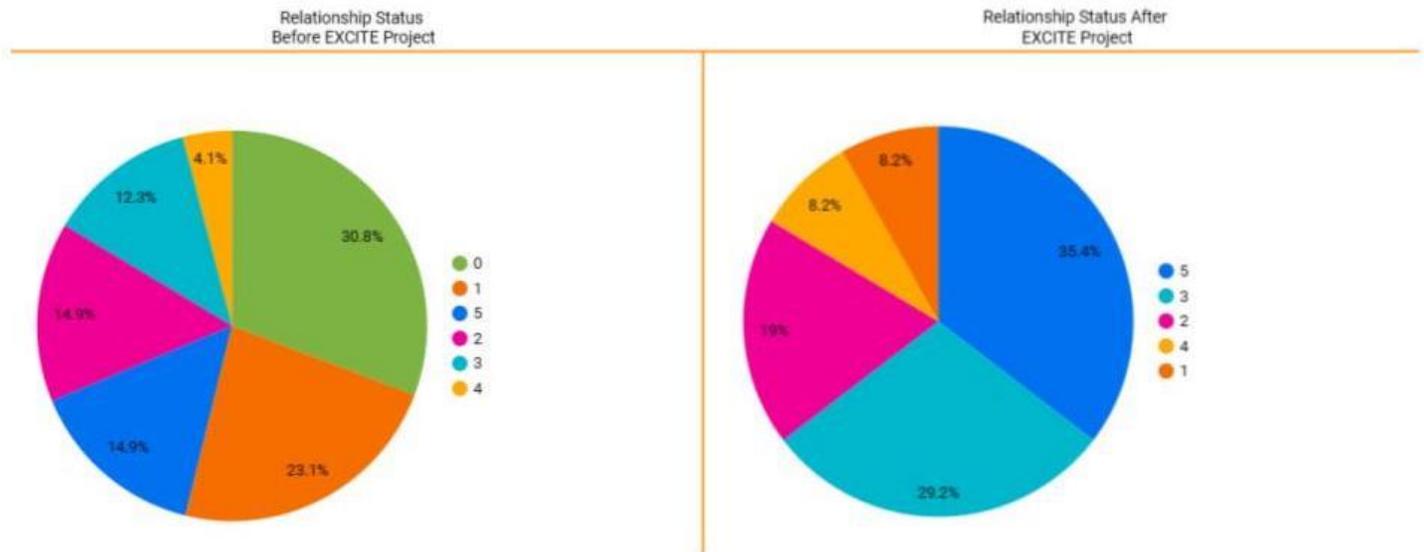


Figure 8: Relationship Comparison: Status before and after EXCITE project.

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP RELATED TO THE NETWORK FOR COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK

### External Partners

Many of the external partnerships developed further along the continuum during the project. Of the 114 external partnerships reported as external partnerships, 71% showed development of their partnership at least one point across the continuum. Around 27% of the partnership showed to either stay at the same relationship, while only 2% had a decrease on the spectrum scale.

# External Partner Type



Figure 9: External Partner Type

The reflective narrative questions provided qualitative data related to the change in the continuum. Several common themes emerged from the data.

For those partnerships that moved significantly across the spectrum (4-5 points) the primary success factor included *achieving high vaccine rates*, and the ability to successfully reach people who may or may not have been vaccinated due to primarily fears around the vaccine. Another general theme relating to the success of the project was when the primary contact was able to have successful meetings and create a relationship of trust around the community, helping to meet the project goals.

For the 63% of partners who moved up the continuum at least 1-3 levels, the general feedback showed a successful ability to reach out to the community regarding the vaccine through webinars, social media, and community meetings. There was also an emphasis on the ability to create and maintain trust within the community through facilitated awareness and positive social norms surrounding the COVID 19 immunization.

For those who saw no change in the relationship, the primary barriers faced were establishing trust within the target population, not having a direct line of communication, and limited resources to support the project.

## Internal Partners

Before the project began, “None” and “Networking”, were the lowest ranking on the Collaboration Framework. Afterward the project began, there is a significant realignment with the highest categories shown to be Collaboration. In addition, relationships identifying as 2,3, and 4 (Cooperation, Coordination, and Coalition) increase post-project.

There was a significant decrease in 0 and 1 relationship types: 100% decrease from the relationship classification (“None”) and there was a 14.9% difference from the relationship classification (“Networking”).

Of the 45 partners who were classified as internal, over 63% showed an increase in their relationship across the continuum by at least one point. Around 36% of the partnerships stayed at the same type of relationship through the project.

Within the internal partnership category, it is not surprising that there were no partner classifications that moved the entire distance across the partnership continuum because they already had some relationship. For those partners who moved significantly across the continuum (3-4 points - 17%) the primary factor included how social media impacted the community, and successfully created a network of partnerships that provided bilingual vaccine education at low-income resource centers.

