



Engaging Arts and Culture for Vaccine Confidence

A Guide for Building Programs and Creative Campaigns



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



Vaccinate with **Confidence**
Strategy to Reinforce Confidence in Covid-19 Vaccines

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/vaccinate-with-confidence/art.html>

A Guide to Building Programs and Creative Campaigns

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Who is this guide for?

This guide is for state and local health departments and community-based organizations that want to promote vaccine confidence and increase demand for COVID-19 vaccines and routine immunizations for people of all ages.

What is the purpose of this guide?

This evidence-based guide is designed to help public health professionals partner with local artists and culture-bearers to create culturally responsive^{1,2} materials and programs that can help increase vaccine confidence and uptake.

Make arts and culture your superpower to increase vaccine uptake

What is arts and culture?

In this guide, the term “arts and culture” refers to the wide range of creative expressions, cultural identities, and traditions that exist in and are unique to communities. It includes art forms such as music, dance, spoken word, photography, storytelling, and theatre, as well as traditional and culinary arts, craft, spiritual practices, and celebrations of places, histories, and cultures.

Artists (creators and makers of all kinds) and culture-bearers (those who embody and transmit practices of particular cultures³) are trusted, knowledgeable, and influential community members. Artists and culture-bearers have long been translators and trusted messengers of vital information in communities. Their performances, artworks, installations, and activities engage people with information and in conversations that influence individual and collective behaviors.⁴

How arts and culture can empower vaccine confidence programs

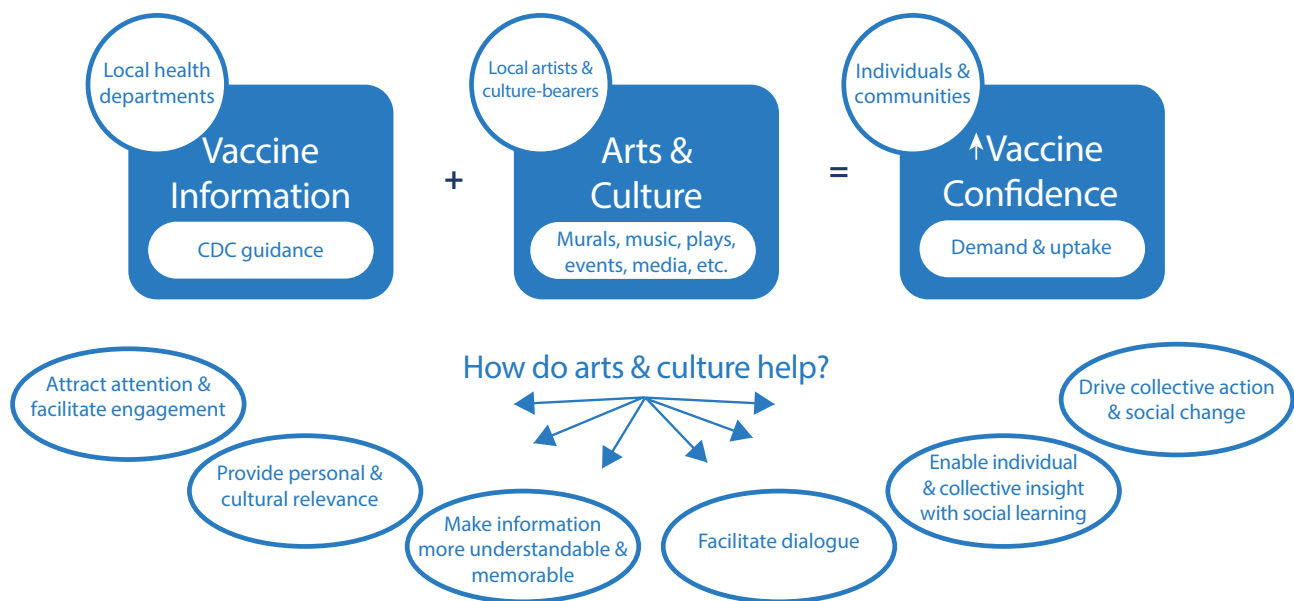
Vaccine confidence is defined as the trust patients and their families have in vaccines, the healthcare providers who administer them, and the health system from which they come. Public health professionals regularly use principles of communication, marketing, and entertainment in health communication programs to educate, build trust, and encourage healthy behaviors. This guide explains how arts and culture are also important elements in vaccine confidence programs recognizing that:

