Addendum

Considerations for Conducting Rapid Community Assessment with Refugee, Immigrant, and Migrant Communities

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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Vaccinate with **Confidence**
Strategy to Reinforce Confidence in Covid-19 Vaccines

Purpose

This document outlines considerations and guidelines for working with Refugee, Immigrant, and Migrant (RIM) Communities to the United States, including refugees and immigrants with various documentation statuses, as part of a Rapid Community Assessment (RCA). A full RCA guide with detailed steps and adaptable tools is available on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website](#).

RCA Step 1: Identify Objectives & Communities of Focus

Identify Your Objective(s)

An RCA may be conducted with RIM community members, sometimes referred to as newcomers, for many reasons. The following example objectives can help public health professionals better understand the context and strengths of these communities in order to develop asset-focused approaches to increase COVID-19 vaccination.

- Identify RIM communities within and around a geographic area to aid public health authorities, community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations in planning and delivering COVID-19 vaccination services (i.e., mobile vaccination clinics and vaccine education) in their community.

- Understand demographics and sociocultural characteristics within these communities in order to tailor or develop approaches to increase COVID-19 vaccination uptake.

- Understand beliefs and opinions RIM community members may have about the COVID-19 vaccine recommendations and safety, access to vaccines, and access to information.

- Identify communication channels and social networks, and understand how RIM community members use and consume information in order to promote COVID-19 vaccine uptake and disseminate accurate COVID-19 prevention and vaccination resources more effectively.

- Identify opportunities for culturally and linguistically appropriate changes to local partnerships, programs, and services to increase accessibility and uptake of – as well as confidence in — COVID — 19 vaccine.

When identifying objectives, consider how they might be integrated with other existing programs and plans affecting RIM communities, such as health, school, and civic outreach programs.

Identify Your Community(ies) of Focus

RIM community members include refugees, asylees, people with Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs), and immigrants with a variety of documentation statuses.

If you have limited information about RIM community members in your area, speak with multiple key local contacts to learn about the population and how to best identify sub-groups. Consider reaching out to your State Refugee Health Coordinator, local health department, school district, organizations of local business owners, or community-based organizations (e.g., refugee resettlement agencies, immigrant-led organizations) for more information.

When thinking about RIM communities to focus on for the RCA, consider the following relevant characteristics to better define that population and inform potential approaches to engagement:

- Geographic area (e.g., statewide or in a specific county or counties)

- Immigration status (e.g., refugee, asylee, legal permanent resident, SIV)

- Country of origin (e.g., Afghan, Bhutanese, Burmese, Congolese, Eritrean, Iraqi, Syrian)

- Ethnic group (e.g., the Pashtun ethnic group within Afghani communities)

- Religious beliefs and/or preferences

- Primary language spoken

- Gender orientation

- Sexual orientation

- Age

- Existing family and community relationships

- Educational attainment

- Proficiency in primary language

- Health insurance status

- Established healthcare provider and relationships within health systems

- Health literacy beliefs

Review Existing Data

There are a number of sources that may be useful for gathering published data:

- State and Local Health Department Directories

- Office of Refugee Resettlement Key Contacts: State Refugee Coordinators and State Refugee Health Coordinators

- Refugee Processing Center

- CDC Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Health

- CDC Centers of Excellence in Newcomer Health

- National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants (NRC-RIM)

- National Center for Farmworker Health

- [Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)](#)

- Local immigrant or other relevant consulate branches

- Local universities that work with RIM communities

  - » [Georgia State University Prevention Research Center](#)

  - » [Northwest Center for Public Health Practice | Public Health Training, Research, and Evaluation for the Northwest](#)

  - » [University of Minnesota: Center for Global Health and Social Responsibility](#)

- [The UN Refugee Agency](#)

- [ReliefWeb](#)

- [Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health](#)

When reviewing existing data, keep in mind that:

- Data sources about RIM communities may have limitations and may contain bias. Data are also generally coarse/ aggregated; thus, local communities you work with may present differently than what existing data suggest.

- Community members will likely have a better understanding of community dynamics and cultural and linguistic diversity than public data sources, so you will need to compare data with their insights and possibly explore informal data collection methods to gather community insights.

Human Subjects Considerations

If your organization or agency has Institutional Review Board requirements (IRB), submit your RCA plan for IRB approval and/or other type(s) of research determination approval. This should be done after your community partner has agreed to the approach. It is important that the concerns, rights, and needs of participants are respected and prioritized, protecting personal or identifying information during data collection, storage, and reporting.

The following protective practices are recommended when working with RIM populations.

- Avoid asking for personal identifiers such as state ID and addresses. Confidentiality is the highest priority.

