

## PHAC COVID-19 Vaccine Project

To-date & Moving Forward

Funding period: Sept 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

### Improving Low-Barrier Access to Vaccines for Underserved Populations: Vaccine Microgrants and Community of Practice for Community-Based Health Care Providers

#### Year 3 Project:

- Building on learnings from the first 2 years, the project will support community-based health care providers across Canada in their efforts to support marginalized populations in gaining confidence and equitable access to important vaccines, utilizing a low-barrier, integrated health care approach.
- The project will provide microgrants (\$25,000 each) to four organizations across Canada:
  - Northreach (Grande Prairie, AB), Wellness Wheel (Regina, SK), Interlake Reserves Tribal Council (Manitoba), and Ally Centre of Cape Breton (Nova Scotia)
- Using these microgrants, each organization will develop strategies for promoting confidence and equitable access to vaccinations.
- The project will also convene a national community of practice to discuss challenges and generate solutions to key practice issues related to improving vaccine confidence and equitable access.

#### Recommendations from the First 2 Years

#### Project Structure:

- **Microgrant Program:** from \$15,000 grants in Year 1 to \$25,000 grants distributed to 20 organizations nationally.
- **Virtual and In-Person Incubator Workshops.** Deep dive sessions to share lessons learned and develop recommendations for successful health care strategies among micrograntees.
- **Community of Practice.** Strengthen national network and knowledge sharing.

#### General Recommendations

According to microgrant recipients, the following recommendations were identified when implementing health care strategies for equity-deserving groups:

- **Engage the community** in designing and implementing the initiatives;
- Take an **integrated health care approach**;
- Incentivize through addressing **Social Determinants of Health**;
- **Establish relationships with key partners** within and outside of the healthcare system;
- **Move beyond science-based messaging** by foregrounding **social connection and dialogical approaches to communication** around COVID-19 which **meet people "where they're at"**;
- Use **peer-based approaches** (to health communication and direct health/harm reduction support);
- **Address structural barriers** (such as race, gender, and language);
- Be intentional around choosing and creating **accessible, non-stigmatizing spaces**.
- Align and **find synergies** with what's already being done,
- Draw on the ideas and affirmation of the **networking events** (CoPs and Incubators), and
- **Widening the lens** beyond COVID vaccines; combining COVID vaccinations with other vaccine offerings

#### Recommendations to the Dr. Peter Centre



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Microgrant recipients put forward the following recommendations to the Dr. Peter Centre to improve future microgrant programming:

- Continue the current **flexible granting and accountability** structure;
- **Provide more information in the beginning** of any evaluation requirements;
- Work with the funder to find ways of **extending the timeframe** (or minimizing funding delays);
- Continue emphasizing strategies to help micrograntees **find synergies** with current activities;
- Prioritize previously funded projects and their **sustainability**;
- Consider ways of **prioritizing events** that would enable projects to share their initiatives and implementation strategies early on.

### Recommendations to the Public Health Agency of Canada

Finally, micrograntees identified the following recommendations to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) for working effectively with front-line organizations to promote vaccine uptake and health care overall, utilizing Dr. Peter Centre's microgrant program structure:

- Continue to find ways of creating a **more robust ongoing funding** for this work, in the context of a network that incubates and helps sustain and grow these innovative practices;
- Support **DPC's role as grant administrator** and the microgrants model as a strategy to be replicated as a complement to the traditional funding stream;
- Find ways to introduce the **developmental approach** enabled by the microgrants to your wider granting stream (i.e., not tying projects and their budgets so rigidly to activities but allowing people latitude to learn as they go based on which practices are effective in that context, and even to shift their goals as the communities' priorities become better understood);
- Explore ways to further **expedite the funding** to ensure DPC and micrograntees can fully benefit from this opportunity, and
- Consider **extending the timeframe** for future microgrants.

### Quotes from microgrant recipients on the impacts of their projects

- *"We had harm reduction conversations in a positive, vibrant, exciting environment. Having education paired with entertainment, bringing resources to where people are."* – Microgrant recipient
- *"Listening to communities is perhaps more important than speaking to or sharing information to communities."* – Microgrant recipient