- ◆ Health communication is a social process.⁵
- ◆ Effective health communication is built on an understanding of local cultures, histories, and beliefs, and it is tailored to resonate with specific audiences.⁶
- ◆ Health communication is enhanced by active engagement of participants.⁷⁻⁹
- ◆ Arts and cultural resources exist within every community.¹⁰
- ◆ Arts and cultural engagement can quickly influence people’s health beliefs and behaviors.¹¹⁻¹³

Public Health + Arts and Culture

The arts are rooted in local cultures, histories, practices, and places. As a result, arts-based materials and programs can provide a common language to reach prioritized audiences and enable highly tailored two-way communication that starts with trusted local influencers.

Experiential, interactive, and narrative-based approaches enhance people's emotional engagement, learning, and behavior change, and they engage people individually and collectively at the same time.^{14, 15} Arts-based modes of communication make information more accessible, understandable, memorable, and—importantly—more personally and culturally relevant.¹⁶⁻¹⁸ For these reasons, arts activities can be particularly effective in helping to counter misinformation and to provide resources needed to help people make decisions that are built on trust and take action to protect their health.



Ultimately, arts and cultural programming can influence multiple factors that affect vaccine decision-making, including what people think and feel, social processes, and motivations to get vaccinated. Arts and cultural engagement can generate community demand for vaccines by making vaccination the accessible and socially supported choice. They can also enable on-the-ground social mobilization efforts by addressing both access and confidence issues simultaneously.

Throughout human history, the arts have been central in efforts to communicate difficult concepts and to drive social change, even that which seems impossible. The arts turn information into narratives, images, and symbols that resonate deeply and move past intellectual arguments to embodied dialogue, knowing, and action.^{19, 20}

Read [this story](#) then listen to Billie Holiday's song, *Strange Fruit*, and imagine how public health might have embraced both to center racism as a public health issue in the public eye and in health policy.

Public Health + Arts and Culture: How-tos

Public health + arts and culture:

Putting arts and culture to work in vaccine confidence programs

Partnerships between public health and arts and culture can provide solutions to problems related to community engagement in vaccine confidence campaigns, particularly where insufficient work has been done to meet a community's information needs – resulting in low vaccine confidence and uptake. The following steps are intended to guide the development of sustainable partnerships that can strengthen community engagement and communication in identified communities with low vaccine confidence and uptake.

#1: Find local artists and culture-bearers, and establish equitable and durable partnerships.

- ◆ Use guidance from the CDC's [Engaging Arts and Culture for Vaccine Confidence: Quick Start Guide for Building Sustainable Partnerships](#) to find local arts and cultural resources and build sustainable public health + arts and culture partnerships.
- ◆ Search the [Vaccine Confidence Arts Response Repository](#) or the [COVID-19 Arts Response Repository](#) to find examples of partnerships and to connect with potential partners.
- ◆ Consider various dimensions of equity (e.g., health and equity indices, language access, urbanicity, race/ethnicity, age, populations at increased risk, COVID-19 hot-spots) and engage partners who can represent and speak to disproportionately affected, marginalized, and priority communities in places where vaccine confidence is low or where vaccine access is low.¹⁹

#2: Work together to define the challenge, the audience, and the gap.

- ◆ Use local public health data and the insights of local artists and culture-bearers to describe what is known and not known about the population of focus or priority audience regarding reasons for low vaccine access, uptake, or confidence.
- ◆ Assess previous and current communications and programming efforts for this community, including evaluations of their successes, challenges, outcomes, and impacts.
- ◆ Make a list of networks, influencers, and resources in the community.
- ◆ Collect data to understand major information gaps, as well as barriers and enablers to vaccine uptake that an arts and culture partnership can help alleviate or address.
- ◆ Develop key insights to act on for this community.
- ◆ Define objectives and metrics for measuring your success.



The [Vaccines - NOLA Ready](#) partners created visual art that is appealing and culturally sustaining for specific communities.