- Do not take photos or collect identifiable information unless you have obtained consent and are sure consent is not just given, but truly understood.

- Those conducting the RCA (or as many people on the team as possible) should ideally reflect the culture of the community of focus and be fluent in their spoken language.

- All materials should be translated into the language of communication for the communities you seek to include. Consult with your IRB about their requirements for pre-translation of materials versus "on-the-fly" translation of materials. Review the policies and procedures of your organization related to interpretation for interaction with individuals participating in the RCA.

- Since education and literacy levels may vary, steps should be included in the data collection process to ensure participants fully understand the purpose of the community assessment and any possible risks or benefits (to them and/or their community).

- Consider adding clarification or assurances to address any concerns (e.g., not providing their real names) the RIM community members may have related to public charge rules and determinations that may affect immigration.

- Be sensitive to language regarding immigration status; do not directly ask for unauthorized immigration status. Ask questions related to this topic and avoid public health research terms like "informants" or "surveillance" that can have associations with government-related institutions like ICE/immigration.

- Consider location of data collection and gender dynamics and sensitivities at play during interview and data collection. Be mindful about preferences for male/female interviewers.

- Consider whether survey data collection, focus groups, informal intercept interviews, or one-on-one interviews might be the best data collection format for your study participants.

- Consider if and when power dynamics (i.e., between the data collection team and the RIM community members) may affect the data collection process. For example, if one of your methods includes community listening sessions, consider holding the sessions without the assessment team present (i.e., with a community member facilitating a recorded interview) instead of direct one-on-one interviews with project staff.

- Be prepared to offer information or resources to communities while conducting surveys or interviews (e.g., where to get vaccinated, transportation resources, and legal aid assistance resources). For example:
  » [Vaccine Central | NRC-RIM](#)
  » [Get the Facts Campaign | NRC-RIM](#)
  » [Vaccines.gov - Find COVID-19 vaccine locations near you](#)

- Include an RCA representative's contact information on any survey in case participants have questions.

RCA Step 2: Plan for the Assessment
Identify Community Partners

It is critical to work closely with community organizations that represent and serve your communities of focus. These include:

- Faith-based groups and institutions

- Community health workers/traditional health workers

- Grassroots organizations

- [Refugee Resettlement Agencies](#)

- Community-based organizations led by or serving newcomer and multilingual communities

- [Ethnic Community Health Boards](#)

- Refugee and immigrant coalition advocacy groups

- Schools with multilingual students

- Low- or no-barrier clinics/FQHCs, where RIM community members establish medical homes

- Local health departments in communities with large RIM populations

- Legal aid/immigration services

- Other social service organizations

- Ethnic-based media (radio)

- Academic institutions with expertise in RIM communities

- Consulates from the countries of origin of the communities in the RCA

- Other health programs (e.g., Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; hospitals, education departments; public housing agencies; fire/EMS; public safety)

NOTE: Some very rural communities may rely heavily on local advocates that serve as community assets. Visiting local gathering places (e.g., food trucks, stores, check cashing or money order services, places of worship, funeral homes) can help identify ideal partners.

The location of RIM communities may be dependent upon historical factors, affordable housing, and employment opportunities. Specific industries like manufacturing, factory, or farm work may be more common in more rural settings. To narrow down potential community partners or facilitate introductions to community groups, start with organizations that are already engaged in vaccination and/or health services (e.g., clinics) and build from there. Consider partners' bandwidth and capacity and engage them early in the process.

NOTE: When engaging employers or industry representatives, it is important to inform them that activities are not regulated, audited, or recorded. This can help improve participation and promote candid information sharing.

Obtain Support

Once you have identified potential community partners:

- Meet with partners to understand their COVID-19 concerns among RIM communities and offer the RCA as an option for addressing these concerns.

- See guides and promising practices in the NRC-RIM Community Engagement Toolkit for how to engage with community partners.

- The steps and recommendations in Co-Creating Public Health Guidance with RIM Community Partners: A Checklist for Health Departments is broadly applicable multiple contexts.

- A key component to consider early in developing partnerships is to discuss the available budget and how community organizations and their staff will be paid for their time and expertise.

Identify Resources

In addition to the RCA team and supporting partners, here are some key resources you may need:

- Training for staff awareness on how to safely and ethically conduct surveys or interviews and document qualitative data in RIM communities

- Translation, interpretation, and other language access services

- Printed or recorded educational materials (developed with literacy and plain language needs in mind) to provide to people who may have questions

Keep in mind that:

- RIM community members may only speak the language predominant in their community of origin and some may be illiterate in their heritage language due to limited educational opportunities.