For the 39% of internal partners who moved along the continuum at least 1-2 relationship levels, there was general feedback showing an increased ability to communicate with various internal partners and collaborating to learn about the different stigmas that surrounded COVID-19.

For those who did not make any change in the relationship continuum, they indicated that barriers included internal vaccine hesitancy, a short timeline, financial resources, and “bandwidth” (people resources) to do the work.

## Internal Partner Type

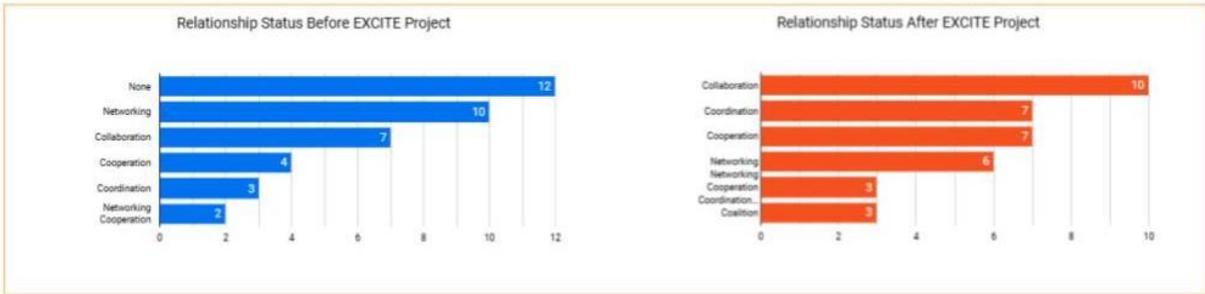


Figure 10: Internal Partner Type

## EXISTING AND NEW PARTNERS RELATED TO THE NETWORK FOR COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK

### Existing Partners

There were 18 partners who were classified as existing. Within this group, 38% showed movement along the continuum of at least one partner type. Around 61% of the existing partnerships stayed at the same type of relationship throughout the project.

Qualitative data indicated that those partners who moved significantly across the continuum (3-4 points (11%)) mentioned that the EXCITE funds helped to support programs that shared vaccine experience throughout their

communities. Also noted was the ability to create a coalition of all major health partners to set common goals that helped to guide the project to success. For the 27% of the partners who moved on the continuum at least one relationship type toward collaboration, there were statements noting the increasing awareness of vaccination opportunities and the ability to reach over 1.5 million through digital impressions. Also, success came through early efforts to build capacity of the Extension educators and their partners as trusted messengers regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

For the existing partnerships that did not have any relationship change in the continuum, primary barriers and establishing trust within their priority population group, the lack of direct communication among the partners and frequent staff turnover were cited.

## Existing Partner Type



Figure 11: Existing Partner Type

### New Partnerships

Of the 18 partners who were classified as new, over 88% showed an increase in their partnership continuum by at least one point. About 11% showed maintaining the same relationship type throughout the project.

There were 11% of the partnership relationships that moved 4-5 points across the whole continuum. They indicated that the primary success they experienced was in the ability to make connections with other community organizations. For the 77% of the new partners relationships that moved at least 1-3 levels on the continuum, there was general feedback showing that the reach of accurate information and services helped build the relationships both internal and externally. Also having Extension specialists helping to facilitate multiple internal listening sessions allowed for healthy dialogue among faculty and staff. Those that did not have any change in the type of relationship indicated that barriers included the polarity of the political climate and a lack of relationship with corporate entities that they had tried to establish.

# New Partner Type

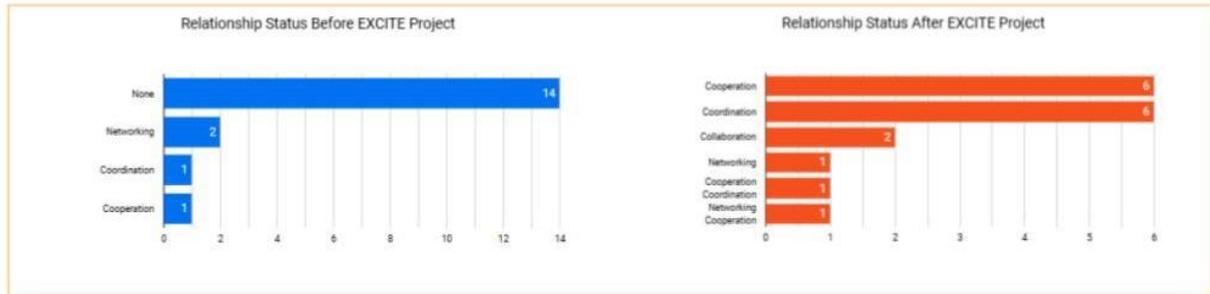


Figure 12: New Partner Type

## PARTNERSHIPS SUMMARY

There were 195 different partners collaborating with the 72 institutions across the U.S. 3.26% showed no movement across the continuum of the Collaboration Framework, while 1.07% showed a decrease in movement. Over 66% showed an increase in partner relationship throughout the project.