Public Health + Arts and Culture: How-tos

#3: Design the program together.

- ◆ Clearly identify communities of focus and collect available data to share and discuss with partners. Discuss what is known and not known about this community's vaccine uptake challenges and successes.
- ◆ Take time to share the knowledge, key theories (such as behavior change theories), values, objectives, success metrics, and practices of each partner.
- ◆ Start your design process by encouraging partners and people in the priority community to listen to each other, remembering that the arts are ideal structures for listening, expression, dialogue, and understanding. For example, activities like story circles, interactive theatre and photovoice engage people in sharing stories and talking. Look for these arts and cultural practices that are common in the local community.
- ◆ Map local vaccination access points, enablers and barriers, and infrastructure, as well as local resources and assets.
- ◆ Engage in design charrettes or similar collaborative design processes, with partners and community members to identify interests, values, priorities, and ideas of everyone involved. Leverage insights or values that resonate with identified needs to increase vaccine uptake.
- ◆ Recognize the historical and ongoing injustices that drive government and health systems within LGBTQIA+, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern/Arab American, Asian American, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander communities, as well as those who experience houselessness, are uninsured or underinsured, or are otherwise marginalized. Engage partners in addressing these realities in program design.
- ◆ Design multi-modal campaigns (materials and activities) with components that span channels, formats, and communication and learning styles and that provide accessibility for people with varied abilities and disabilities.
- ◆ With objectives in mind, consider modalities like murals, creative public service announcements (PSAs), music, plays, story circles, spoken word and poetry jams, performances, posters, fashion, TikTok dances, and other digital media. More ideas are suggested in the Quick Start Guide to Addressing Common Challenges below.
- ◆ Design programs that empower vaccine recipients to share their personal stories and reasons for vaccination within their circles of influence.
- ◆ Pre-test the programming with representative members of the priority community.

#4: Roll out the program together.

- ◆ Position artists and culture-bearers as leaders, translators, and spokespeople in rolling out programs.
- ◆ Host activities at local arts and cultural venues and make materials available at these venues.
- ◆ Include opportunities for community conversations with artists, culture-bearers, and public health professionals in events, activities, and media platforms.
- ◆ Prepare community listeners and influencers such as barbers and hairstylists, bartenders, teachers, and faith leaders, to answer people's questions with health information about the vaccines. These arts activities will drive local conversations beyond the events.
- ◆ Amplify materials and event promotion across as many local live and virtual platforms as possible.
- ◆ Engage in ongoing assessments of the program with partners and be responsive to their feedback and unanticipated outcomes by making any necessary program revisions and expansions.
- ◆ Use local arts and culture to communicate successes in vaccination uptake back to communities.

Public Health + Arts and Culture: How-tos

#5: Evaluate the program together.

- ◆ Design responsive evaluation processes in every phase of the project from needs assessment to planning, and throughout implementation and revision. Include process/output, outcome, and impact evaluation processes, and invite your arts partners to lead in using arts methods, along with others, to collect and analyze data all along the way.
- ◆ Include **process/output**, **outcome**, and **impact** evaluation processes, and invite your arts partners to lead in using art methods (such as photovoice or story circles), along with other methods to collect and analyze data all along the way.
 - › **Process/output evaluation** - Has the program been implemented as intended? Has it produced what was intended?
 - » *Indicators:* number of events or materials produced, participation in events, participation in specific communities/populations, distribution, uptake and sharing of materials and media, unanticipated outcomes.
 - » *Use the arts:* Use photography, video, or interactive art projects that invite comments or reactions to document public behavior and participation – they can be coded to yield both quantitative and qualitative data.
 - › **Outcome evaluation** – Is the program achieving the effects or changes it intended?
 - » *Indicators:* number of vaccines administered at events and sites, demographics of those vaccinated, changes in attitude and intention, local vaccine advocacy.
 - » *Use the arts:* use story circles, participatory mural-making, or dialogues following dramatic performances to collect data regarding changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.
 - › **Impact evaluation** – Is the program achieving its ultimate goal?
 - » *Indicators:* COVID-19 and other vaccination rates in priority communities, counties, and states.
 - » *Use the arts:* Engage artists and culture-bearers to communicate successes and impacts to local and broader audiences through music, PSAs, posters, and art installations that tell stories about how making the decision to get vaccinated impacted the lives of individuals or communities or their return to normal activities.
- ◆ See the [CDC Approach to Evaluation](#) and the [National Endowment for the Arts Guide to Community-engaged Research in Arts in Health](#).



The Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Arts & Culture and Public Health teams partnered with local artists and designers to produce creative, culturally resonant communications about COVID-19 and vaccinations.

MAPC hired nine artists and artist groups to create materials encouraging under-served communities to get vaccinated.

Quick Start Guide to Addressing Common Challenges to Vaccine Confidence with Arts and Culture

Public health and arts and cultural organizations alike are realizing the power of the arts and culture in vaccine confidence efforts. While these partnerships are not yet standard practice in public health in the United States, there are many examples of promising practices.

The following guide offers examples of promising practices and specific steps that health departments can take to address common challenges to vaccine confidence through arts and culture-based health communication programs in priority communities. Health departments should involve cross-sector partners and community members at every stage of the work, from needs assessment and program design to implementation and evaluation.

Challenge: Addressing Vaccine Concerns Among People Who Have Not Chosen To Get Vaccinated

Program Idea: Commission local artists (through a call or a contest) to collaborate in creating a comprehensive arts-based local health communication campaign, including features like murals, posters, TikTok dance videos, stickers and buttons, apparel, songs, events, and street banners that reinforce positive vaccine messages through local personal stories and voices.

Partners: Local artists, culture-bearers, arts organizations, graphic designers, health providers, community organizers, city government, media outlets

Strategies:

- ◆ Determine the most commonly circulating vaccine safety questions or concerns, and segment by audience (e.g., fertility concerns among people of childbearing age).
- ◆ Collaborate with partners to determine the best ways and means to reach segmented audiences and to provide health information to artists and creatives. Design charrettes are excellent structures for this kind of creative visioning with interdisciplinary partners. If more artists are needed to create media and events, consider posting a local call for submissions.
- ◆ Ensure that campaign materials and activities:
 - › Include educational resources and tools, and link to local resources;
 - › Explain medical and scientific concepts in compelling and understandable formats;
 - › Amplify stories of people representing a range of perspectives, including those who grapple with vaccine decision-making and who chose vaccination, despite initial concerns;
 - › Include events facilitated in common local formats such as story circles, town hall meetings, picnics, radio call-in shows, or fairs; and
 - › Feature local voices, experiences, traditions, and cultures.
- ◆ Ensure that those already engaged in social mobilization efforts for vaccine confidence use the design and media (e.g., door knockers can wear the designed t-shirts).
- ◆ Ensure that all artists involved are paid equitably.

Examples

[Creative COVID-19 Communications and Amplifier](#)

Quick Start Guide to Addressing Common Challenges to Vaccine Confidence with Arts and Culture

Challenge: Addressing Misinformation, Questions, and Concerns

Program Idea: Create a multi-modal campaign featuring a series of short videos addressing specific topics of misinformation and concern, supported by corresponding media and events. These videos may use music, animations, poetry, storytelling, spoken word, or drama to correct misinformation. Highlight local trusted voices, and link from media sites to trusted health information and local services. Empower local artists, influencers, listeners, and culture-bearers with vaccine information. Multi-modal components may include events, street art, posters, community listening sessions, apparel, performances, or art contests.

Partners: Local musicians, poets, storytellers, culture-bearers, music producers, social media specialists, schools, museums, libraries, places of worship, businesses, newspapers, and television stations.

Strategies:

- ◆ Identify misinformation, questions, and concerns circulating in communities of focus.
- ◆ Develop a list of frequently asked questions and fact-based messages that can be reused, remixed, and translated by arts and cultural partners across the multi-modal components.
- ◆ Equip and empower artists and culture-bearers to communicate across the components and through their platforms. Prepare these trusted messengers to link people to credible information sources, such as local health facilities or organizations.
- ◆ Promote vaccine conversations at events. Use theatre, storytelling, or community listening sessions to facilitate dialogue centered on local experiences that allows people to ask questions and get answers from peers, community leaders and healthcare providers. Ensure that facilitators are prepared to model empathy and help people make their own choices.
- ◆ Employ the arts and artists to translate medical and scientific concepts into more understandable and shareable ideas that resonate with people. Make CDC content visual, musical, or performative. Address topics such as short- and long-term side effects, herd immunity, how mRNA vaccines work, and COVID-19 risk factors.



