

Improving access to COVID-19 vaccines by understanding local nuance



Challenge

Black and Latinx communities are more likely to get seriously ill from and less likely to be vaccinated against COVID-19 than are other racial and ethnic groups.¹ Contributing to this situation are barriers to transportation, gaps in healthcare access, and lack of trust due to past medical racism.

Building the trust that's needed to overcome these obstacles requires engagement at the individual level and messaging that resonates at the community level.

Solution

In April 2021, Uber, Walgreens, and PayPal created the Vaccine Access Fund, an \$11 million fund to enable free rides with Uber Health to vaccination sites in communities of color and low-wealth areas across the country.

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a national community development organization, was brought on to identify and work with local nonprofits and other partners to coordinate free rides for people in their communities. LISC selected and provided grant funding to over 80 local organizations with a history of implementing programs that successfully deliver critical services in historically underserved communities. These organizations book rides for people in their own communities via the Uber Health dashboard.

With the need for a change in strategy, the fund expanded its eligibility rules to cover operational costs, labor-intensive outreach, and incentives.

50,000+
rides provided since the
launch of the program

“What we learned quite early on is that the Uber Health technology is extraordinarily efficient, but it must work hand in hand with direct community outreach.”

Julia Ryan
LISC Vice President for
Health Initiatives.

LISC
LOCAL INITIATIVES
SUPPORT CORPORATION

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/vaccine-equity.html>

“St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center has integrated the Vaccine Access Fund into our workflow by giving community partners access to our Uber Health account and encouraging them to use the account to sign people up for rides...If our department or one of our partners knows of a community member who has been flagged as having a transportation need (either through word of mouth or a Social Influencers of Health screening) we will use our Community Health Workers to contact them and schedule rides to get their first vaccination. Through our partnership and funding of these community-based organizations, our hospital has been able to connect with many people who we might not usually interact with.”

-St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center

Impact

Since the launch of the Vaccine Access Fund, over 80 organizations—including health centers, social service providers, civic action agencies, faith institutions, and housing and development organizations—have provided 50,000+ rides using the Uber Health dashboard.

Among the grantees were Sostento, which has helped spread the word about vaccination events and arranged over 4,000 rides to free health clinics, and the Community Health Worker Coalition of Migrants and Refugees, which has arranged over 100 rides while also getting the word out about vaccine clinics at community events and soccer games.

Uber Health's platform is able to facilitate everything from mobility solutions to critical deliveries, streamlining population health management and supporting better patient outcomes. For more information, visit uberhealth.com.

Challenge

- Communities of color have been less likely to get vaccinated
- Productive outreach has to happen at the local community level via messengers trusted by the community
- Outreach strategies have had to shift over the course of the pandemic

Solution

- To make local impact at scale, an \$11 million Vaccine Access Fund was established by Uber, Walgreens, and Paypal
- The fund is administered by LISC to identify local organizations that are likely to have a strong impact in their communities
- The fund criteria has expanded to include outreach and awareness efforts (including covering program administration costs) in addition to transportation

Results

- Over 50,000 rides provided since the launch of the program
- Grants donated to over 80 organizations