CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY OUTREACH RAPID DEPLOYMENT

California Labor and Workforce and Development Agency
Information Communications Technology Innovations
Community Outreach Rapid Deployment
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ABSTRACT
The State of California needed a rapid way to manage COVID-19 outreach campaigns to equitably inform residents about protective safety during the pandemic. California is one of the most diverse states in the US with close to 40 million residents. Within 45 days of inception, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency designed, developed, and implemented the Community Outreach Rapid Deployment (CORD) solution. With local demographics in mind, the solution is used to guide planning and communication strategies to ensure outreach is culturally and linguistically tailored to the intended local community. The CORD solution uses recent US Census datasets (including hard to count, healthy families, and other data sources) which allow the determination of strategy and methods for optimal outreach.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STRATEGY

Create a statewide platform to collaborate and coordinate multi-departmental COVID-19 outreach efforts across California leveraging community-based organizations.

Challenges
- Coordination of dispersed community-based organizations for tracking actual efforts is difficult and time consuming.
- Community-based organizations are independent groups with different governance structures.
- State departments are separate operating entities with distinct constituent programs. Coordinating and responding to an emergency in a collaborative manner is crucial.
- Reaching disadvantaged communities is challenging, and measuring effectiveness of outreach communication efforts is difficult.
- Aligning cross-departmental resources to ensure consistent communications is challenging.
- Equitable access to COVID-19 related resources is critical to ensure California combats the COVID-19 spread and moves to reopening.

Simplify Targeted Communication
- Involved over 1,000 non-profit organizations in outreach efforts.
- Adapted targeted communications messaging of individuals and regions.
- Leveraged lessons learned from census outreach to enable tract-level analysis to build extremely specific tailored messaging by demographic.

Create a Data-Driven Central Planning and Reporting Portal
- Served users in a helpful and intuitive way, to enable more effective and targeted planning and reporting, through a flexible user-centric approach.
- Provided individuals and organizations assisting with COVID-19 outreach focus areas that needed the most help.

Leverage Cloud Technologies to Accelerate Platform Access
- Accelerated the process of data reporting and aggregation.
- Enabled cloud accessible data dashboards to assist in planning efforts.
- Leveraged cloud hosted GIS, Identity Management, and Data Analytics Visualization to accelerate delivery.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

Customer-Centric Design
- Users were involved in the design process from the very beginning. Critical design decisions were made based on functionality for end users.
- The platform team focused on aligning business requirements with user needs through adaptive requirement clarification.
- A user feedback loop was introduced in the rapid enterprise agile lifecycle. The team

collected and analyzed feedback from users regularly, and this information helped the team make user-focused decisions.

- The iterative design process enabled the collaboration team to constantly work on improving user experience by introducing changes as developers gained more understanding about the target audience.

Multi-State Department, Non-Profit Partnerships, and Collaboration with Foundations

- More than 1000 non-profit organizations were enabled onto the platform.
- Cross-agency collaboration occurred with the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California Department of Industrial Relations, California Department of Social Services, and California Department of Public Health.

Guided On-Boarding

- Applied agile principles to the training process.
- Established virtual office hours for support.
- Enabled a help desk for rapid support.

Re-Usability

- Established a collaboration model and platform solution that was easily shared with other departments that needed to roll out effective outreach campaigns.
- Designed and created a system with an elastic capacity and a usage model that ensures scalability based on usage demand.

RESULTS

Adaptive Campaigns Based on Metrics

- Supported real-time planning and outreach efforts.
- Enabled identification of areas and populations least likely to respond to government messages.
- Prioritized outreach based on real-time cases and trends. Data accessed hard to count (HTC) populations identified using index modeled on the US Census Bureau's HTC score of past censuses, includes 14 correlated demographic, housing, and socioeconomic variables.
- Through on-demand data analysis, helped identify areas with high concentrations of people least likely to respond to outreach efforts.
- Deployed and measured local area community-based organization's regional exposure efforts of message outreach with consolidated and localized dashboards. Targeted outreach areas showed effective downward trending of virus spread and the increase of immunization rates.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