Examples

Community
Immunity

Shots at the Shop

Quick Start Guide to Addressing Common Challenges to Vaccine Confidence with Arts and Culture

Challenge: Creating Vaccine Outreach Opportunities that are Appealing and Culturally Sustaining for Specific Communities

Program Idea: A series of pop-up performances, visual installations, and events in busy local places, such as parks, schools, supermarkets, libraries, bus stops, or churches, all under the umbrella of a local hashtag or campaign brand. Amplify the campaign with selfie stations, design, apparel, and media, and by sharing events on local news and social media in real time.

Partners: Local artists, culture-bearers, cultural-event organizers, arts organizations, graphic designers, healthcare providers, community organizers, students, faith leaders, city government, media outlets, and neighborhood associations.

Strategies:

- ◆ Identify communities with lower vaccine confidence or uptake and identify the highest priority barriers that need to be addressed (e.g., access, vaccine concerns).
- ◆ Invite a small group of local artists, culture-bearers, and/or community organizers to host and facilitate the program design process.
- ◆ Develop tailored performances and materials that consider language, accessibility, context, and materials use (and reuse in the future). These may include graphic design, animations, videos, TikTok performances, posters, skits, or music.
 - › Invite students to participate and critique ideas, plans, and materials specifically to help identify where inequitable or exclusionary elements may be present.
 - › Value both traditional heritage practices and current community practices.
- ◆ Promote intent to vaccinate by offering opportunities to make small, doable commitments or provide signals to others that vaccination is a healthy choice with social incentives. Consider participatory mural-making, selfie stations at local community vaccination sites, or linking vaccination with free entry to local arts and cultural venues/events.
- ◆ Ensure performers are from the local communities and highlight the events as representative of the desired return to social engagement that can be achieved through vaccine uptake.



Examples

Vaccines - NOLA
Ready

Resist COVID Take 6

Quick Start Guide to Addressing Common Challenges to Vaccine Confidence with Arts and Culture

Challenge: Making Vaccine Sites More Trustworthy and Accessible

Program Idea: Partner with known local musicians and video artists to create a series of site-specific music videos about vaccines and vaccine sites. Feature local community members in the videos, link to vaccine information, and present live performances at vaccine sites.

Partners: Local musicians, a video artist or production company, vaccination sites, community organizers, students, faith leaders, city government, media outlets, and transportation services.

Strategies:

- ◆ Determine which vaccination sites may be less frequented or trusted by communities of focus.
- ◆ Work with partners and community members (in structures like those noted above) to understand reasons for lack of access and trust, and to identify content and storylines for the music videos.
- ◆ Embed vaccine information within lyrics and visuals, including that getting a vaccine is easy, and that no one will ask for money, an insurance card, or citizenship status.
- ◆ Include lyrics or visual elements that celebrate community influencers' decisions to get vaccinated at specific sites.
- ◆ Include information about where and when vaccinations are available and how to get there.
- ◆ Expand vaccination sites through these partnerships to include more accessible, convenient, safe, trusted, and appealing options, including arts and cultural venues.
- ◆ Bring live music performances by the musicians featured in the videos to established and new vaccination sites.



Examples

[The Urban Voices Project](#)

[Milwaukee Repertory Theatre Video Project](#)

Quick Start Guide to Addressing Common Challenges to Vaccine Confidence with Arts and Culture

Challenge: Addressing Distrust in Health Systems and Government

Program Idea: A multi-modal storytelling, art and design campaign featuring art forms and visual communication mechanisms specific to local communities. Blend visual art and event-based participatory modalities that center on individual and collective stories, art, music, and the voices of community members as well as local health and government workers.

