

**new
routes
to community
health**



IMMIGRANT
MEDIA MAKING
**NEW VOICES FOR
COMMUNITY
HEALTH**



lessons and recommendations from the field

Table of contents

Executive summary.....	3
Introduction.....	6
Creating local media for community health improvement.....	8
Funding and evaluating local media.....	23
New voices for community health: Directions for the future.....	29
Research methods.....	30
Respondent profile	32
Evaluation checklist	33
Acknowledgments	34
Resources	37
Bibliography	40
Key organizations	42
New Routes grantees	43

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Executive summary

“We want to break the very American notion that your individual freedom is all you came for. You know, we actually came for collective freedom. We came together to improve things together, in our neighborhoods.”

—Maria Poblet, executive director of Causa Justa/Just Cause

As recently as five years ago, few predicted the proliferation of YouTube, Facebook, or smartphones. Recent events, including citizen-led demonstrations in the United States and the Middle East, point to the central role these technologies play in grassroots organizing. Despite their pitfalls, these technologies offer a sea change in opportunities to connect. And it seems clear that more people will continue to use easily accessible media, with its affordable production and distribution capabilities, to shape new networks on an expanding range of platforms.

This report offers guidance for community organizations and those who fund social change in how best to harness the power of these technologies for community health improvement. Specifically, does increased access to media offer value for health improvement initiatives in communities experiencing significant health disparities?

Why this report?

A recent grantmaking program, New Routes to Community Health, funded eight community media partnerships designed to encourage innovative use of locally produced media for health improvement in immigrant communities. The projects took place in vulnerable immigrant communities with limited English proficiency and low-wage jobs. A national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, directed by the Benton Foundation and MasComm Associates, New Routes included immigrant community organizations, local media-making organizations, and a “managing partner” organization.

As the New Routes projects unfolded, lessons emerged that were salient for community health improvement. First, unanticipated project leaders emerged during the media-making process. Second, communities often chose to focus on issues related to mental well-being and social functioning in their media-making efforts. Third, youth and young adults often played critical roles as “brokers,” navigating cultures, languages, generations, systems, and new technologies. At the same time, the projects demonstrated that forging partnerships across organizations and cultures, combined with a focus on complex



Rosario Sotelo and Jean-Marc Jean-Baptiste participate in the final New Routes conference in Atlanta.

health issues, required time, patience, and persistence. Grantees also reported that having looser grant requirements allowed them to follow an iterative process that reflected the dynamism of immigrant and refugee populations.

The projects demonstrated that in-language media can clearly offer value to health improvement efforts in immigrant communities. Few frameworks exist, however, to describe or quantify this value. This report is intended to capture the lessons of participants in the New Routes project and to see whether it is possible to validate and expand on those lessons based on the experience of other successful community media projects nationwide. The report identifies the characteristics most likely to make in-language media valuable and provides a much-needed framework for evaluating the success of community media projects. These lessons have applications beyond the realm of immigrant health and can inform the broader use of locally produced media for social change.

Summary of findings

A review of relevant literature and interviews with 44 thought leaders across five sectors, including New Routes partners, identified the key factors likely to boost the impact of community health improvement and social change initiatives. These factors anchor media making in the community and allow communities to use the process to leverage their capacity for social change.

Recommendations for creating local media to improve community health

- Use storytelling to motivate action for social change.
- Engage community members in all aspects of the media-making process.
- Build on strengths that already exist within the communities.
- Combine local media making with other strategies to improve community health.
- Clearly define your message and the community you intend to engage.
- Leave community organizations better equipped for community health improvement than when the project started.

Additionally, community media projects can capture the ways economic, political, and social conditions influence community health. They can be used to inform others about what's happening in immigrant communities. In this way, they may help set the stage for systems or policy changes that benefit the community.

Recommendations for funding and evaluation

Many media initiatives to reduce health disparities have centered on “health education.” The underlying theory is that knowledge will motivate action. Results from inquiry, along with other research evidence, suggest that efforts should center on community engagement. In fact,

“Digital media and technology are changing how we connect to information and each other. The way we engage in public dialogue, coordinate, solve problems—all of it is shifting.

—“Connected Citizens,” a report of the Monitor Institute and the Knight Foundation, 2011

there is good evidence that because of their engagement, immigrants who are active in their communities become more motivated to learn about opportunities to improve their lives and overall well-being (Lai & Hynie, 2010). Those interviewed for this report indicate that the process of media making engenders engagement and builds leadership within communities. These outcomes suggest that the media-making process is often as useful in improving community well-being as the media product itself. Our recommendations for funders include the following:

- Structure funding and support to spur innovation.
- Leverage the insights, experience, and interests of local funders.
- Encourage communities to define results important to them.
- Allow time for organizations to build trust, establish partnerships, engage communities, support positive youth development, and make media.
- Support research and evaluation driven by community voices and priorities.

Current health and income trends among immigrants and refugees in the United States make it increasingly critical to have truly innovative funding, engagement, and partnership models that foster meaningful community engagement. Success happens when community members have genuine power to identify the health challenges most important to them and create solutions for them. This report details the powerful role community media can play in making those solutions possible.

Introduction



Over the past four years New Routes to Community Health has provided funding, fostered partnerships, and offered technical assistance to allow eight immigrant communities across the United States to create locally produced media, capturing immigrant experience and telling stories of immigrants seeking health and well-being in the United States. In Atlanta, a Somali video about the health impact of changing diet focused on coffee with too much sugar and cream. It went viral and was downloaded 70,000 times, reaching all corners of the global Somali diaspora. In San Francisco, domestic workers stood up to declare the dignity and value of their work. They directed the creation of a sophisticated ad campaign, doubling their client base, and taking their model of worker safety and dignity global. In Chicago, youth who found their voice creating radio and theater dramas emerged as national leaders of DREAM Act efforts. The Chicago youth used tools of message framing and civil disobedience to call attention to their plight as undocumented youth coming of age in the United States, declaring themselves “undocumented and unafraid.”

In the same four years, immigration policy and legislation have become more exclusionary and stringent. Immigrants in the United States have been scapegoated for high unemployment rates. Some regions of the United States have experienced a sharp increase in immigrant population over the last decade, fueling talk of a constitutional amendment to repeal the 14th Amendment, which guarantees citizenship as a birthright to those born in this country. These factors impact the lives of immigrants, especially the most vulnerable. We see profound effects in their health status.

While cultural dislocation and stress have always been part of the immigrant experience, the media produced by New Routes grantees shows that even against long odds, immigrant communities are tenacious and resourceful. Given tools and training, immigrants are ready to use their stories of life in the United States to improve the lives of all of us. New Routes was designed to reflect this bigger, more inclusive picture of immigrants’ contributions to American life, helping all of us to see the truth of the New Routes theme: “Everyone benefits when Immigrants live healthy and productive lives.”

In October 2010, New Routes grantees gathered to discuss and amplify lessons learned across its sites, and in December 2010 all grant sites submitted final reports. The resulting publication, “[From Charting New Routes to Building New Bridges](#),” documents the lessons shared by New Routes grantees. Key outcomes across grant sites were:

- **Leadership development through media making.** The process of collaborative media production and storytelling provided a powerful opportunity to develop authentic, community-based leadership within immigrant communities.
- **Bridging divides.** Community leaders who emerged through the media-making process used media making to bridge generations, cultures, legal status, newcomer and receiving groups, languages, and in some cases, national boundaries.
- **Addressing mental health concerns as integral to improving overall health.** This was true across all program sites.

The name New Routes to Community Health points to a journey. This report represents its final step. Our purpose was to look outside the New Routes experience to offer a broader set of recommendations from the field that can be used by funders, media makers, and immigrant organizations as they devise new media-making collaborations.

To create this report, New Routes to Community Health sought the expertise of Mary Michaud, MPP and principal of Health Forward Consulting, to conduct a study tapping the expertise of national thought leaders around immigrant health and community media making. Her interviews probed to find out how “organizations reach out to form new, strategic relationships in the community, leveraging existing strengths and creativity to address the root causes of problems, not just symptoms.” Health Forward Consulting’s conclusion is that “these organizations are poised to effect systems and policy change. By creating a space, time, and purpose for public storytelling, locally produced media, created by and for the community, can help fuel these processes.”

—Beth Mastin
Program Director
New Routes to Community Health National Program Office

Creating local media for community health improvement



For immigrant community health to improve, a process of social change must take place. Two questions drove the inquiry into this process: What are the steps involved in social change? How can local media making contribute?

When people stop and reframe how they think about an issue, they can use information to guide decisions that could better serve their interests. This is a key step in individual empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). Community-produced media can provide a way for this reframing to occur. It can help people begin to see possibilities for a different future.

