

Identifying Community Partners: Tips for Health Departments

Effective COVID-19 response among refugee, immigrant, and migrant (RIM) communities requires relationships with communities. There may be some difficulty in knowing where to start when building or strengthening relationships with a community. Effective community engagement will vary locally; however, identifying community partners is the first critical step. Below are some tips for identifying partners who can help reach RIM communities.

- Identify and map the RIM communities you hope to reach, including disproportionately affected subgroups within those communities (e.g. single moms, specific languages)
- Based on the RIM communities you hope to reach, connect with local organizations that serve RIM communities including community-based organizations (CBOs), grassroots organizations, refugee resettlement agencies, and refugee and immigrant coalitions
- If you are not familiar with organizations in your area, perform an internet search that combines *your geographic area + the community you are trying to reach + the words "organization" or "coalition" or "association"* (e.g. search "Minneapolis Somali organization" or "Seattle Ukrainian association")
- Reach out to health department staff that may have existing external partners; make sure to include a diverse range of staff and roles such as public health social workers, directors of engagement and outreach, and healthcare providers working with refugee health screening programs
- Reach out to national organizations that represent the community you are trying to reach and ask if they have local connections
- Connect with faith-based organizations
- Identify local businesses that serve and/or are owned by RIM community members and engage with local business leaders; consider businesses that are frequented regularly by community members such as grocery stores, restaurants, salons, coffee shops, or international money wiring locations (often inside a restaurant or store)

- Connect with media organizations that serve RIM communities including radio stations, community newspapers, and online news media outlets
- Connect with health care professionals that serve RIM communities including community clinics, federally qualified health centers, community health workers, and medical interpreters who often have deep community ties and medical providers with refugee and/or immigrant backgrounds
- Connect with [State Refugee Health Coordinators](#) who can introduce you to clinical and community partners working with refugee populations and resources in your state
- Explore partnerships with K-12 schools, including English Language Learner (ELL) coordinators and/or ELL teachers
- Explore partnerships with industries that employ RIM community members such as manufacturing, food and agriculture, hospitality, and others; recognize there may be sensitivities around COVID-19 and employment; consult with CBOs to help navigate
- Partner with bilingual and bicultural health department staff to explore potential RIM community connections and collaborations
- Explore existing connections that colleges and universities may have with RIM communities through outreach or community-based research programs