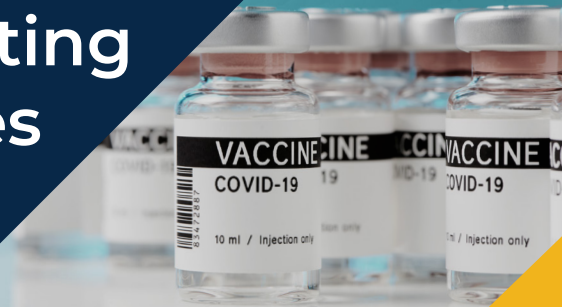


Findings on COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Strategies from a Survey of Local Organizations



As part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' efforts to combat COVID-19, prioritize health equity, and prepare for future pandemics, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health sponsored a study of testing and vaccination programs and policies for people who are medically or socially at disproportionate risk for COVID-19 or adverse outcomes.

This document summarizes findings from a survey of five types of local organizations conducted by Mathematica. The survey collected responses from 164 organizations involved in COVID-19 testing and vaccination across 22 states. See "About the Survey" on page 4 for more information on the sample and methods.

Survey findings on the strategies local organizations used to deliver or promote COVID-19 testing and vaccination can inform promising practices for closing ongoing gaps in COVID-19 testing and vaccination and approaches to testing and vaccination in future pandemics. Organizations typically used multiple strategies to deliver or promote COVID-19 testing and vaccination, although it is not clear from the survey data which strategies they used simultaneously versus sequentially or how the approaches evolved over time. Many of the most commonly reported strategies were similar among organizations delivering testing and vaccinations, suggesting these strategies may have been adaptable and useful for promoting or delivering multiple kinds of services.

Local Organizations in the Survey



Local Health Departments (LHDs)



Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHCs)



Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)