Given the right catalysts and process, collective action can follow. Maria Elena Figueroa, director of research and evaluation for the Center for Communication Programs at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, says she has seen many examples where locally produced media promotes “a horizontal diffusion of innovations,” in which people learn about their options by hearing or seeing stories from other project sites. “Many communities we work with are very isolated,” says Figueroa. “Using local media allows us to help them see what the future could look like.”

According to Figueroa’s research, social change processes start with a catalyst—a problem or an opportunity that affects people. Locally produced media can provide a forum to engage the community in discussions around these catalysts, but it is critical that decisions about the process reside within the community itself. Community members should discuss how the issues affect them and identify priorities for action (Figueroa, 2002). More specifically, Figueroa and her colleagues have found that when people have the opportunity to participate in community dialogue leading to collective action, they are more likely to get the kind of health services they need because they can express their needs clearly and with a collective voice (Kincaid & Figueroa, 2009).

The recommendations that emerged in this study offer key steps in facilitating this process.

WEB RESOURCE

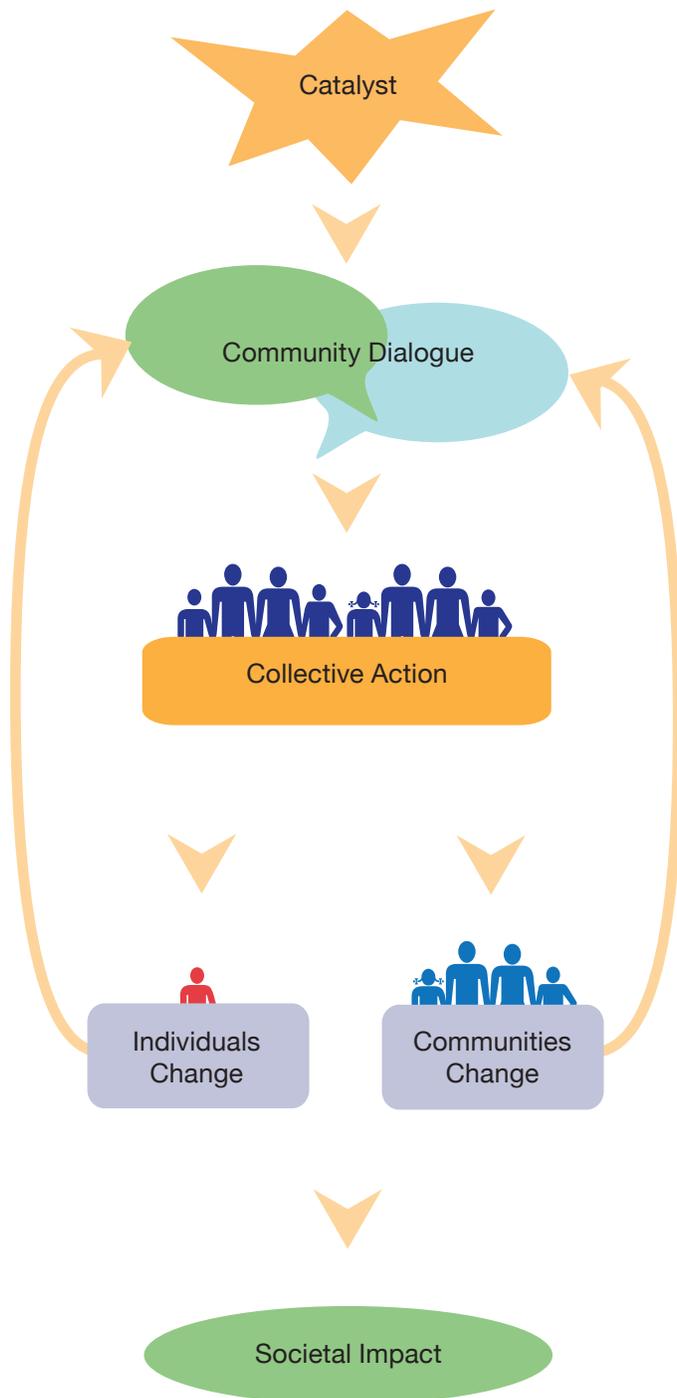
[Communication for Social Change: An Integrated Model for Measuring the Process and Its Outcomes \(PDF\)](#)



Adar Kahin takes the mic to speak at a New Routes Egal Shidad planning meeting.

Communication for social change: A case study

This model of community change illustrates the process of collaboration for community problem solving using New Route's Domestic Workers Dignity and Safety social marketing campaign as an example. [See media clips and more details online.](#)



Catalyst: Something moves people to action

- Immigrant domestic workers have no job protections.
- They begin to talk as a group about the safety and dignity of domestic work.
- The group applies for a grant from New Routes to Community Health.

Community Dialogue: Together, community plans for action

- The women in La Colectiva meet regularly to talk about their lives, families, and work.
- They learn about nontoxic cleaning products.
- They work with partners to devise a media plan to advertise cleaning services that are safe for workers and families who hire them.

Collective Action: The partnership works together to make media

- La Colectiva partners with UC Berkeley Labor Occupational Health Program and Underground Advertising to launch a social marketing campaign aimed at employers and domestic workers.
- Women begin to see themselves differently, gaining pride in their work.
- Women develop leadership skills in the media-making process.
- Powerful images of proud, strong women appear, larger than life, on billboards and public transportation.

Individuals and communities change

- More women join La Colectiva, and more employers call to hire them.
- More women tell their stories, no longer afraid to speak out.
- Leaders emerge. One La Colectiva organizer becomes leader of a national domestic worker organizing group.
- Partners build capacity. UC Berkeley LOHP and Underground Advertising partner again to take on new health-related outreach projects.

Societal Impact

- Organizations are empowered with skills and media-making experience.
- Domestic workers share their stories locally, regionally, and nationally. Some travel to Switzerland to speak at a UN Conference on Domestic Worker Rights.
- Domestic workers push for a California Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.

Adapted from Figueroa M. & Kincaid D. Communication for Social Change: An Integrated Model for Measuring the Process and Its Outcomes. New York: The Rockefeller Foundation and Johns Hopkins Center for Communication.

Use storytelling to motivate action for social change

Marshall Ganz, a longtime community organizer and now a lecturer at the Harvard School of Government, says stories are fundamental to personal experience and social change and that stories motivate people to action because they appeal to values and emotion (Ganz, 2010).

Stories among immigrants and refugees in the United States are exceedingly rich. Immigrants must continually reinterpret the world and their roles within it. The process of making media can help ignite the motivation Ganz describes. Local organizations can partner to create a safe space and a way for people to choose topics important to them, define health issues in their own terms, and share meaningful stories—stories that may never have been told out loud. Research has documented the mental health benefits for immigrants who participate in this type of process (Simicha, Maiterb, & Ochocka, 2009).

Communities find their voices through stories

In 2008 and 2009, Latinos working with Abriendo las Cajas (Opening Boxes), a New Routes project, created nearly two dozen digital video stories addressing their experiences of intimate partner violence. The storytelling project was a powerful way of drawing attention to violence in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, California, where they live. A DVD of the stories was used by community groups to help spread the message about preventing violence. Some participants later produced a short documentary exploring and analyzing the violent messages in Spanish-language media.

In 2010, Abriendo las Cajas was invited to present digital stories at the FCC Digital Inclusion Summit in Washington, D.C. The audience included national policy leaders, teachers, technologists, and community leaders who were brought together to discuss technology access, training, and resources for underserved communities throughout the United States.

Respondents relayed many examples of transformative processes that began when people heard a story in their language, or saw someone from their class, gender, clan, or tribe speak about personal experiences the way the participants in Abriendo las Cajas did. Through storytelling, people begin to feel validated. They find their voices. In so doing, stories can foster community healing, giving voice to those most affected by a health issue or community problem.

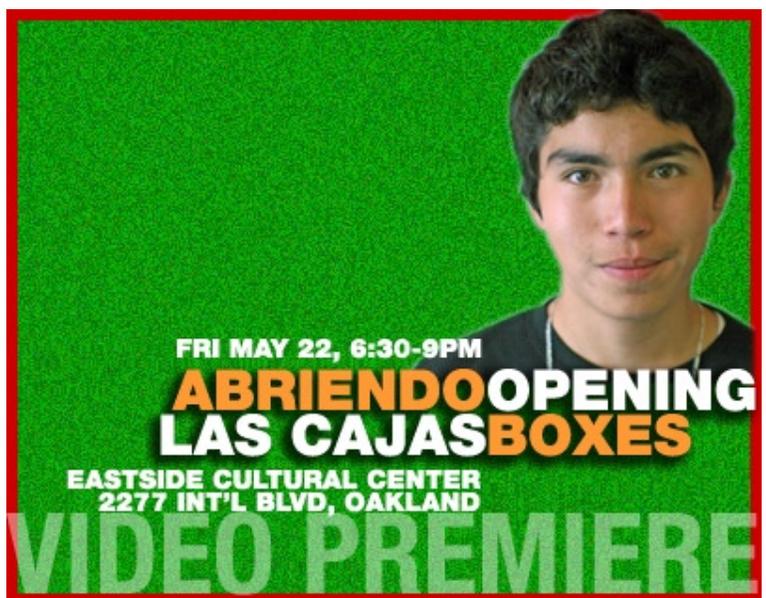


Photo of young man courtesy of BANAC

The New Routes Abriendo Las Cajas produced and showed the stories of people touched by domestic violence in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland.

