

COVID-19 Farmworker Outreach Demonstration Projects 2021

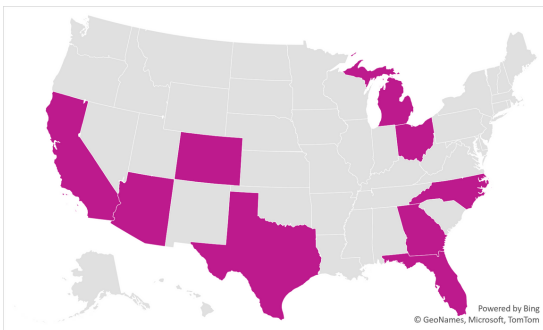
In Spring 2021, NCFH provided individual subcontracts of \$20,000 - \$100,000 totaling \$1.3 million to 19 community-based organizations and agricultural employers across the U.S. to increase access to the COVID-19 vaccine and to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on farmworker families.

Project Overview

Despite farmworkers being designated as "essential workers", they are often logistically and socially isolated from existing public health resources, including COVID-19 vaccines and other mitigation efforts. In October 2020, NCFH partnered with the The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on farmworker communities. The Demonstration Projects are one strategy of that response, [see more about the National Agricultural Worker Health Program](#). In April 2021, NCFH launched a request for projects from community-based organizations and agricultural employers to protect and safeguard farmworker families and stop the spread of COVID-19 through increasing access to vaccines. All projects were reviewed by a selection committee made up of NCFH staff and representatives from farmworker serving organizations, who scored the projects based on defined criteria including but not limited to cost efficiency, serving highly-vulnerable farmworker populations, evidence of partnerships, and acceptable use of funding. Nineteen out of 74 project proposals were provided contracts. Projects took place from April 2021 through December 2021. To evaluate the collective impact, all projects submitted an end of project report and participated in end of project interviews, for a total of 19 interviews.

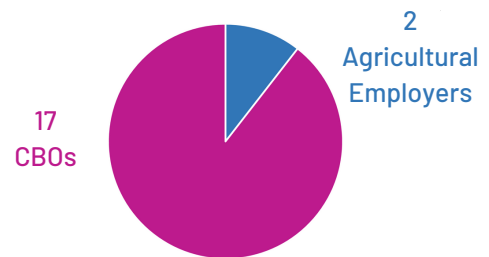
Demonstration Project Snapshot

Projects spanned 9 states from the West Coast to the East Coast.

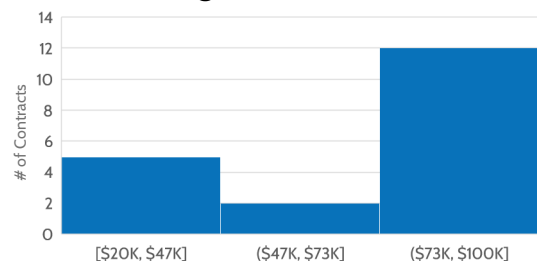


[Click here](#) to view the Demonstration Project organizations.

89% of Demonstration Projects were Community Based Organizations (CBOs)



The average contract was \$72,272



Project Outcomes

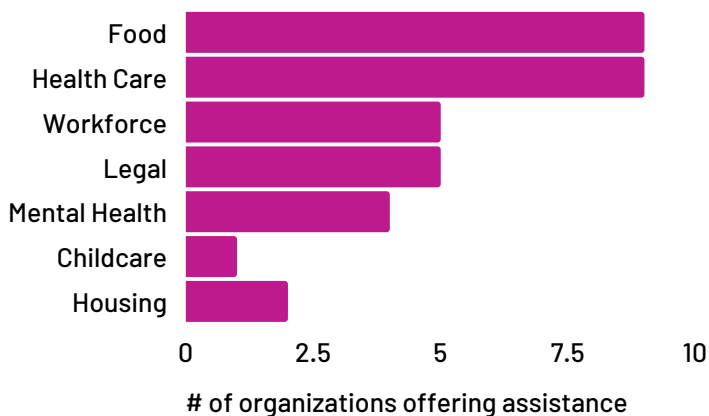
62,343 COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered to farmworkers and their families from April 2021 through December 2021

- 17,266 farmworkers initiated vaccine
- 27,739 farmworkers completed vaccine series*
- 17,338 family of farmworkers vaccinated

*Includes farmworkers who received the second-dose of a two-dose vaccine or the one-dose vaccine. Boosters were not widely available or recommended for the majority of this contract period.



84% of organizations provided additional assistance or referrals to services to a total of 25,819 farmworkers



The majority of organizations provided additional services beyond vaccination access to farmworkers and their families, to address other challenges during the pandemic. Food packages and referrals to other health care services were common support services offered among Demonstration Projects. Organizations also supported over 680 farmworkers in quarantine or isolation.

Organizations reached 446,652 farmworkers with education addressing COVID-19 vaccines

Organizations conducted outreach to notify farmworker communities about vaccine clinics and to provide education on COVID-19 prevention and mitigation. Collectively, organizations provided 446,652 farmworkers with information on COVID-19 vaccine clinics, educating 97,993 through in-person outreach, distributing over 110,000 flyers, and reaching over 238,000 people through digital media and materials (measured by social media impressions, video streaming, etc.). Projects also provided education on COVID-19 mitigation and prevention to over 354,266 farmworkers through in person and digital outreach.

