Building Effective Partnerships for Influenza Prevention: Lessons Learned

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Objectives

- Present my top 10 lessons learned regarding the formation and maintenance of partnerships for increasing uptake of influenza vaccines.
- These lessons are based on our experience working in the US with domestic partners.
Lesson #1: Building effective partnerships is difficult. Plan accordingly!

• Effective partnership building…...
  – requires a great deal of time, effort and other resources
    • Education of decision-makers regarding the value of investing in partnerships may be needed
  – requires thoughtful planning, including how you will evaluate your partnership efforts
    • Set expectations for small wins at first
  – is a long-term commitment, requiring a sustainable plan/approach
Lesson #2: Be strategic in choosing your partners

• Develop criteria for selecting and prioritizing partners:
  – Are they respected/trusted? Where do they fall on the “credibility ladder”?  
  – Do they have access to the intended audience or community?  
  – What is their capacity to implement and sustain flu vaccine communication activities?  
  – What is their level of interest? Is there a champion for the issue of flu prevention in the organization?
Lesson #3: Articulate a vision and roadmap for success

• Acknowledge the importance of their participation in achieving success

• Recognize the resources they bring to the table (e.g., their expertise, perspectives, communication channels, etc.)

• Make sure the vision taps into what motivates them (e.g., protecting their community, enhancing the credibility of their organization)
Lesson #4: Have a clear “ask”

• Be clear and straight-forward when asking partners to commit to the effort
  – It is helpful to have a “menu” of specific activities partners can choose from which range in commitment/resource levels
  – Remember that for many partners social media is a simple way to help spread the word
• Be equally clear about what you can and can not do to support partners’ efforts
• Remember that effective partnerships are equitable
Lesson #5: Create an environment and opportunities for sharing challenges, barriers, and successes

- Listening sessions have been a helpful tool for:
  - gaining insight into the challenges partners face
  - dilemma-sharing and problem-solving
  - sharing best practices and celebrating successes
  - ensuring our approach will meet/is meeting partner needs
  - allowing partners opportunities to network
Lesson #6: Identify and engage trusted messengers

• These should be individuals who:
  – know the communities you are trying to reach, and
  – are plugged into “the grapevine” (those informal networks that can make or break a partnership)

• Trusted messengers should be the connection point to sustain communication
Lesson #7: Connect your partners to each other

• Remember, it’s about creating a network
• Partners can achieve things together that they could never do on their own
• Get to know the assets of your partners and connect them to each other
Lesson #8: Use a “planning with”, not “planning for” approach

• Grassroots leaders often value partner relations where empowerment (not power over) is the goal
• Empowering partners take ownership of their efforts helps to achieve success and sustainability
Lesson #9: Maintain patience, respect, and sensitivity to differences in knowledge and attitudes toward flu vaccination

- Know that it may take time to gain the trust and understanding of partners who may be skeptical of vaccines and your motives
- Often the perceptions of the opinion leaders reflect those of the community
- Critical to listen to, understand, educate, and empower these key leaders to be informed advocates
Lesson #10: Provide incentives, recognition, and acknowledgements

- Recognize partners locally within their community, as well as nationally.
- Thank your partners often for their contributions.
Many thanks to Yvonne Garcia and HMA Associates for teaching me these lessons and contributing to this presentation!
Thank you!

For more information please contact me at fluinbox@cdc.gov

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Pan/Seasonal Flu Partnership Structure
(featured logos only represent a few example partners)