Stories offer validation on more than one level. “Having stories told by their own community media is one level of validation,” says Angie Chuang, associate professor at the American University School of Communications. “Even if it’s a difficult story, the media product says, ‘I have status in my community. My story is acknowledged and it matters. I have a voice, I have a say in things.’ But when mainstream media or English-language media represents these stories, if it’s done correctly in the way that feels inclusive and fair to the community members, there is another level of validation. It can say, ‘I’m no longer an outsider or invisible. I’m not somebody who doesn’t participate, and I have an identity here.’”

Stories grounded in distinct cultural values can also introduce new narratives—narratives that can redefine immigrants’ needs and the kinds of systems that can serve more diverse communities. “We want to break the very American notion that your individual freedom is all you came for. You know, we actually came for collective freedom,” says Maria Poblet, executive director of Causa Justa/Just Cause, a grassroots organization that works with low-income Latinos and African Americans in East Oakland on housing rights and other issues.

Stories heal isolation

The mere fact of being an immigrant presents mental health risks: “There is little question that a permanent shift in residence across national borders raises stress levels and calls for adaptation in multiple dimensions of one’s life. . . . A main protective factor appears to be the presence of a community in which people can experience social connectedness as a resource for mutual support and problem solving.” (Scheie I., et al., 2010).

But the immigrant experience can also include profound isolation, and the mental health model that prevails in the United States is an incomplete solution. Holistic, community-defined approaches to mental health are not the norm. “I’m not really sure we’re addressing mental health well in U.S. communities,” says Jay Blackwell, director of capacity building at the Office of Minority Health Resource Center at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “The assumption is that you have to come to our version, a clinical view of mental health, which is generally not one of promoting overall well-being.”

Storytelling can build social connectedness and help reduce the isolation that threatens the mental health status of immigrant communities. To foster dialogue among community members, organizations can partner to create a safe space and a process for community members to choose topics important to them, define health issues in their own terms, and share meaningful stories—stories that may have never been told out loud. Because it provides the space to do these

WEB RESOURCE

Unnatural Causes: Is inequality making us sick?

Watch clips from a seven-part documentary series exploring racial and socioeconomic disparities in health.



Causa Justa/Just Cause staff Maria Poblet and Cynthia Muñoz join together to demonstrate on May Day 2011.

Photo courtesy of Causa Justa/Just Cause

things, the process of media making may be as important—and in some cases more important—than a “durable” media product.

Valerie Chow Bush, deputy director of the Renaissance Journalism Center and a cofounder of San Francisco’s Asian Women’s Shelter, recalls how empowering it was for many immigrant women at the shelter to hear women like themselves speak out about having been abused. “It was a breakthrough for many women to hear someone speak out about domestic violence in their native language and to hear another battered woman tell her story of survival,” she says. “It took the problem out of this isolated and shameful ‘I am alone’ place and put it out in the open, giving the women hope that they, too, could survive and heal.”

Engage community members in all aspects of the media-making process

In December 2009, photographs of domestic workers standing with pride and dignity holding their cleaning buckets appeared on mass transit and on billboards throughout the metropolitan San Francisco area as part of the New Routes’ Domestic Workers Safety and Dignity project. Latina domestic workers commissioned photographs by a well-known fashion photographer to capture their pride in themselves and their work. Partners in the project said that the photographs were important because of the dignity expressed in the women’s posture and attributed the success of this social marketing campaign to the fact that the domestic workers themselves guided the process. “The women themselves shaped that photo shoot,” says Catherine Stifter, codirector of media and technology for the New Routes Program.



This kind of community collaboration yields long-term benefits. In fact, social change organizations that collaborate to advance shared interests are more likely to advance their missions than those that focus exclusively on internal growth (Wei-Skillern & Marciano, 2008). “It takes a village to make community media,” says Jesikah Maria Ross, director of the Art of Regional Change, a community media center at the University of California, Davis. “You have the media maker, the community action group, and a partnering organization. They all do different things and they all have to buy in on collaborating and working toward mutual benefit.”

This ad showing La Colectiva members appeared on buses in the San Francisco area.

Projects may vary in terms of how actively community members participate in hands-on technical production, but it is critical that community members be involved in the following ways:

- Generating priorities for health improvement
- Guiding how the message is framed
- Guiding the choice of media and how it is disseminated
- Offering opportunities for leadership and risk taking
- Envisioning a different future
- Participating in evaluation, framing the questions that are important and determining how the evaluation proceeds.

It's not surprising that respondents said it is critical to honor language, culture, and traditional beliefs in the media-making process, especially when offering guidance about navigating U.S. systems or cultures. Collaboration makes this possible.

Community media partnerships can help preserve the integrity of the storytelling process. "When we're helping immigrant organizations produce media, we need make sure we preserve that authentic voice," says Jennifer Gilomen, director of public media strategies at the Bay Area Video Coalition in San Francisco, a New Routes grantee. "Otherwise, we're molding our perspective instead of them expressing themselves freely."

Partnerships take time, effort, and support

Respondents indicated that building an effective community media partnership—especially one spanning cultures, languages, organizations, and health issues—requires an investment in training and support.

"Many grantees don't know as much as they should about storytelling and the media world because they're so focused on their work," says Mary Lou Fulton, program officer for communications and media at the California Endowment. "But it's strategic, essential policy and advocacy work to make sure these stories are broadly heard. We need to increase the quantity, quality, and amplification of storytelling."

Those interviewed for this report said that community media making works best when it involves a team of experienced "media facilitators" from both the media and the community who can guide the process while preserving the authenticity of community stories.

Media facilitator teams can bring together expertise in several areas: storytelling, community organizing, social work, project management, and, finally, media technology. "It's better if you can have people codirecting any of these projects and not assume that any one person can actually have the bandwidth and experience to manage such a multidimensional project," says jesikah maria ross. "We really should always work in teams."

“
We really should
always work in
teams.
—jesikah maria ross
director of the Art of
Regional Change
”

Another function of a media making team is to enlist clinical experts to guide health content when necessary. Health professionals should guide and shape clinically accurate content while respecting the roles of traditional belief systems in many cultures. Culturally competent mental health professionals may also provide valuable guidance to media production projects to ease discussions about sensitive or difficult topics.

Even with ample investments in training and support, building a community partnership takes time, patience, and persistence. Not surprisingly, a theme that emerged repeatedly in the interviews was that funders and community organizations should allow for ample time to complete in-language media projects, perhaps even tripling the amount of time estimated.

“What you’re really talking about is a deep community investment in building relationships,” says Jill Shenker, field director with the National Domestic Workers Alliance. “The training, the support, the trust that’s required takes time. But then you see a ripple effect that’s worth the money invested.”

Research supports Shenker’s observation. Once community collaborations have flourished, future collaborations are more likely to succeed. (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001).

Build on existing community strengths

Youth UpRising is a youth service organization in Oakland—a “community hub”—that arose out of a partnership between youth service



Guillermina Castellanos Mendoza, a domestic worker and leader in her community helped make the Domestic Worker Safety & Dignity program a success.

organizations. Youth media production has become integral to their programming because it offers both practical job skills and leadership development. Through partnerships among health, public safety, economic development, housing, and youth-serving organizations, as well as faith-based

organizations, large health systems, and local businesses, youth are connected to job experiences, leadership opportunities, and a network of support that already exists in the community.

Youth UpRising shows how organizations working in the community gain power when they are not exclusively focused on problems but connect themselves to existing assets (Kretzmann, McKnight, Dobrowolski, & Puntteney, 2005; Wei-Skillern & Marciano, 2008). “We need to look at institutions in communities that are already producing media,” says Mary Lou Fulton, communications and media program officer with The California Endowment. “Places like Boys and Girls Clubs, and youth centers are very rich with media equipment because kids love to make media. High schools often have hidden capacity, too.”

The youth advantage

Youth and young adults in immigrant communities often find themselves acting as “brokers” among languages, cultures, service systems, and communities (Yeh et al., 2005; Suarez-Orozco, 1997).

This makes them a notable, if often undervalued, asset in many communities.