Partners: Local artists, culture-bearers, cultural event organizers, arts organizations, graphic designers, health providers, community organizers, youth groups, faith leaders, city government, media outlets, neighborhood associations, and those already engaged in social mobilization efforts for vaccine confidence.

Strategies:

- ◆ Recognize that distrust, particularly within Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latinx, under-resourced, historically excluded, and disproportionately affected communities, is well-founded. Recognize also that distrust cannot be fixed overnight or with one program, but immediate, mindful, and inclusive efforts are essential.
- ◆ Work with partners to understand what aspects of the vaccines, the vaccinators, and the health system the communities of focus most distrust. Consider using arts-based methods, such as [PhotoVoice](#), for this process and explore previous approaches to addressing these concerns.
- ◆ Host a listening session to hear community members' concerns and questions, and to recognize feelings and experiences as valid. Consider cultural formats like a story circle, quilting bee, or potluck. Commit to working with community members across all aspects of vaccine delivery, from communications to access.
- ◆ Design a campaign that centers on voices, experiences, cultural traditions, and artistry of community members, and healthcare providers.
- ◆ Invite everyone in the community, including healthcare providers and people of all ages, to submit art and to participate together in events as performers, activity facilitators, and participants.
- ◆ Create art installations and events in multiple accessible locations that feature local healthcare providers, and that humanize them through their personal stories and celebration of their artistry and cultural practices.
- ◆ Be ready to move vaccination sites to more trusted, safe, and appealing locations, such as arts and cultural venues, libraries, museums, coffee shops, barber shops, theaters, or even an artist's studio.



Examples

[The Novel Artist Health Equity Campaign](#)

[Trust Transfer Project](#)

Funding Programs and Campaigns

Both existing and new funding sources can be used for public health + arts and culture programs. Cross-sector partnerships provide opportunities for resource sharing, for more impactful reallocation of existing resources, and for accessing new and different resources and funding sources. The same budgets and resources that would be allocated to more standard programs and campaigns can often be used for arts and cultural approaches. These kinds of programs can be grassroots and inexpensive, and existing resources can be leveraged across partnerships.

For example, many communities are developing [incentive programs](#) that bring vaccines to cultural venues and provide people with benefits, such as free admission to a museum, when they get vaccinated. These programs typically don't involve exchange of funds. Instead, free or discounted admissions (or other values) fit with the organization's existing marketing strategies and budgets, creating a win-win proposition. It is crucial that value propositions for these types of partnerships are clear and equitable (see the CDC's [Engaging Arts and Culture for Vaccine Confidence: Quick Start Guide for Building Equitable Partnerships](#)).

Look to existing funding sources

- ◆ Repurpose existing budgets and resources. For example, leverage existing social mobilization and communication budgets from health departments by working with local artists instead of a marketing firm. Use advertising budgets to commission works of art (e.g., murals, billboards, songs, videos), fund arts and cultural activities or events, or to promote and provide monetary awards for local art contests.
- ◆ Request special funds from health departments and other current funders.
- ◆ Leverage funding through partnerships: Collaborate with advertising and marketing agencies that are already investing in local health and vaccine promotion efforts. Invite local businesses to provide incentives for vaccination that align with their routine marketing expenditures and provide value (e.g., a local theater could provide free or reduced-price tickets to people who get vaccinated at a particular vaccination event to build new audiences).
- ◆ Example: The [Vaccines - NOLA Ready](#) partners used their access to Federal Emergency Management Agency funds allocated for COVID-19 emergency protective measures, and to City of New Orleans Office of Cultural Economy, Ochsner Health, and Humana funding sources.



[Raizes Collective](#) is a Santa Rosa-based nonprofit that mobilizes the Latino community through art, cultural expression and environmental education.