IDEA

On March 4, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom declared a State of Emergency as a result of the threat of a global pandemic related to the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) illness in the State of California. This Executive Order provided, among other things, that the State must prepare for, respond to, and implement measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The Labor and Workforce Development Agency team visualized a centralized, multiplatform destination to collaborate with the California Department of Social Services in outreach planning and reporting. The joint effort would provide online materials and access to community-based organizations, provide users with curated state resources based on their needs, and allow users to modify their future communications. Existing funding constraints meant some non-profit organizations and other interested parties lacked the time and expertise to provide data-driven planning and reporting, and they may have experienced challenges targeting underserved populations and regions.

Information existed in each organization's respective department and/or community-based organization, stored in spreadsheets, databases, forms, and paper files. No easy way to pool data and share information was available. Lack of standards for data processing, collection, and management made maximizing data value difficult for users who are not data scientists.

The Labor and Workforce Development Agency partnered with the California Department of Social Services, partnered with the California Department of Public Health, and engaged local workforce safety and social service community-based organizations to design the outreach program. The Labor and Workforce Development Agency and vendor partners began the build in January 2021. The resulting data process and platform, CORD, was introduced on February 1, 2021.

IMPLEMENTATION

The CORD platform was first deployed by the California Census. The platform was made into a significant data analysis platform by the data collection and dissemination effort led by the California Census team. The Labor and Workforce Development Agency laid groundwork for the COVID-19 outreach program by establishing a data governance and sharing framework among several government departments and community agencies. This entailed coordinating logistics among key stakeholders, including teams responsible for program representation, data governance, and technical implementation. A tremendous amount of work was put into addressing simplification of data-sharing, reporting, and placing importance in the community-based organization's user experience. This collaboration framework was fundamental to establishing a data collaboration framework that could be used for outreach response management and other future use cases.

The CORD platform actively collected data from multiple sources. The platform provided local governments and community-based organizations with a vast amount of information to help them understand and combat the COVID-19 pandemic in their neighborhoods. Advanced data analytics and pre-built visualizations enabled quick and informed decisions on how to address, and successfully respond to, the COVID-19 outbreak in a proactive manner.
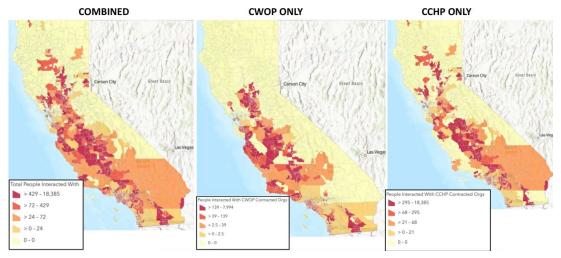
The CORD platform was deployed to help address this problem. Agencies that securely collect information from various sources could now store data in one repository and utilize the data for outreach efforts. The system documented and cataloged the data, removed sensitive information, and allowed non-information technology professionals to create customized

outreach plans and report on their progress. Information from multiple data sources was presented in an easy-to-understand manner. This information provided actionable intelligence so community-based organizations could make data-driven decisions in their planning efforts. A self-service analytics layer was designed to give community organizations powerful new tools to develop plans and see reports and dashboards in a timely manner, view incident maps, and more effectively collaborate as they responded to the crisis.

Increased Visibility Intro Outreach Efforts

The Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California Department of Social Services, and California Department of Public Health all sought to deploy resources and efforts into the local communities that needed the most urgent help based on trending data of COVID-19 spread. They also wanted to ensure outreach efforts were targeting and effectively reaching the specific areas targeted for outreach due to trending data. They leveraged the platform to learn about both issues simultaneously. The data shared on the platform showed what areas in California needed outreach efforts based on the new reported cases, testing data, hospitalization rates, and vaccination data. Once an area was identified for outreach based on trending data, a highly specific outreach plan that incorporated demographic data, language preference, and other census track indicators, was created and an outreach campaign enabled. The platform enabled the outreach partner to report back on their outreach activities, whether it was a phone call, canvassing, event, mail piece, digital ad, or other activity, and that activity was then tracked on a GIS visual map that displays the outreach efforts by targeted area, including quantity of people reached. Data was correlated to see the impact of outreach efforts to the COVID-19 outbreak data. Throughout California, when data indicated an upward trend on COVID-19 outbreak, an outreach effort was applied to the area. Over time, the data reflected a reversal of outbreak trending.