The use of media to build relationships and help reallocate power in the interest of community health seems to attract young people at many levels of the process. It’s a natural fit: youth live in a media-saturated world. Tools are readily accessible to them and often easy

to use, and creating their own media is both fun and popular, as evidenced by websites like YouTube.

Through their experiences in media production, youth can learn how to think about social and community health issues in a broader social and political context. Four out of eight New Routes projects engaged youth in media production. One Chicago project, Salud: Healing Through the Arts, brought together youth in the city’s Pilsen neighborhood to work with three organizations: The National Museum of Mexican Art; Teatro Americano, a program of Latinos Progresando; and WRTE FM, Radio Arte. Youth wrote and performed plays on topics of interest to them as bicultural urban youth, such as respiratory conditions brought on by air pollution, alcohol and drug abuse, gang violence, mental health, domestic violence, diabetes, obesity, and access to prescription medication. Partners said that this community media initiative elevated their organizations’ profiles in Chicago by helping recruit scores of Latino youth to summer theater programs.

Key, however, to successful youth involvement are steps to create self-care ethics and spaces for youth to safely participate in social change. While youth can take the lead in media making, they also benefit from thoughtful guidance and mentoring from professionals with expertise in counseling or positive youth development.

Strength in unexpected places

Community media making can help locate the unexpected settings where community members feel comfortable exploring difficult issues. Community organizers describe creating safe places where immigrants can meet regularly to talk about what’s happening in their lives and find out about resources. Heike Thiel de Bocanegra, director of evaluation for California’s Family PACT (Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment) Program and former chairperson of the Caucus on Refugee and Immigrant Health for the American Public Health Association, reflects on her experiences working with East African women’s groups in New York City. “You’ll see Somali women gather



Photo courtesy of WRTE FM Radio Arte

Radio Arte youth produced radio programs to improve health in their Chicago community.

RESOURCE

“Strategies for Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Families,” a SAMHSA-funded publication for Safe Schools/Healthy Students grantees, developed by EDC, Inc. is available at www.promoteprevent.org.

for cooking classes or English as a second language or parenting classes, and they end up talking in really amazing ways about how their refugee experiences have affected them,” she says.

Identifying and making use of existing community assets can make it possible to address important health issues without big budgets. “The response to every public health issue does not require some kind of a major federal grant,” says Reverend David Ostendorf, director of the Center for New Community in Chicago, whose Midwest Immigrant Health Project helps organize immigrant workers in rural meatpacking plants to improve the safety and overall working conditions. “People in the community need to identify the problem, come up with creative solutions, and deal with the problem. The agencies and experts should be there to support and learn from that process.”

Combine media with other strategies to improve community health

Several respondents suggested that local media making should not stand alone as a health improvement strategy. The value of local media will depend on whether other pieces of the community health improvement puzzle are in place, says Albert Yee, M.D., MPH, senior project director for the Health Through Action Project of Educational Development Consultants, Inc. “Having a media project is a great way of pulling people together, but it should happen in conjunction with all the other things that need to happen—leadership, organizational development, and community building.”

Research supports his observation. A key component of successful, comprehensive initiatives for community health or development is meaningful community engagement (Trent & Chavis, 2009).

One New Routes project, Egal Shidad, which produced video and radio pieces on mental health, sexually transmitted diseases, and youth behavioral health, reached Somali diaspora populations in the United States, Europe, and Africa. “Media making was the focal point of a broader, inclusive community effort

created to develop vocabulary about otherwise taboo health issues,” says Steve Brunsberg, technical producer with the St. Paul Neighborhood Network. Brunsberg worked with the Somali community to produce video and radio pieces. “The strategy included community meetings, information gathering, and developing print materials,” he says. “It helped people to think and talk about the issues in the Somali culture, and they found ways to access available resources. The media gave the project a life after the initial work was finished.”



Photo courtesy of Saint Paul Neighborhood Network

Egal Shidad producer Mukhtar Gaad-dasaar behind the microphone.

Participants in the Egal Shidad project attributed its success to the care partner organizations took to foster leadership for the project among community members and apply community-guided, culturally appropriate approaches to issues that had remained unaddressed in the community (Aageson, 2010).

Clearly define the message and the community you intend to engage

Media, according to those we interviewed, should offer reasonable suggestions for civic action. Stories should go beyond entertaining or moving people emotionally; they should offer new ways to think about an issue. Stories work best when they provide context, lead people toward steps they can take, or help them find ways to become more engaged.

“Ask yourself: What do you want people to do or think differently?” says Beverly Schwartz, vice president for global marketing at Ashoka, an international organization promoting civic action through social entrepreneurship. “If media is used within the community to galvanize, to mobilize, to make the community vital around an issue of immigrant health, it has basically created a force that can influence legislators, change local policy, reshape public perception, and generate power which didn’t exist before.”

In these ways, good communications can help organizations build a more proactive approach to change, according to Alex Tom, executive director of the Chinese Progressive Association in San Francisco. “So many times we’re reacting, and we are beginning to see how we can use local media to change that,” he says. Stories, he adds, are one of the most powerful things he has seen to engage the communities with which he works—mostly low-income Chinese and Latino immigrant families—to take action in shaping systems and policies that affect them.

Media also needs a defined audience. A key benefit of community media training is that when people participate in a collaborative process, they become aware of the need to think deeply about their audience and frame messages to meet community members where they are. “Leaders and people making media need to say, ‘What are we really trying to get people to do differently, and how do we achieve that with this audience?’” says Jill Shenker. “That skill is needed all over your life. When we do media training with Spanish-speaking women who are domestic workers, they find out that they already know how to frame messages for particular audiences—their kids, other family members, their friends. They do it all the time. We’re just naming it as a skill.”

Having a realistic plan to disseminate the media is key, and can be most helpful if it is in place even before production begins. “We find that it’s a lot easier to tell the stories than it is to have the stories be heard,” says Mary Lou Fulton of the California Endowment. There may be limited range of use for a media product. There is a

WEB RESOURCE

The Frameworks Institute offers guidance about framing messages for civic action in their “[Framing Public Issues Toolkit](#)” (PDF).

good chance that media produced for a specific audience may not be useful for another, even if the language is the same. There is also a good chance that commercial media outlets may not be the best way to distribute the media. Felicia Bartow, interim program director with Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, says that media makers should look to sources that are trusted within the community as vehicles for distribution. “It may be a place of worship in one community,” she says, “and a school or a health information fair in another.”

Media that reaches a clearly defined community with a carefully framed message can have a powerful impact. In Oakland, New Routes grantee La Clinica de la Raza partnered with the Bay Area Video Coalition to produce and distribute videos addressing the sources of violence in the community. The videos highlighted the ways commercial media normalizes violence. “People see our videos and then, in the community discussion, they say, ‘I never thought about it like that,’” says Juan Cuba, health educator at La Clinica who facilitated community involvement in the project. “They say, ‘I hear these guys on the radio making jokes when I’m driving, but I never saw the violent things they said as a health issue. But then I think about how that can affect my kid, and I turn it off.’”

Leave communities better equipped for community health improvement than when the project started

One of the most enduring and transformative ways media making can equip communities for change is by enhancing leadership and power. Respondents who had experience with local media were asked to describe leadership that emerged through a community media-making process. Leadership characteristics they considered important in this context fall into the category of “collaborative leadership” (Rubin, 2009). They described people who foster inclusive processes, treat others as peers, seek information to enhance decision making, promote open conversation, see the larger context of the work, and facilitate relationships. This kind of leadership is a key component in sustaining collaborative efforts for health improvement at the local level (Wolff, 2002; Fawcett, 1999).

“Conventional leadership programs don’t tend to include community leaders,” says Margie Nicholson, professor of arts, entertainment, and media management at Columbia College—Chicago. “Leadership emerges if someone can bridge divides and help build social capital in the community. To be a leader, to some extent, you need power. Most immigrants and most community-based organizations don’t have a lot of traditional sources of power.”

Leaders urge others to speak

Respondents with community organizing and media-making experience said leadership development and media making for social



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INDIVIDUALS
MADE HERE.**

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IMMIGRANTS A FAIR CHANCE.
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COLORADO
**WAS BUILT WITH
STRONG
CHARACTER.**

Why stop now?

LET'S GIVE IMMIGRANTS
A FAIR CHANCE.
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Posters from Welcoming America

change share essential skills: People must find their voice, define their audience, frame messages effectively, and urge others to speak. “Developing confidence and trust is important for any leadership development, but it’s critical within the immigrant community,” says David Lubell, executive director of Welcoming America, a national organization working to promote mutual respect and cooperation between foreign-born and U.S.-born Americans. “It takes a lot of courage to tell your story in front of other people.”

Leadership can appear in different ways for different people. Respondents described how leadership is culturally defined, that people know it when they see it, how it’s often a long-term process, and how it sometimes emerges spontaneously.