Internal partners generally rated their relationship as between Cooperation and Coordination at the beginning of the project and on average ended with a relationship between Coordination and Coalition. External Partners had a relationship generally between Networking and Cooperation at the beginning of the project and on average ended with a relationship between Coordination and Coalition.

Existing partnerships had a relationship between Cooperation and Coordination at the beginning of the project and on average ended with a relationship between Coordination and Coalition. New Partners had a Networking relationship at the beginning of the project, and on average, ended with a relationship between Cooperation and Coordination at the end of the project.

The qualitative data provided some general themes that contributed to success. These themes included:

- Tailored vaccine education in social media posts that dispelled misinformation.
- Effective collaboration with different partners in the community,
- The cue cards strategy was a novel approach and was popular in addressing vaccine misconceptions and were even provided in multiple languages.
- The development of specific slogans provided sustainable graphic and identity for ongoing partnerships and boosting long-term message sustainability.
- Creating trust around the community through building multiple relationships and partnerships.

- Efforts that transitioned from hosting community events to attending existing ones helped to expand reach.
- Hosting town hall sessions, producing and disseminating resources, and forming an advertising campaign were able to address community concerns.

There were also some common themes related to barriers to success. These included:

- Limited time and capacity.
- Finding the best time and delivery method for livestream education.
- General apathy and resistance towards the subject of COVID-19.
- The constantly changing nature of COVID-19 information.
- Hesitancy both within the organization and external to the organization Staff shortages and inadequate training in health-related areas in some institutions impacted ability to be successful.
- Some partnerships that did not occur as planned impacted educational efforts.
- Challenges in the university sponsored program offices limited staff capabilities to fulfill project implementation.

In summary, a change of relationship type does not always mean success of a project. However, clearly having partners working with Cooperative Extension was an essential element to success. Many have commented that the new partnerships for EXCITE Vaccinate with Confidence is expected to lead to other partnership opportunities related to community health.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

---

The Vaccinate with Confidence project demonstrated that the Cooperative Extension System was able to respond quickly to meet this national pandemic. The Extension Foundation was a significant contributor to this capability, by being the subrecipient to USDA-NIFA and then contracting with each individual institution. The system-wide Request for Proposal went out in March 2021; applications were received, reviewed, and contracted by June 2021. The 72 Cooperative Extension Services involved were willing to forgo other activities and initiate brand new work to respond to the pandemic. Institutions were real pioneers in developing message points and delivery methods to get the information into the hands of the public as quickly and as meaningful as possible.

There were multiple challenges to this project, including an environment that was highly politicized across the nation, and constantly changing and updating of information as more was learned about COVID-19.

Extension agents are truly representative of the communities in which they live and serve. As such, they also represent the very differing opinions around COVID-19. Many Extension agents, despite their own concerns, welcomed the opportunity to learn fact-based information and to share it in their communities. Extension was valued as a “trusted messenger” especially among existing relationships. With the short timeframe of the EXCITE Vaccinate with Confidence campaign, the reach and vaccination clinics held demonstrates one level of success of Extension as a trusted messenger. For some Extension staff, involvement was challenged by advisory boards and funders at the county and state level, where opinions differed regarding the approach to the

pandemic. Extension agents across the country were also quickly becoming highly engaged with distance technologies due to limitations to provide direct education.

Many new partnerships were formed through the Vaccinate with Confidence project. Institutions continue to indicate that the partnerships developed continue for new joint efforts related to health and well-being. These new partnerships are both internal within the LGU and community based. Several institutions have been able to continue their partnership efforts through continued public health funding.

Connected to the Activity One project, Michigan State University Extension is partnering with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to launch a three-year, \$7 million immunization education project. The initiative, which runs through 2024, will educate Michiganders about vaccination to support informed decision making about COVID-19 vaccines and other immunizations. The effort is supported by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The University of Tennessee received \$2.9 million from the Tennessee Department of Public Health to continue their immunization education partnership into the future. Other Extension services have been asked to join in community coalitions to continue the work or partner for additional health education ventures. Some of the Activity One teams have continued their efforts with EXCITE funds and are providing education in adult immunization in their state.

***Despite the challenges and barriers, EXCITE Vaccinate with Confidence was successful in providing 140,292 engagement activities, reaching 11,616,644 individuals. EXCITE Vaccinate with Confidence joined with 410 partners. 1,129 assets were developed and adopted.***

---