

INSIGHTS & ANALYSIS

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) partnered with C+C to develop a social marketing initiative to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates in Washington. To do this effectively, the campaign needed to build receptivity, intention and action among people in Washington. DOH was particularly interested in ensuring that typically underserved populations were proactively considered as campaign priority audiences. Understanding the attitudes, beliefs, barriers and motivators regarding the vaccine was fundamental to creating an effective campaign.

Four types of research were used to develop the campaign:

- **Gates Foundation Statewide Polling:** The team partnered with the Gates Foundation to poll 1,000+ Washington residents on a monthly basis to inform on vaccine intent, barriers, benefits and motivators.
- **Qualitative Research:** C+C created a Market Research Online Community (MROC) of more than 850 WA residents to inform the campaign through 2-3 quantitative and/or qualitative research exercises per week (open-ended questions, projective techniques, messaging/concept testing, and ranking/rating barriers and motivations).
- **In-language Stakeholder Interviews:** The team conducted one-on-one interviews in 15 languages every other month throughout the campaign. Community members served as interview moderators.
- **Focus Groups with Hesitant Populations:** We conducted focus groups to understand vaccine hesitancy among people with conservative values, the Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx communities.

Below are a few examples of research findings that informed the campaign:

1. Mixed emotions dominated by anxiety and worry created a vaccine mentality of “wait and see.”
2. The biggest barrier was concern over the safety of the vaccine. Political involvement and mistrust of “big pharma” contribute to this concern.
3. There is increased mistrust around vaccines for minority groups due to systemic racism.
4. Doctors and healthcare providers are the most trusted source for vaccine information.
5. Desire to protect loved ones, the community and vulnerable people is a strong motivator.
6. “Operation Warp Speed” increased concern: parallel vaccine production and testing was not intuitive to audience and was seen as concerning rather than encouraging.
7. Populations with higher levels of hesitancy include people with conservative values, people living in rural counties, and members of the Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx communities.
8. Young adults were getting vaccinated at slower rates not due to hesitancy, but due to a lack of urgency and not being concerned about contracting COVID-19.

PLANNING

Our goal was to **get 70% of WA adults (aged 18+) to initiate vaccination**. Objectives included:

- Create an inclusive campaign that reached all Washingtonians
- Increase intent to get vaccinated (before vaccine roll-out)
- Drive traffic to the Phase Finder, Vaccine Locator and DOH vaccine information websites
- Drive social media engagement
- Increase vaccination rates among hesitant populations

The **target audience** for the campaign was all adults in WA with a special focus on populations with lower vaccination rates: young adults, people with conservative values, people living in rural counties, and members of the Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx communities. Using the campaign’s 16-million-dollar budget, the team developed a three-stage integrated communications approach to motivate vaccination.

Education: We started in late 2020, before the vaccines were available, with a baseline multimedia effort to educate about how vaccines work, how the COVID-19 vaccines were developed and how to know if you could trust vaccine information. This education effort had a broad audience of ages 18+ and was also transcreated into 16 languages.

Intent: Once vaccines became available, we launched the *Vaccinate WA* campaign. This campaign included an online tool called Phase Finder where people could find their vaccine eligibility phase. When vaccine supply was limited and people were waiting their turn, we created messaging to thank the community for their patience and to show gratitude for vaccine staff and volunteers. This effort was designed to help build vaccine intention.

Action: When the vaccine became available to all adults in April 2021, we launched a Vaccine Locator website and created the *Together We Will* campaign to share people’s vaccine stories and messages from trusted physicians and medical experts. In June, we shifted our strategy to focus on vaccine hesitancy among audience groups with lower vaccination rates. These groups included young adults, the Black/African Americans and Hispanic/Latinx communities, people with conservative values and rural residents. Research was conducted with each of these groups to help us create messages and strategies that would help overcome their unique barriers. Two examples:

- For young adults, we needed to catch attention and give them a push to get vaccinated now. We created two high energy campaigns letting them know that getting vaccinated was a way to get back to doing all the things they love to do.
- For the Hispanic/Latinx community, we developed a campaign that empowered undecided community members to choose the vaccine by addressing misinformation with straight facts presented in a way that was culturally relevant. We worked with Hispanic/Latinx healthcare providers, community members and leaders to create content that highlighted how they made their vaccination decision. We also created the *Mijo/Mijo* campaign that featured an “abuela” as the main character — an emotionally-charged, nostalgic grandmother-like figure in many Hispanic/Latinx families who acts as THE trusted source.

EXECUTION

A wide suite of tactics supported the campaign strategy. Campaign materials were created in 36 languages with 28 languages incorporated into the paid media buy.

- **Paid advertising** has reached audiences aged 18+ and priority audience segments through a wide variety of channels: TV, radio, digital video, social, billboards and mobile. For young adults we included TikTok, Snapchat, Reddit, Twitch, dating apps and bar coasters. Micro-community media were implemented to reach diverse segments of the population (cultures, languages, LGBTQ+ etc.).
- Both **organic and paid social media** have been integral to the campaign, with the team posting new content daily as well as engaging with and responding to the public.
- A **Google Search** strategy drove 1.5 million clicks to WA DOH vaccine websites.
- More than 55 paid **social media influencers** created content that reached priority audiences.
- The team coordinated **partnerships** with many organizations to deliver additional reach:
 - Every major WA sports team partnered with the campaign. The Seattle Seahawks’ Coach Carroll provided footage for a PSA, teams communicated with fans and staff through various channels, and all teams provided footage of players and coaches.
 - We partnered with eight local health jurisdictions in counties that had lower vaccination rates, helping them create custom content and materials to meet the needs of their communities.
 - Organizations such as large-scale employers, the Latino Center for Health, transit agencies, AARP, Fred Hutch and many others sent campaign messaging through their channels.
- **Expert panel webinars** were held once a month in both English and Spanish.
- We also created **materials and resources** for everyone to access such as:
 - An online partner toolkit with materials and web content in 36 languages.
 - An online portal where vaccine providers and businesses could order free vaccine materials (stickers, signage, handouts, buttons, etc.).

EVALUATION

Goal: Get 70% of WA adults (aged 18+) to initiate vaccination.

Result: As of January 28, 2022, 83.7% of WA adults aged 18+ have initiated vaccination (13.7% above goal). The campaign closed the gap in vaccination rates among hesitant populations as follows:

- **9% for young adults:** The young adult vaccination rates improved since launching the campaign with the rate being 16% behind the overall WA rates in May 2021 to just 7% behind in January 2022.
- **13% for Hispanic/Latinx:** The gap closed dramatically on Hispanic/Latinx community vaccination rates from being 32% behind the overall WA rates in May 2021 to only 19% behind in January 2022.
- **10% for Black/African American:** The Black/African American community vaccination rates also improved with rates being 26% behind the overall WA rates in May 2021 to just 16% behind in January 2022.

Objectives:

- The campaign was inclusive, reaching all Washingtonians through materials in 36 languages as well as messaging for the Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, LGTBQ+, Ethiopian, Somali, Japanese, Filipino, Indian, Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian and Korean communities.
- Intent to vaccinate increased 14 points between December 2020 and February 2021.
- 1.2 billion completed video views.
- Drove 4.6 million clicks to WA DOH vaccine websites and 1.8 million Phase Finder submissions.
- More than 475,000 social media engagements.
- 3.5 billion media impressions.

View the Vaccinate WA campaign [case study video](#)