During a New Routes program grantee conference, one participant said that New Routes helped their community to “change what a leader looks like.” Respondents echoed that observation, noting that when local media makers depict leaders who look, talk, and even dress the way you do, it can be empowering. Rahwa Habte, an organizer with OneAmerica in Seattle, won the leadership award for her work in the community. An acquaintance, Gyatri Eassey, spoke about her in a short film produced after she won the leadership award. “Rahwa has made me realize that leadership doesn’t look or sound just one way. I see her and I see myself. That’s not always something I see in leaders in my community. To see that in her completely inspires me” (Albers School of Business and Economics, 2010).

Building youth leadership

When organizations understand the role of youth as cultural brokers and build on that strength, media making can help youth emerge as community leaders in dramatic and sometimes surprising ways. When Latino youth in Chicago performed plays as part of Salud: Healing Through the Arts, hundreds of community members came to view the plays. “Salud youth quickly realized the power of media,” says Anel Ruiz, communications manager at the National Museum of Mexican Art. “They learned media influences public opinion and that public opinion in turn influences public policy, and they developed brief, low-budget public service announcements with a high-impact message, such as one PSA about a family torn apart by deportation.”

Emmanuel Gutierrez, a youth member of the Salud partnership, said the program helped to transform him from a troubled youth to a community leader. Gutierrez began as a participant in the Salud program; within two years, he became the artistic codirector for Teatro Americano, one of the partner organizations of Salud. “Salud gave me an opportunity to understand more health issues,” says Gutierrez. “It also helped heal societal wounds for young people and for audiences, and it legitimized the power and authority youth should have.”

Examples of youth leadership can be subtle. “In my cohort of youth leaders around domestic violence intervention, we have about



Emmanuel Gutierrez and his Salud colleagues presented information on their youth-focused work at the final New Routes conference.

20 young people, and 14 of them are young men of color,” says Tuere Anderson, health services director for Youth Radio in Oakland. “That’s significant, because the field is dominated by women. One of these young men is really proud because he’s using the principles for conflict management he is learning and teaching them to his peers.”

Building job skills

An investment in training that provides marketable skills is both a way to make participation attractive to community members and to lay the foundation for ongoing impact. At ZeroDivide, a San Francisco-based funder helping social change organizations access and capitalize on the use of broadband technology, youth gain marketable skills. “It’s not just about these kids producing really interesting stuff and gaining confidence from that,” says Laura Efur, vice president and chief community investment officer at ZeroDivide. “They were gaining the confidence that they actually had a skill that was worth something in the marketplace. That is huge for a lot of them.”

Enhancing capacity in community media organizations

The increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of many communities, as well as a rapidly changing media landscape, suggest that local media outlets will need to increase their capacity to act as “media production facilitators.” Investment in that capacity, as several New Routes grantees suggest, can help ensure that communities can participate in and benefit from what the Knight Foundation calls the “information health of communities” (Knight Commission, 2009).

“The New Routes project gave us a freedom to experiment and grow,” says Mike Wassenaar, director of the St. Paul Neighborhood Network. “It forced us to open ourselves up to understanding the Somali community more deeply. Ultimately, the Twin Cities will benefit. Our communities are only getting more diverse, and for my staff to be able to respond to their needs is extremely important.” Wassenaar says that multilingual projects—those with a non-English verbal component that need to have English translation and some type of captioning—require extremely complex production processes. “Over the course of the New Routes project, we went from trying to engineer the thing for the first time to understanding exactly how we could pull off the workflow efficiently.”

The partnership structure offered the Somali community connections to new resources. Janice Lane-Ewart, executive director of KFAI-FM, a community radio partner in the project, says that because the media partners offered a different set of connections in the community, they could link immigrant organizations to resources they may not otherwise have used.

Other New Routes projects transferred capacity in other ways. “The Salud curriculum became the framework for all of our



Talia Herrera, a Causa Justa/Just Cause member speaking at the unveiling of a mural she designed.

Photo courtesy of Causa Justa/Just Cause

educational programming,” says Anel Ruiz. “It has also increased the interest in health issues throughout our own organization. We will continue incorporating them into Teatro’s programming well into the future.”

Capacity gained through media partnerships can be applied to other health issues. Suzanne Teran, program director with the Labor Occupational Health Program at the University of California, Berkeley, says that through its partnership with La Colectiva and the New Routes program, her staff learned about social marketing and effective messaging. “We immediately applied what we learned,” says Teran. “In the Summer of 2010, we worked collaboratively with our media partner, Underground Media, to win contracts for two more projects, including a large-scale social marketing campaign to prevent heat illness in California and a project with homecare workers in Alameda County.”

Deepening the impact of community media

“If your house is getting foreclosed or your landlord is pressuring you to move out,” says Maria Poblet, executive director of Causa Justa/Just Cause, “you can say, ‘I must have done something wrong.’ Or, with enough of the right education and support, you could actually say, ‘Wait a minute. Something is wrong with the way this is set up and maybe I should—maybe I could—do something about it.’”

Causa Justa/Just Cause released a report on the health effects of foreclosure. It used locally produced media to document key milestones and bring others into the organizing process. Community members helped frame the questions, gave interviews, and spoke about their eviction experiences at the report’s release. “It changed the issue environment for us,” says Poblet. “It’s a critical ‘aha’ moment when people say, ‘I see dozens of other people who have defended their rights and taken risks to expand the rights of others, and I’m going to try it, too.’”

Link stories to the social determinants of health

According to those interviewed for this report, when media effectively links people’s daily lives to the social determinants of health, and when media offers clear and reasonable steps to civic engagement as Causa Justa/Just Cause did, communities start to recognize that systems and policies could better serve their needs.

“You can’t talk about health without talking about food, and you can’t talk about food without talking about whether people have a job to pay for food, and what food is available in their communities,” says Jill Shenker. “Over and over, we have seen people become more moti-

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Read more on the health effects of foreclosure: [“Rebuilding Neighborhoods, Restoring Health: A report on the impact of foreclosures on public health.”](#) Causa Justa/Just Cause, Alameda County Public Health Department (September 2010).



Renee Saucedo of a day labor program in Oakland speaks at a housing hearing.

Photo courtesy of Causa Justa/Just Cause

vated when they see paths toward an organized strategy that targets the social determinants of health rather than targeting each other.”

Use stories to influence policy and systems change

Media can also reach outside a community to inform others about what’s happening in immigrant communities. When this happens, it can help set the stage for systems or policy changes that benefit the community. “There are certain voices clearly missing from public discussion and dialogue about health,” says Mary Lou Fulton, program officer for communications and media at the California Endowment.

Community stories, our respondents agreed, add an authenticity that statistics cannot capture. “It’s very, very powerful when policy makers sit across from a person that can say, ‘I’ and ‘we,’ rather than advocates referring to ‘those people,’” says Lina Avidan with the Zellerbach Family Foundation. “There’s just no way getting around that personal connection. One of the reasons why media is so powerful is it brings personal stories to a broader audience.”

Respondents from the communications and social entrepreneurship sectors agreed that a media product designed to engage immigrant community members may look and feel very different from media produced to inform or persuade policy makers or the general public. “I think that there is value in people telling their own stories, making their own films,” says Alyce Myatt with the National Endowment for the Arts. “But there’s also a value to having experienced, professional, artistically driven filmmakers telling the stories.”



Photo courtesy of Causa Justa/Just Cause

Maria Ramirez and Princess Beverly Williams of Causa Justa/Just Cause protesting the effects of foreclosure on public health in East Oakland.

Funding and evaluating local media



Nearly any contemporary initiative for community health improvement includes objectives for “systems change,” an admittedly murky concept. For our purposes, systems change happens when organizations or community groups: 1) identify promising or innovative practices for community health improvement; 2) generate resources to support those practices for the long term; 3) use resources (money, technology, human capital) differently; 4) change how work is done; and 5) influence institutional commitments or priorities, including changing policies.*

Our interviews with thought leaders in community media, immigrant advocacy, funders of social entrepreneurship, and others working for community health improvement, reinforced the notion that how community health initiatives are financed significantly influences the capacity for communities to achieve systems change. Organizations experimenting with funding models for social change, for example, suggest that innovative practices should have the potential to be “taken to scale,” or adopted widely by many people or organizations in a region, country or system, to ensure funding achieves long-term social impact. Others with experience in forging local, mission-driven organizational networks suggest that changing expectations of “success” will help organizations achieve the community buy-in necessary to sustain change.

The following recommendations summarize recurrent themes that emerged during our interviews. Efforts to support community health improvement will require adaptive, collaborative approaches among funders as well as community organizations doing the work.