Funding Programs and Campaigns

Look to new funding sources

- ◆ Public health funding: Numerous funding opportunities have been created to fund vaccine confidence campaigns, including the American Rescue Plan Act Awards, the Rural Health Clinic Vaccine Confidence Program, Promoting Vaccine Confidence in Local Communities through Partnerships with Regional Health Offices, and the American Pharmacists Association Foundation Incentive Grants. Watch for new opportunities from these agencies and search online or inquire with your state health department for others.
- ◆ Arts and culture funding: Many arts and culture funders have created funding opportunities for projects related to COVID-19 response and recovery. These opportunities often have quick turnaround times, and these sources can be looked to now and in the future for vaccine confidence programs. Web searches will identify these opportunities in your area. Also look to:
 - › [National Endowment for the Arts](#)
 - › State arts and culture agencies; find yours in the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies [State Arts Agency Directory](#)
 - › Americans for the Arts [Funding Resources Guide](#)
 - › Example: The [California Creative Corps](#) will award \$15 million in grant funds for arts projects that “fuel positivity and inspire safe and healthy behavior across California’s diverse populations through a media, outreach, and engagement campaign to increase vaccine adoption.”

Find more program examples and submit your programs to the [Vaccine Confidence Arts Response Repository](#)



[Amplifier](#), a nonprofit design lab that builds art and media experiments to amplify the most important movements of our times, makes curated art promoting COVID-19 vaccination uptake available for organizations to download and use for free.

Resources and Evidence

[Creating Healthy Communities through Cross-sector Collaboration White Paper](#): Examples and recommendations for public health + arts and culture partnerships

[Arts and Culture in Public Health: an Evidence-based Framework](#): Framework and evidence for using the arts in public health

[Health Promotion Practice Special Supplement An Arts in Public Health](#): 16 articles that discuss and exemplify collaborations, including practice and research between public health and arts and culture

[Ampifier.org #Vaccine](#): Free downloadable artwork for vaccine confidence and equity campaigns

[Health Communication and the Arts in the United States: A Scoping Review](#): Examples of arts-based health communication programs and summary of outcomes

[Forward: How Artists Help Drive Better Health Outcomes](#): Commentary, case studies, and toolkit for public health + arts and culture partnerships and programs

[Community-based Organizations COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit](#): CDC toolkit to help community-based organizations educate communities

[University of Florida COVID-19 Arts Response](#): Advisory briefs, webinars, and program/media repositories

[Art-train National Training and Technical Assistance Program](#) for using federal COVID-19 funds for public health + arts and culture partnerships

[Vaccinate with Confidence](#): CDC strategy to reinforce confidence in COVID-19 vaccines

[Art, Anti-Racism and Health Equity: "Don't Ask Me Why, Ask Me How!"](#): Commentary on how art can help people unlearn misinformation and mitigate the health effects of racism.

[National Endowment for the Arts Guide to Community-engaged Research in Arts in Health](#): Guidance on how to partner effectively in documenting and studying the contributions of community-based arts programs to positive health outcomes

[What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?](#) A scoping review: World Health Organization Report on Arts in Health

Engaging Arts and Culture for Vaccine Confidence website: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/vaccinate-with-confidence/art.html>

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Cover: Greater Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council; page 4: City of New Orleans; page 6: Greater Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council; page 8: Hip Hop Public Health; page 9: City of New Orleans; page 10: Milwaukee Repertory Theatre; page 11: Springfield Cultural Partnership; page 12: Raizes Collective; page 13: Amplifier.

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- ◆ **Elisabeth Wilhelm, John Donovan, Louise Shaw, Kathleen Holmes, and Grace Liggett**, Vaccine Confidence and Demand Team on the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- ◆ **Dr. Erin Stair**, CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Communication and Education Support Contractor, St George Tanaq Corporation

Partners:

- ◆ University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine
- ◆ National Endowment for the Arts
- ◆ Georgia Department of Public Health
- ◆ St. George Tanaq Corporation

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- ◆ **Sunil Iyengar**, National Endowment for the Arts

Graphic Design: **Jen Cronin** and **Timothy Knight**, St. George Tanaq Corporation

Recommended Citation: CDC (2021). *Engaging Arts and Culture for Vaccine Confidence: Short Guide for Building Programs and Creative Campaigns*. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Appreciation to the following artists and organizations whose work is cited as examples: Billy Holiday, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Amplifier, Hip Hop Public Health, Biden Administration, City of New Orleans, Resist Covid Take 6, Carrie Mae Weems, Urban Voices Project, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Raizes Collective, 4Culture, Public Health – Seattle & King County, Springfield Cultural Partnership, Community Music School of Springfield, and California Arts Council

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