Tribal and Urban Indian Organization (T/U) Health Facilities



Community Pharmacies

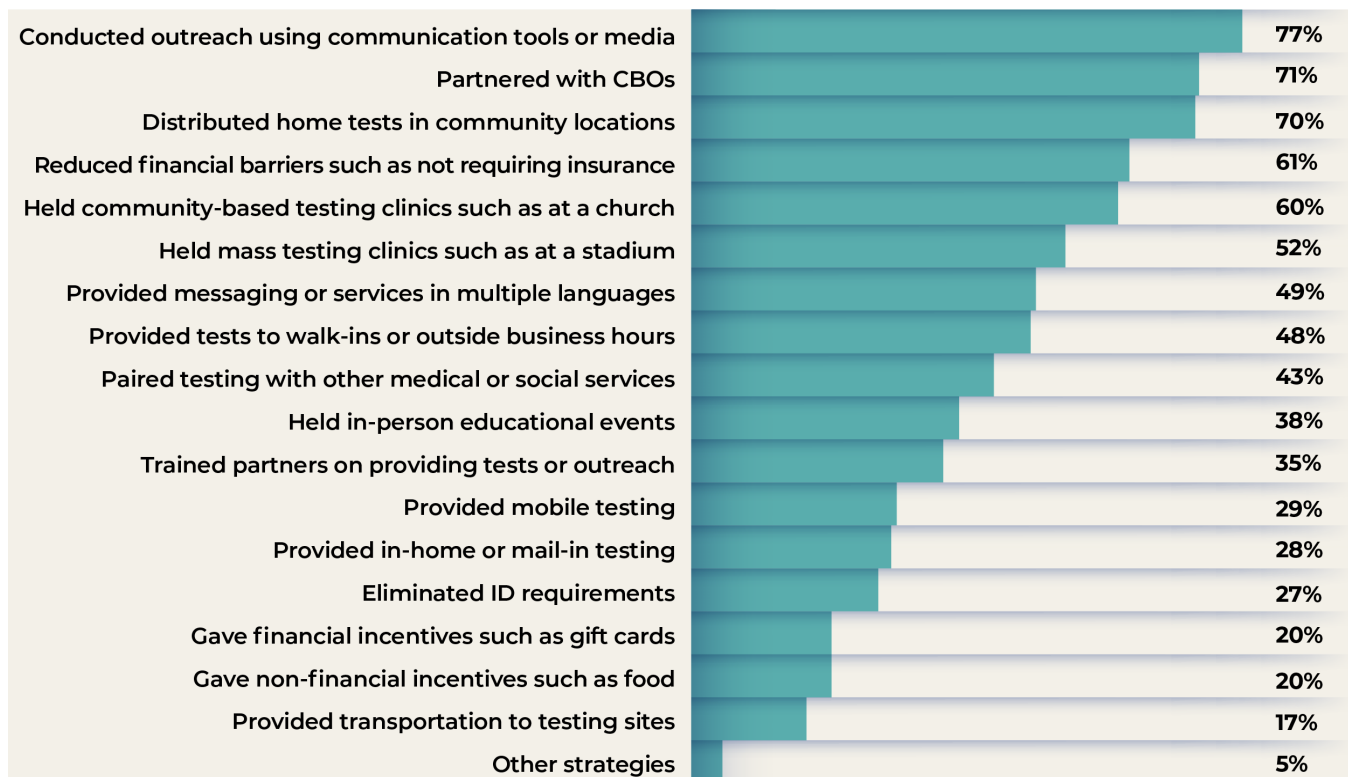
COVID-19 Testing Strategies

The strategies most commonly reported by all respondents to deliver or promote COVID-19 testing were similar across the five organization types:

- 1. Conducted outreach or campaigns** using communication tools or media such as phone calls, text messages, emails, social media, or mass media (TV or radio) (77%)
- 2. Partnered with CBOs** such as food banks, churches, or schools, or people trusted by communities such as religious leaders, school staff, or community health workers (71%)
- 3. Distributed home tests in community locations** such as at a church, mall, library, community center, school, public housing, or shelter (70%)
- 4. Reduced financial barriers** for test recipients such as not requiring health insurance (61%)
- 5. Held community-based testing clinics** such as at a church, mall, library, community center, school, public housing, shelter or events (60%)

On average, respondents used seven out of the 18 testing strategies listed as response options in the survey. LHDs and FQHCs reported using the most strategies (averages of nine and eight, respectively). Pharmacies reported using the fewest (an average of four).

COVID-19 testing strategies used by organizations that responded to the survey



Perceived Effectiveness of COVID-19 Testing Strategies

Using their own words in open-ended survey responses, respondents identified the following testing strategies as effective:

- **Removing barriers to testing and making testing more accessible and convenient**, for example by hosting mass testing and community-based testing events, drive-through and home testing, and pairing testing with social or medical services.
- **Forming partnerships**, particularly with local trusted partners and messengers, helped respondents build trust and relationships with community members.
- **Holding events and using culturally appropriate messaging to reach specific populations** such as people in racial/ethnic groups, people with low income, and people without housing.

COVID-19 Vaccination Strategies

Similar to testing, the strategies most commonly reported by all respondents to deliver or promote COVID-19 vaccination were similar across the five organization types:

1. **Held community-based vaccination clinics** such as at a church, mall, library, community center, school, public housing, shelter, or events (79%)
2. **Partnered with CBOs** such as food banks, churches, or schools, or people trusted by communities such as religious leaders, school staff, or community health workers (69%)
3. **Provided vaccination services** outside of typical business hours or offering walk-in appointments (67%)
4. **Held mass vaccination clinics**, sometimes called mega-vaccination sites, in locations such as stadiums, parking lots, or at events (66%)
5. **Conducted outreach or campaigns** using communication tools or media such as phone calls, text messages, emails, social media, or mass media (TV or radio) (66%)

As with testing, most organizations reported using multiple vaccination strategies, up to 15 out of 18 possible strategies listed as response options. The average number was seven. On average, LHDs reported using the most strategies (an average of nine) and pharmacies the least (an average of six).