Structure funding and support to spur innovation

Social innovation consists of new strategies, concepts, ideas, and organizations that meet social needs of communities, strengthening civic participation and the infrastructure of civil society. The idea of social innovation for health is not new. What is new, however, is broad popular access to personal and digital media. When harnessed for social innovation, these media have the potential to ignite community capacity for change.

According to respondents in this study, harnessing the power of these media will require funding that offers organizations latitude for creativity and innovation. It will require longer-term investments that come with support, provide technical assistance, and strengthen connections to resources in the community. Funding to support innovation generally focuses on strengthening organizations or organizational partnerships with demonstrated track records for

WEB RESOURCE

“[Tips and Tricks for Network-Centric Grantmaking](#),” is a component of the Connected Citizens project.

*Adapted from Urban Health Initiative, “What do we mean by SYSTEMS CHANGE?” May 2002.

innovation, and such investments often do not lead in a straight path to outcomes. In short, those interviewed for this report said that funders who “let go” of strict expectations for community health outcomes over short periods of time may see a multiplier effect over the long term.

“We’re funding the core of the organization,” says Kimberly Dasher Tripp, senior program officer with the Skoll Foundation. “We give unrestricted funding. We’re not going to be able to reasonably make the case in some sort of linear fashion that hiring a chief development officer led to more people accessing health care. However, what we do need to track is that the innovation espoused by the organization is driving the overall systems change that the organization seeks.”

Media can help build community ownership of innovations and even take innovative ideas to scale, reaching more communities than limited interventions could. In Minnesota, for example, in-language community media helped familiarize communities with community health workers’ roles, broadening their utility. At the same time, a community college program, supported by local health systems, began to offer a certification program for community health workers.

Because health problems in immigrant communities may be poorly understood by those who do not live in those communities, local media can also help identify needs currently unmet by traditional approaches—a key element in what scholars call “disruptive innovation.” Stories of immigrants’ experiences may uncover more tailored interventions that are a better fit for community needs.

Innovation may take unexpected forms. In many communities, “home-grown” media products serve to engage many populations better than commercial or professionally produced products. In Los Angeles, smartphones are the medium for the Vozmob/Mobile Voices initiative, sponsored by the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California and the Institute of Popular Education of Southern California. Vozmob allows immigrant and/or low-wage workers in Los Angeles to create stories about their lives and communities directly from cell phones, forging new connections to serve a range of common interests.

Leverage the insights, experience, and interests of local funders

Local philanthropy may have resources, history, and knowledge that national funders can augment; they may also have distinct reasons and goals for grantmaking and community investment. Alyce Myatt says that during her time as executive director of Grantmakers in Film and Electronic Media she saw many smaller foundations thinking about ways to leverage dollars that, in the long run, might be more effective. “They often support things for a longer period of time,” she says. “They often have a personal connection to an idea or an organization as opposed to being directed by, let’s say, the preservation of their own funding institution.”



Ms. Wu was interviewed about her health and she appeared in a Chinese seniors instructional video as part of the New Routes project in Los Angeles.

Photo courtesy of LA18

Nikki Will Stein, executive director of the Polk Brothers Foundation, a philanthropy with a long history of supporting immigrant integration efforts in Chicago, says local funders don't necessarily know everything that's been tried elsewhere or what has and hasn't worked. "But we do have a pretty good idea of what resources are on the ground here and what people are available to do this kind of work," she says. The local interest and often long-term "institutional memories" of smaller, local foundations can be leveraged by national organizations to support "incubators" for social innovation.

Encourage communities to define results important to them

Our respondents underscored the need for funders to encourage communities to define outcomes important to them. Innovative financing models are worth exploring, and models supporting social change may require a different funding approach—one that recognizes the primacy of community investment. Kimberly Dasher Tripp, of the Skoll Foundation, says community ownership is the common denominator among successful innovations. "We see that the community pays for that innovation, and they own it," she says. "They work at it, they invest sweat equity building it, they participate, they have leadership, and they own the innovation. That's what we most often see when we're looking for sustainable change."

Give it time

Allow time to let organizations build trust, establish partnerships, engage communities, support positive youth development, and make media. Those interviewed for this report overwhelmingly said that any worthwhile approach to complex social change takes time, particularly when collaborative interventions are used.

Media production across cultures and organizations adds another layer of complexity, as does the prospect of including youth. Ultimately, successful community leadership can change the balance of power, but an investment in that leadership development takes time, money, and active support to allow innovative programs to flourish.

Support research and evaluation driven by community voices and priorities

The field of community media is developing and changing so rapidly that research has not kept pace. As a result, community organizations often see powerful changes result from community media projects, but often lack the means to articulate or measure convincing indicators of social change.

The need for this kind of measurement and documentation presents opportunities for both funders and researchers to learn more about the potential of media for social change. "Foundations have the opportunity to support research that could significantly leverage their investments," says Alyce Myatt. This belief was echoed by others interviewed for this report.

For researchers, media making opens a window into community dynamics that previously may have been difficult to observe. Community-based participatory research, in which researchers partner with community members in a process to explore and document areas of mutual interest, offers an as-yet-untapped way to identify promising practices. “We need to pull community-based participatory research into this,” says Lina Avidan. “Having community members develop their own media, star in it, have a hand in it, isn’t just a feel-good kind of thing. No. It works”

Involving researchers in social change also requires community effort, and respondents indicated that the process would benefit from more formal facilitation that validates the strengths of each party. “We have to shape-shift a little for the academic community. What is in it for them?” says Tuere Anderson. “If you can really meet the researchers where they are, the onus is on us as community advocates to define the outcomes that matter to us, and we can show how community engagement leads you to these outcomes.”

Looking for the right outcomes

To inform future research questions, those interviewed for this report were asked to define “success” when thinking about community media initiatives to improve health in immigrant and refugee communities. What do optimal results look, feel, and sound like?

Their answers suggest a rich palette of options for future evaluation. The following desirable outcomes can guide evaluation planning so that organizations making local media can systematically document the results of their work. On page 33, we provide an Evaluation Checklist to help in the planning process.

- New leadership emerges in the media-making process

Offering the opportunity for leadership development can lead to unanticipated results. “It soon became apparent that new leaders were emerging out of the process-oriented work involved in media making and message framing,” says Beth Mastin, director of the New Routes to Community Health program office. “It has been especially gratifying to see New Routes leaders move beyond this program using their newly honed media savvy to assume central roles in local and national advocacy around topics they are passionate about including comprehensive immigration reform and workers rights.”

Role changes occur over time, and these changes should be documented. “Young people, especially young men, come into our program to make music,” says Tuere Anderson. “Now they go to Washington, D.C., to be with other youth leaders across the country. I don’t think that they’re imagining that when they come in to do the work.”

WEB RESOURCE

The New Media Toolkit, a project of the Renaissance Journalism Center, is an excellent new resource for media makers and community organizations. A collection of online tools, tutorials, and resources covering video, audio, blogging, social media, and many other topics, it was created to help nonprofits and ethnic and community news organizations navigate the changing new media landscape.



Youth Radio participants working on developing apps to serve community needs.

Photo courtesy of Youth Radio.

- The media-making process or product shifts community dialogue. Angie Chuang, assistant professor at the American University School of Communications, says that community leaders and members themselves often have the best sense of topics and discussions that have been silenced in their own communities. Effective media and sensitive reporting can open those channels of dialogue. “If I were in that community and people were talking about an issue that before had been taboo, or if they were talking about stories in ways that were going to make a difference in that community, that would be one of the very first measures that media made a difference,” she says.
- The organization grows or develops new competencies as a result of participation. Changing “the way work is done” is one key element of changing systems. Evaluation can document such changes. “Groups that produce the media embrace not only the idea of storytelling and media as a tool, but they also embrace the concept of identifying an audience and goals for the media before it’s produced,” says Jennifer Gilomen, of the Bay Area Video Coalition. “If they have a realistic plan to disseminate it, that’s measurable. That’s something valuable.”

Increased community participation in organizations’ efforts can be a meaningful indicator of change, and it’s worth exploring how the organization uses new networks to handle those changes. After launching their social marketing campaign to improve the working conditions for domestic workers, San Francisco New Routes grantee La Colectiva Worker’s Collective reported an influx of new jobs from new employers, as well as new members who joined the group. “When the women are able to work and aren’t worrying about getting a job, they are also more open to participating in other advocacy efforts,” says Suzanne Teran, of the Labor Occupational Health Program at the University of California, Berkeley, which partnered with La Raza Centro Legal’s La Colectiva and Underground Advertising on the project.

Who participates is just as important. “I think success, especially in immigrant health and immigrant media, comes when you begin to see intergenerational communities take part,” says Jay Blackwell, director of the Office of Minority Health Resource Center at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “If you’re only seeing one segment of the community pop up, then you’re not hitting the entire community. But if Grandma is taking part as well as husband and wife and children, you’ve got something.”