"...we know the gas stations where the farmworkers cash their checks on Friday nights, and we go there when the [bus drivers] bring the buses there and we get on the buses and we talk to the driver and we bring farmworker kits to give everyone on the bus and speak with all of them... they are definitely more receptive when they know we're giving them something and we're there to support them."

- CBO Representative

Partnerships

All project staff from participating organizations agreed partnerships were critical to reach and provide vaccines for farmworker communities. Funding provided opportunities for new cross-sector collaboration, with farmworker-serving organizations cooperating with schools/education, faith leaders, health centers, agricultural employers, legal aid, consulates, pharmacies, and state and local government. Along with new partnerships, projects expanded and deepened previous partnerships that organizations believe will be sustained into other services for farmworkers beyond COVID-19. Demonstration Projects also raised awareness and credibility of the work of farmworker-serving organizations among larger health and government entities that organizations believe may lead to more funding and collaborations.

"It's really opened our eyes that we need to be more present in the community to other organizations, to continue building on those partnerships and leveraging them."

- Agricultural Employer

"We were able to strengthen not just partnerships, but the credibility of our work, because people realized how critical our work was. We were out in the community, in the field, at the pick up sites, we were out with the farmworkers, taking them the information... we were that bridge that we had always been."

- CBO Representative

Challenges

While specific project challenges varied based on organization, region, and characteristics of the local farmworker population, key themes emerged during end of project conversations with organizations.

- **Establishing Trust.** Vaccination efforts were impacted by the lack of trust between the served community and health care providers according to project staff. Organizations reported that farmworker communities often did not have existing relationships with health care providers, exacerbating issues of vaccine access and hesitancy.
- **Vaccine Hesitancy.** Organizations reported vaccine hesitancy among farmworker communities, citing root causes such as lack of access to educational resources/information, history of mistreatment/mistrust, competing anti-vaccine narratives via social media, the J&J vaccine pause, and religious affiliation.
- **Farmworker Occupational Factors.** Projects found that health care access factors intensified in the pandemic: vaccine clinic schedules often conflicted with farmworker's long work hours; isolated locations of farms and farmworkers meant more staff and time needed for outreach; and lack of transportation available to farmworkers. These logistical factors made it difficult and time-consuming for program staff to coordinate with health providers and farmworkers to arrange vaccine clinics or vaccination appointments, especially when vaccine availability was limited.
- **Staffing Troubles.** Many organizations discussed issues with limited staff availability due to factors like vaccine mandates, difficulties in virtual and social distanced training and hiring, and lack of volunteers. Organizations also pointed to staffing issues at partner health care providers, such as lack of bilingual staff and staff available to administer vaccines in the evenings.

"Language is a colossal factor, culture, understanding. Most of our people speak the Spanish of the workplace, but that is the only Spanish they have access to, but all of the rest of their conversation is in their local Mayan language, of which there are multitudes." - CBO Representative

Project Stories

Each of the 19 participating organizations spoke about their successes, ranging from new partnerships to outreach strategies to continuing support services to resilient and dedicated staff, volunteers, and communities. The following are a glimpse of those stories. For a more in-depth account of one project, check out the NC FIELD case study.



Over 90% of employees vaccinated with support from employer and new partnerships

"We learned to partner with outside agencies, and leverage those partnerships to help bring something to the table to our employees to help them with either getting vaccinated, getting tested... making sure that they had the right support services for them to get what they needed."

- Agricultural Employer



Student outreach workers educate peers and parents in Mississippi farming community

A community organization in a rural Mississippi farming community trained high school students to provide COVID-19 health education and conduct outreach in their community. Youth could "look [their] parent in the eye and say I want you to [get vaccinated] because I love you... we could never do that individually with those parents."



Meeting farmworkers "where they are at" opens communication channels in Southern Florida

Outreach was more than printing flyers or posting to social media, rather outreach workers were "meeting them at their doors and answering those questions for them, and making it part of the conversations that we have every single day."

Next Up

As the COVID-19 pandemic stretches into 2022, NCFH and farmworker serving organizations reflect on lessons learned and look toward the future to continue to support farmworker communities, both in this pandemic and against other infectious diseases and health issues that disproportionately impact farmworker communities.



Lessons Learned

- Educational materials need to be available in multiple languages (Spanish, Indigenous languages, and Haitian Creole, etc.), and should include more pictures, and audio and video for low-literacy audiences.
- In-person, safe, outreach is crucial to reaching farmworkers, including providing physical access to services and education.
- Multi-year funding is critical to sustain partnerships, retain staff, and continue this work in addition to other health services like mobile clinics.
- Intermediary organizations, such as NCFH, allow smaller organizations to access federal funding (such as CDC funding) with decreased administrative burden.



Sustainable Impact

- Organizational growth experienced during this project will support future work with flu and COVID-19 prevention, including boosters and vaccinations for children. Examples of growth included expansion of community partners, trust established between clinic providers and farmworkers, and more collaboration with health centers.
- Project funding allowed organizations to expand their services and partnerships, and be more competitive for other contracts and/or types of funding; ultimately offering more operational sustainability.

While the demonstration projects concluded at the end of 2021, the need to support farmworkers' access to vaccines, support services, and health care continues. NCFH is dedicated to continue providing additional funding, training and technical assistance, and research to support a network of farmworker-serving organizations and health centers. Find out more about that work on the [NCFH website](#).