- There may be limited written forms of specific languages. For example, Rohingya (a language spoken by an ethnic group from Burma) is a spoken language, so written resources may be unavailable.

Budget considerations:

While each project will have its own unique budget and resource needs, there are some key areas that are worthwhile to consider for translation of questionnaires listed in the table below. This table aligns with a guidance document from PolicyLab on how to approach translation and cultural adaptation of questionnaires. Each RCA may have additional budget considerations.

Item	Estimated Time or Cost
Bilingual/bicultural team member to participate in project approach planning Potential components: • Identifying project approach • Determining translation and interpretation strategy • Ongoing guidance	6-12 hours x hourly rate
Forward translation of questionnaire (by local certified translator or certified professional service)	Cost per word differs by language
Study team training	4-8 hours
Review English questions as a team	1 hour/block of 10 questions
Complete back translation	2 hours/block of 10 questions
Recruitment	2 hours/person identified for pre-testing of translated screening tool (2 hours x number of persons)
Food for recruitment and community meetings	2-3 meals x desired number of people participating
Gift cards for pre-test participants	Gift card amount per participant may differ based on length/sensitivity/participant for each hour of participation

Choose Assessment Methods

To make the assessment more comprehensive, it is important to use a combination of methods to gather information from resettlement staff, employers, healthcare providers, trusted representatives within the community of focus, RIM communtiy members, and their families. Methods may include surveys, listening sessions, community interviews, and observations, and the methods you choose should consider factors such as culture and available resources. Keep in mind that informal conversations are an important aspect of encouraging participation as well as relationship building.

Considerations for choosing assessment methods with newcomer and multilingual communities are outlined below:

- Listening sessions, focus groups or one-on-one interviews, and surveys may be primary sources of data collection. It is important to consider the language skills needed for each method and whether or not the team has the appropriate multilingual skills for the interviews, or if additional team member or consultants will need to be recruited. In the most ideal scenario, the sessions will be conducted in the language spoken by the community member. However, it is also possible to conduct sessions with the use of an interpreter with experience conducting such sessions. If sessions will be recorded and transcribed, it is important to consider translation if not all RCA team members speak and read a shared language.

- Keep in mind methodological and cultural challenges when using surveys with your communities of focus.

  » Survey methodology may be strongly affected by low literacy levels and translation challenges. If used, it is recommended that the option is provided to conduct surveys verbally and there are appropriate trained and bilingual staff to conduct surveys. The survey items should go through a process of both translation and cultural validation.

  » Phone calls and texts may be costly for community members. Consider discussing this topic with community partners to determine what the preferred modality may be. For example free, encrypted messaging platforms may be preferred.

  » Conducting surveys at community sites (such as stores, restaurants and/or places of worship), work sites, and housing sites may make your sample more representative of the entire community of focus. For example, conducting data collection in all of the above sites ensures that you are capturing information from community members who may not have access to regular transportation.

- A methodology for consideration, not included in the RCA Guide, is Community-Based Participatory Research Mapping. This exercise involves creating a visual map of the community with the input of the community members. This can be helpful in characterizing mobility (i.e., reasons for movement, trends, and patterns) and increasing understanding of community perceptions. This may be particularly relevant for RIM communities as populations shift and change frequently which may not be captured in publicly available data. For more information, see the Population Connectivity Across Borders toolkit.

Form the Assessment Team

Once you have determined the scope of data collection, assess how many team members will be needed and the level of commitment from them over the course of the RCA to achieve your objectives. Ensure that the project is appropriately resourced to value the time of all team members, particularly community members.

In forming the RCA team:

- Recruit RIM project staff and volunteers who are trusted by their communities and can often be engaged in data collection.

- If those implementing the RCA are not from the community themselves, they should consider asking a trusted partner to join their team.

- Engaging RIM community members and non-native English-speaking members in the planning, implementation, dissemination, and evaluation phases as content experts (whose time is valued, and if possible, compensated) is recommended.

- Train and orient the team as needed on special considerations for working in RIM communities including establishing rapport, reducing bias in data collection methods, how to work with interpreters, and confidentiality protocols.

- Project staff from outside the community of focus should position themselves as guests and defer to local community knowledge and relationships.

Recruit Participants

There are many strategies to recruit newcomer and multilingual participants for an RCA. These include:

- Outreach through
    » Local community partners (e.g., resettlement agencies, refugee and immigrant community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, small ethnic businesses, local media outlets)
    » FQHCs
    » Places of worship
    » Schools
    » Employers
- Visits to
    » Housing developments and apartment complexes where RIM community members live
    » Public spaces such as culturally specific grocery and other stores, check cashing stores, and small immigrant community led businesses

Also consider the following:

- It is most effective to work through trusted community leaders and representatives to identify participants and create a safe and open environment for them to participate in assessment activities.