Intergenerational effects accumulate over time, and evaluation measures should take this into account. Lina Avidan agrees. “There is a powerful effect on families of the participants in these leadership development activities,” she says. “I’ve been working

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The catalytic innovations that will bring new benefits to the most people are likely to come from outside the ranks of the established players.”

—Christensen, Baumann, Ruggles, & Sadtler
“Disruptive Innovation for Social Change.” *Harvard Business Review*, 2006

with immigrant women's groups for 20 years, and I can't tell you how many stories I've heard about how their kids are so proud, they're doing better in school, their daughters have aspirations for college, and relationships within families have really changed, especially among spouses and partners."

Avidan points out, however, that despite the clear long-term benefits of leadership development, there are few tools available to measure results in the community. "It's this multiplier effect that we can talk about anecdotally, but we haven't really been able to capture," she says. "I haven't been able to find any kind of sophisticated research that talks about that."

Asha Chandra, marketing and program manager of the Community Ambassador Program for Seniors, in Fremont, California, says that success can be seen in stronger community relationships. "The Filipino group has built a connection with the Social Security office," says Chandra. "They have made presentations around Medi-Cal and Social Security and transportation—issues that matter to older Filipinos. Also, the Taiwanese community is now helping the Indian community, and the Latino community is helping the Filipino community. These connections are measures of success that we don't necessarily think about."

Ultimately, partnerships can generate the kinds of capital that allow organizations to achieve greater impact, and it's important to document that process, too. "Part of what I would ask is whether your process has built power that's going to sustain and grow and have a further impact," says Tuere Anderson. "You want to see an organization with more connections, more relationships in the community, more prestige in the community, whose leaders are more sophisticated and capable in articulating their reality and what's needed so that they can make change. That's success."

New voices for community health: Directions for the future



New, widespread access to media offers unexpected opportunities to challenge the status quo of community health, especially in communities where people feel isolated because of language, culture, or immigration status. But for communities facing poverty and social isolation, the power of media making is not well understood. Media use is progressing at lightning speed; funding models and evaluation approaches have not caught up.

Top-down health education or social marketing models often provide good information, but they have not achieved the kind of lasting change or capacity immigrant communities need. Why? When people's health is at risk because of isolation, poverty or crime, too many factors conspire against health improvement. When the community doesn't own the process, it's tough to sustain the progress. What's required in such communities is innovation—new ways of building the long-term capacity for health improvement. Also required are new ways of measuring the steps you might expect on a path toward systems change. What are the circumstances that lead to innovation? What indicates innovation is leading to social change?

Innovation for social change requires that people in communities rewrite their own scripts. It requires investments of time, leadership, and support for collective action. Over time, communities own the solutions. The community dialogue shifts, and people without a voice begin to tell powerful, previously unheard stories that reflect shared human experiences. Youth both hear these stories and share their own, and generations see each other with new eyes, empowered in ways they didn't expect. Community members envision a different future, fueled by a better understanding of the broader factors that influence well-being. New leaders emerge, taking on change in new ways.

Meanwhile, organizations reach out to form new, strategic relationships in the community, leveraging existing strengths and creativity to address the root causes of problems, not just symptoms. With a collective voice, and with an engaged community, these organizations are poised to effect systems and policy change. There is new energy to sustain the community's commitment. By creating a space, time, and purpose for public storytelling, media created by and for the community can help fuel these processes.

Innovative ways to improve community health require investment to achieve on a broader scale. Longer-term, flexible investments that support and leverage local partnerships can help build the capacity to shape health, education, and political systems that better serve communities over time. Because new voices are heard, and because communities own the process, local media partnerships can help take such innovation to scale.



Asian elders learn to use recording equipment during the New Route's Our Stories, Our Health project in Philadelphia.

Research methods

Between January and April 2011, semistructured telephone and focus group interviews were conducted with nearly 50 thought leaders across five sectors. Interviews ranged between 30 and 60 minutes.

Community health issues are complex, particularly in diverse communities with high levels of poverty. New approaches require innovation. In that spirit, interview respondents included people who work across the following sectors: public and community health; immigrant-led and community-based organizations; media makers; and “social entrepreneurs,” those who use entrepreneurial principles to create initiatives for social change. Grant makers who fund these sectors also were invited to respond.

The following sources were used to identify key informants:

- Members of the New Routes to Community Health Advisory Committee;
- Grantmakers who are known to fund immigrant-related work
- Opinion leaders with published or unpublished reports on immigrant health, community media, or both
- Representatives of funding organizations who demonstrated experience or understanding of social innovation, community health, community media, communications for social change, or immigrant integration

Research questions included the following:

- What is the value of local media making as a community engagement strategy for health improvement among immigrants and refugees in the U.S.? How can it add value to comprehensive health improvement initiatives?
- When does it add value?
- What are the components of a successful community media partnership?
- How do we improve the sustainability of partnerships that use locally produced media?
- How do we measure results of community-generated media?

Dedoose mixed-method software was used to perform content analysis on interviews. Themes appear in our recommendations for four general reasons.

Frequency: More frequent themes were assigned more weight in the analysis. Some themes arose more frequently because of the structure and content of questions. When two or more respondents raised issues spontaneously (without prompting by the interview protocol), they received more weight in our analysis.

Utility: Themes or responses that were most useful in answering central questions were weighted more heavily than responses that were provided to give the interviewer context for the interview.

Examples: If opinions were followed by concrete examples that illuminated the basis for the opinion, they received slightly more weight. Probes were designed to foster illustrative examples.

Outliers: If a seemingly powerful idea did not occur frequently, it was explored more deeply through probing questions or in discussions about findings.

In addition to the interviews, 1,300 subscribers to the New Routes to Community Health news digest also were invited to respond to a 14-item online questionnaire. Survey respondents with less experience in local media making assessed their readiness to do so; those with more experience provided advice about the complex task of partnering to make local in-language media. This questionnaire made it possible to compare respondent perspectives to the qualitative findings and was used primarily to validate results.

This study is exploratory, and the qualitative approach was not designed to permit generalizations about the use of locally produced media in immigrant communities or health initiatives. The study is intended to provide a deeper understanding about what, to those working in the field, constituted successful use of locally produced media, the factors most important in achieving such success, and directions for future qualitative and quantitative research and evaluation. Recommendations are offered based on the collective experiences of respondents, and they are presented in that spirit.

Respondent profile: Sectors, strategies, interests

Sector	Strategies	Interests	How locally produced media can add value
Public and community health	<p>Employ evidence-based programming.</p> <p>Promote and support local collaboration, across sectors and disciplines.</p> <p>Develop local and regional leadership.</p>	<p>Address factors where people live, work and play that influence health (social determinants of health).</p> <p>Effect systems and policy change.</p> <p>Prompt normative and behavioral change around health.</p>	<p>Engage communities using culturally appropriate language and media that reflect literacy and media access.</p> <p>Increase leadership skills.</p> <p>Increase community awareness about the social and political contexts of their problems.</p>
Immigrant-led and community-based organizations	<p>Share personal stories that reveal universal immigrant past and aspirations for the future.</p> <p>Community organizing.</p> <p>Advocacy.</p> <p>Build partnerships and networks.</p>	<p>Social justice.</p> <p>Self-determination.</p> <p>Welcoming communities.</p> <p>Strong, healthy communities.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for “first voice” through storytelling.</p> <p>Increase leadership capacity.</p> <p>Engage communities in authentic ways.</p> <p>Bridge gaps in understanding within receiving communities.</p>
Media makers	<p>Capture stories and relay information that encourages communities to shape “responsive systems.”</p> <p>Foster discussion and civic participation.</p>	<p>Build community, opportunity and democracy.</p> <p>Strong, healthy communities.</p>	<p>Increase cultural competence.</p> <p>Train community leaders in media making and message-framing skills.</p>
Social entrepreneurs	<p>Build on existing community assets.</p> <p>Identify “scalable” ideas for social change—ideas that can be replicated.</p> <p>Support innovative models with investments in income generation potential, expertise, mentorship, assistance, human capital development.</p>	<p>Innovation in social change.</p> <p>Sustainable approaches to social change.</p> <p>Strong, healthy communities.</p>	<p>Provide media-making skills and training to help community capture unifying stories.</p> <p>Offer ways to reframe issues to identify “non-obvious” needs within communities.</p>

Evaluation checklist

How can locally produced media add value to the process of community health improvement? Review the following questions if you plan to include community or locally produced media in your social change initiative.

- Planning**
- Is the community involved in determining the media content and what kind of media to use?
 - Did the project include a process to identify audience(s) and hone messages? Is there a dissemination plan?
 - Will community gatherings or other outreach strategies be used to enhance and distribute media?