Being able to identify areas where outbreaks were more likely to spread helped local community organizations better understand where to focus their COVID-19 prevention efforts, resulting in an overall COVID-19 spread decrease and vaccination increase. Delineating these connection, through a visual representation of shared data, helps communities combat the COVID-19 spread.

CORD dashboard showing outreach campaign coverage area by program type.

IMPACT

The CORD platform successfully brought together information from multiple federal and state data sources to create a better way for community-based organizations on the front lines to plan and combat the COVID-19 spread within their communities. The CORD platform gave local community-based organizations specific information to help them proactively and effectively respond to the COVID-19 crisis. This targeted outreach approach was critical in dealing with a disease that was constantly producing variants, and mitigation response outreach communication needed to be presented differently from community to community based on demographics. The CORD was unique since it is based on the idea that a statewide coordinated, local response is the best response to mitigating COVID-19 spread.

After a successful launch on February 1, 2021, the program expanded to other California departments. Recently, CORD functionality was leveraged to support additional initiatives being driven by the California Surgeon General, the Office of Health Equity, and others.

CORD graphic showing outreach events and population reached.

Simplifying Data Analytics to Drive Data-Driven Actions

The volume of data was extensive and could have been overwhelming, but CORD data was presented to users in a way that allowed quick digestion of information and for making informed decisions. Planners used the data to identify trends that helped them proactively plan

outreach campaigns. Community-based organizations on front lines used this information to identify communities who needed to be informed about the dangers of COVID-19. The CORD used data to empower on-the-ground decision making by community-based organizations on the front lines of combating COVID-19 spread.

- Over 1000 different community-based organization were involved with efforts underway to combat COVID-19 spread.
- State leadership identified at-risk communities and correlated COVID-19 spread indicators into targeted outreach efforts to mitigate spread. Throughout California, COVID-19 spread reduction strongly correlated with an increased targeted outreach effort. Due to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency's leadership vision, public officials could micro-target and identify specific neighborhoods and streets that were likely to need resources deployed, based on real-time data trends.
- By comparing data on "outreach campaigns" reported from the period of February 1, 2021 to May 1, 2021, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency could validate quantitatively that prioritized outreach programs based on the needs of the targeted area were conducted.
- By analyzing "COVID-19 New Cases" reported from the period of February 1 to May 1, 2021, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency demonstrates their program management strategy had a positive contributing factor to California's COVID-19 road to recovering from this global pandemic.

California's Workplace Safety, Social Services, and Public Health officials deployed real-time insight to ground efforts and trend conditions related to COVID-19 outreach campaigns designed to mitigate spread. Departments and community-based organizations adjusted staffing and other resources to better align with community needs. The resulting insights helped agencies involved with this effort in California effectively plan and use the right information to prevent unnecessary loss of life from COVID-19 spread in the workplace, public, and private locations. California used the platform effectively to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, with data analysis that helped local leaders determine where cases were rising, where containment measures were working, and helped inform the public of preventative measures.

The collaborative model created by the Labor and Workforce Development Agency and California Department of Social Services, leveraging the CORD platform, provided California with a data-sharing model for analysis and management that prepared the state to respond more quickly and effectively now and into the future. The existing use case of mitigating COVID-19 spread can be extended to other uses to enable California to recover fully and better from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This model of assisting multiple entities in performing data-driven responses for workplace safety and health issues is an innovative model that crosses and combines jurisdictional boundaries and ultimately serves as a tool to make life better for residents of California.