- Strive to include non-work sites for assessment activities. This will help you to meet more people, provide more convenient locations to potential participants, and include more participants.

- If planning to administer the assessment at a place of employment, coordinate with the supervisor in advance to explain the project and objectives, address questions or concerns, and consult about ideal times to engage staff in assessment activities.

- Informal conversations are an important aspect of encouraging participation as well as relationship building.

- Women might be more likely to share detailed/informed health and family well-being information, especially about children, and should be approached by another woman if possible. Similarly, men might be more comfortable speaking with another man.

- Providing cash incentives for participating in data collection activities can facilitate engagement. Ensure that any participant incentives are in a form that RIM community members can use.

  » If providing incentives at work sites, obtain employer approval.

  » Company checks can be difficult to cash at check-cashing locations for people who do not have bank accounts. Cash or gift cards are preferred.

  » If distributing gift cards, seek advice from local community-based organizations regarding appropriate amounts or popular stores for the local community.

  » Pre-activated gift cards are recommended. Non-activated gift cards are confusing and not recommended because many people, especially those who have recently arrived in the U.S., are unfamiliar with gift cards. Provide instructions in participants' preferred language on how to use gift cards — along with a phone number if the participant has any trouble.

RCA Step 3: Collect and Analyze Data

Data Collection

The RCA Guide offers a variety of data collection tools that can be adapted to RIM communities, including community interviews, listening sessions, focus groups, observations, and surveys.

Data collection forms, surveys, and interview guides should be prepared in languages spoken by the community of focus at appropriate literacy levels prior to the RCA and piloted before beginning data collection if possible. If piloting is not possible, they should be reviewed by team members and partners who are from the local community before distributing. Data collection may be more effective if a RIM community expert is administering the data collection tools, to ensure that community members understand the questions in both verbal and written form.

Consider the following:

- When collecting data, ensure that researchers articulate anonymity and confidentiality of participant responses. Some community members may feel sensitive about their private responses being shared across public platforms. Generally speaking, data should never be tied to any personal identifiers or specific locations.

- Ask what language the participant speaks and prefers for data collection as many RIM community members speak multiple languages and possess varying degrees of literacy within each language.

- Data collection times will need to be flexible (evenings, weekends) to accommodate schedules. Some people may have schedules at night or start work very early. Additionally, people within the same family unit may work different shifts. Sensitivities around childcare need to be taken into consideration.

- If data collectors are visiting community sites without advance permission, they should quickly identify and speak with a reliable community partner regarding their visit.

- Intercept interviews can evolve out of an informal conversation.

- Consider how the Social Determinants of Health and historical experiences may affect participant engagement and willingness to share information.

Data Analysis

When conducting data analysis of assessments with RIM populations, consider the following:

- It is critical to interpret qualitative data within the socio-cultural and linguistic context and ideally with multilingual and multicultural team members.

- Characteristics highlighted in Step 1 that help to characterize the communities within the RCA can be utilized to evaluate the data in subgroups. The ability to understand survey, interview, and other quantitative data by language and country of origin, for example, will broaden your collective understanding about groups of people who are not represented in the large data sets. This will allow interventions, educational approaches, and programs to be better tailored to the community.

- If possible, invite community partners to join your analysis team and ongoing discussions. After completing analysis and write up of preliminary findings, consult community partners or other community members to ensure that the findings reflect community narratives and experiences.

RCA Step 4: Report Findings and Identifying Solutions

RCA findings should be reported to stakeholders, partners, and in the communities where data collection was conducted in order to facilitate interpretation, validation, and discussion of solutions. It is important to acknowledge everyone's participation at these community meetings and express gratitude for communities' participation in the RCA.

In addition, it is recommended that a plain language summary of findings with supporting visuals is disseminated in English and the languages of communication within the communities. Also consider other channels (such as particular social media sites or messaging platforms) to reach RIM community members to share findings.

Once there is feedback and consensus on the key barriers affecting the communities of focus, work with community stakeholders, partners, and members to identify appropriate solutions using the guidance and resources in the RCA Guide.

RCA Step 5: Evaluate Your Efforts

It is important to evaluate how well RCA efforts reached the intended RIM communities and gathered the necessary insights. It is recommended to:

1. Assess whether the RCA team experienced difficulty engaging with any subgroups within your community of focus.

2. Consider the limitations of reach due to RCA timing given competing work schedules and daily stressors RIM community members face in the U.S.

3. Review findings with key local contacts and experts on RIM communities.

4. Review findings and recommendations with local community partners to ensure inclusivity of diverse community member voices.