- Will the media product:**
- Provide a “bigger picture” context for the health problems people face? Does it link people’s daily experiences with the “social determinants of health”?
 - Reflect cultural competence by honoring community language, including and respecting immigrant perspectives and appropriately considering the literacy levels of users?
 - Draw on the creativity and existing strengths within the community?

- Will the media-making process:**
- Leave organizations better equipped than when they started to effect community health improvement?
 - Help increase awareness or change attitudes of people who “move resources” (grantmakers, health systems leaders, public officials, employers, policy makers) about what’s happening in immigrant communities?
 - Set the stage, in whatever small or large way, for broader systems or policy change?
 - Take place in the context of a broader initiative to improve community health?
 - Include a process to gather perspectives and priorities from a relatively diverse cross-section of community members?
 - Build community leaders?
 - Make use of existing assets in the community?
 - Generate marketable skills among youth or young adults in the community?
 - Ensure sensitive, credentialed translation and interpretation, if needed?
 - Ensure, in the end, that the community owns the media product or asset?

- Post production**
- Will the media be distributed and outreach conducted as planned?
 - Will participants be satisfied with the media and other results?
 - Will evaluation take place? How will the results be disseminated?

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Resources



Active links for all resources listed below can be found at newroutes.org/newvoices-links

Organizations

[Cities of Migration](#) showcases good practices in the integration of urban migrants and promotes innovative ideas that create equity, social cohesion and urban prosperity.

[Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees](#)

[Health Leads](#). In clinics where Health Leads program operates, physicians can “prescribe” food, housing, health insurance, job training, fuel assistance, or other resources for their patients as routinely as they do medication.

[Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy](#)

[Opportunity Agenda](#) works to build public support and public policy for greater and more equal opportunity in the United States.

[Search for Common Ground](#) combines media with other approaches to transform the way the world deals with conflict.

[Witness](#) is an international human rights organization that provides training and support to local groups to use video in their human rights advocacy campaigns.

[Zero Divide](#) helps underserved communities realize the transformative power of technology to achieve social progress and economic opportunity.

Media sites

[The AJA Project: Youth + Photography Transformation](#). Provides photography-based educational programming to youth affected by war and displacement.

[Chicago Access Network Television \(CAN TV\)](#) provides video training, equipment, facilities and channel time for Chicago residents and nonprofit groups.

[Connecticut Multicultural Health Partnership’s “Faces of Disparity” video](#). A 15-minute documentary that integrates personal stories of health care consumers with the perspectives of leading experts in health care and public health.

[DanjirRadio](#). International news with Health Topics web page in Somali and English.

Disability Awareness Spanish Language Radio Novela Print publication and CD from Waisman Center University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at UW-Madison. Also in English.

ECHO (Emergency and Community Health Outreach) Minnesota. Bridging the communications gap for immigrants and refugees in Minnesota with media in English, Khmer, Somali, Vietnamese, Lao, Spanish, Hmong and other languages.

La Noche te da Sorpresas. The first Spanish-language radio novela produced in Iowa, aimed at reducing unplanned pregnancies for women 18–30 years old.

La Voz del Campesino KDNA-FM and Northwest Communities Education Center. A Spanish-language radio for the farm worker community in Washington state that has produced radio and print novelas on a variety of health issues.

KFAI-FM Minneapolis/St. Paul. A volunteer-based community radio station that broadcasts information, arts, and entertainment programming for an audience of diverse racial, social, and economic backgrounds.

KGNU-FM Boulder. Teen journalists helped produce a seven-part radio series on teen pregnancy.

Eat Your Radio – Food Stories from Colorado Public Schools. Award-winning radio program and website on nutrition.

Latinos Progresando presents “Con Raices Sin Papeles.” This Teatro Americano bilingual production toured the Chicago area to great reviews.

Media Arts Center San Diego. Videos and digital stories from the Teen Producer’s Projects include:

- My Life, My Vote
- Refugee Voices
- Americans: Latino and Refugee Youth Perspectives on the American Dream
- Puentes de Esperanza

Nashville Public Television’s “Next Door Neighbors” project. Award-winning series looks at Nashville’s status as a new destination city for refugees and immigrants and explores the rich diversity of people now calling Nashville home.

New America Media. The country’s first and largest national collaboration of and advocate for 2,000 ethnic news organizations.

New Routes to Community Health. Plenty of media for and by immigrants, a rich database of additional resources, and details about the program can all be found online.

PCI-Media Impact: Telling Stories, Saving Lives. Empowers communities worldwide to inspire enduring change through their pioneering entertainment-education model.

PCUN Oregon's Farmworker Union, KPCN-LP. Radio Movimiento gives voice to youth, women, Latino progressive leaders and indigenous people in the Woodburn, Oregon area.

St. Louis Public Television's "Homeland." A three-hour TV documentary that tells the contemporary story of immigrant issues in America from the perspective of a Midwestern state.

Shared Values: Health and Community—Shaping Minnesota's Future with New Americans

Twin Cities Daily Planet publishes more news and commentary by writers from ethnic and immigrant communities than any other local publication.

Uniting NC. Introduces North Carolinians to people from around the world who have moved to their communities and now call North Carolina home. A project of Welcoming America.

Welcoming America, Building a Nation of Neighbors. A national, grassroots collaborative that works to promote mutual respect and cooperation between foreign-born and U.S.-born Americans.

WPFW-FM Washington, D.C. Provides outlets for the creative skills and energies of the community, to contribute to a lasting understanding among individuals of all nations, races, creeds, and colors, and to promote the full distribution of public information.

Evaluation resources

Figuroa ME, Kincaid DL, Rani M, Lewis G. Communication for Social Change: An Integrated Model for Measuring the Process and Its Outcomes.

Knight Foundation. IMPACT: A Practical Guide to Evaluating Community Information Projects. February 2011.

ZeroDivide Case Study: Youth Institute/Change Agent Productions

Online training resources

Ganz, M. Hauser Center for Nonprofits. Harvard University. Web-based module on organizing.

Publications of interest

"Connected Citizens: The Power, Peril and Potential of Networks." The Knight Foundation and the Monitor Institute. 2011.

Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project and the Knight Foundation. "How the Public Perceives Community Information Systems." March 2011.

Moua M. Relationships Matter: Volunteerism in Immigrant Communities. Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration. March 2010.

Mermin, LSP. (2006). Living in America: Challenges Facing New Immigrants and Refugees. In KE Garrett (Ed.). Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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For grantmakers

Amplifying Social Impact in a Connected Age: A Survey of Technology-Related Grantmaking for Social Benefit. ZeroDivide, March 2011.

Connected Citizens: Importance of Serendipity. Trabian Shorters, The Knight Foundation, 2011.

Healthy Together: Creating Community with New Americans Online. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation.

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Key organizations



The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted solely to the public’s health. RWJF focuses on improving both the health of everyone in America, and their health care—how it’s delivered, how it’s paid for, and how well it does for patients and their families.

Benton Foundation

The Benton Foundation works to ensure that media and telecommunications serve the public interest and enhance our democracy. They pursue this mission by seeking policy solutions that support the values of access, diversity, and equity, and by demonstrating the value of media and telecommunications for improving the quality of life for all.

MasComm Associates

MasComm Associates is a consulting firm specializing in media and community collaborations, operating under the direction of Beth Mastin. Founded in 1990, MasComm offers clients a wide range of services to help media, non-profit organizations, foundations, businesses, and government-related agencies collaborate successfully on media and social innovation initiatives.

Health Forward Consulting

Health Forward Consulting works with organizations that foster community health, helping them identify ways to boost innovative thinking. Health Forward staff facilitate planning and applied research processes to help organizations and community groups identify and build on existing strengths, building long-term capacity for social change.

New Routes to Community Health grantees



Atlanta: HEARMe (Health Education via Airwaves for Refugees). East African refugees improving their health through radio, video, an online media.

Boston: Twa Zanmi (Three Friends). Haitian immigrants creating media to address mental health issues.

Chicago: Salud: Healing through the Arts. Latino immigrant youth creating theater and radio shows to improve community health.

Los Angeles: 10 Steps to Better Health Care: A Guide for Chinese-American Seniors. Helping Chinese seniors navigate the health care system.

Minneapolis-St. Paul: Egal Shidad: Stories of Somali Health for Radio, TV and Classroom Use. Developing health information to strengthen Somali families.

Oakland: Abriendo las Cajas (Opening Boxes). Reducing domestic violence in the Latino community.

Philadelphia: Our Stories, Our Health. Using self-made media to improve the health of Laotians and Vietnamese immigrants.

San Francisco: Domestic Worker Safety & Dignity Project. Addressing on-the-job health issues of Latina domestic workers.