Perceived Effectiveness of COVID-19 Vaccination Strategies

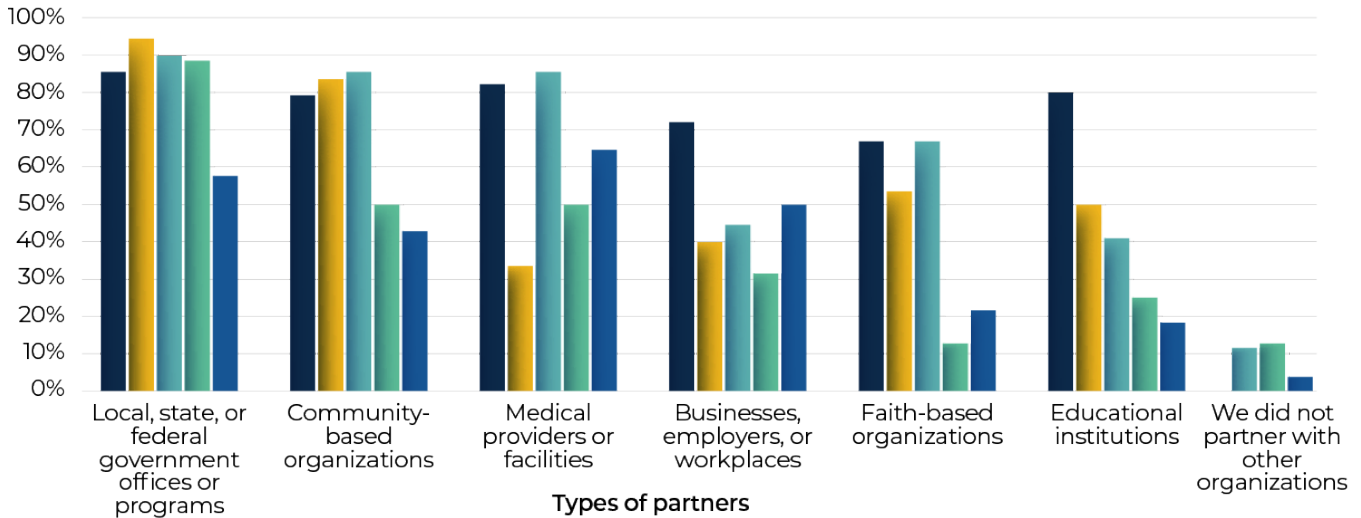
Respondents' open-ended answers about effective vaccination strategies were similar to their answers about effective testing strategies. Effective vaccination strategies included:

- **Increasing convenience and access** by reducing barriers such as time, transportation, and childcare.
- **Engaging local partners** to build trust, connect with community members, and provide culturally appropriate education and information.
- **Tailoring outreach** (for example, using multiple languages) and service delivery to reach specific populations.

Vaccination Partnerships

Forming partnerships, particularly those that helped build trust with community members, was identified as key to testing and vaccination uptake. Nearly all respondents (98%) reported working in partnerships with other organizations to deliver vaccination services, but the number and types of partnerships varied by respondent type.

Types of organizations that respondents partnered with to deliver vaccination services



Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% because survey respondents selected all that apply. Ns for each organization type reflect only those that answered each question.

About the Survey

The National Survey on Best Practices for COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing (OMB control number 0990-0421) is part of the Best Practices for COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Study sponsored by the Offices of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation and the Assistant Secretary for Health. The purpose of the survey was to gather information from local organizations about their efforts to improve COVID-19 testing and vaccination in populations that are medically or socially at disproportionate risk for COVID-19 or related adverse outcomes. This encompasses groups with medical conditions that increase their risk of infection and adverse outcomes, groups that face greater risk of COVID-19 exposure because of where they live and work, and groups facing barriers to services, such as restrictive work schedules, low transportation access, language barriers, or low levels of income. Mathematica administered the survey from September to November 2023. We invited 507 representatives in 22 states to complete the survey based on geographic diversity, vulnerability to COVID-19, and high rates of completion of the primary COVID-19 vaccination series in 2021. 475 invitees met the eligibility criteria and 164 surveys were completed for an overall response rate of 35%.

Mathematica and Kauffman and Associates, Inc. developed survey response options for COVID-19 testing and vaccination strategies using findings from an environmental scan that synthesized information from key informant interviews and a targeted review of peer-reviewed and gray literature published through January 2023.

The full survey report and environmental scan report are available at: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/best-practices-covid-19>.

Suggested citation: Mathematica. Eli Michaels, Becca Gordon, Geraldine Haile, John Hotchkiss, Emma Pendl-Robinson, Nancy Clusen, Karen CyBulski, and Kate Bradley. Findings on COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Strategies from a Survey of Local Organizations. Report for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. September 2024.