

Case study

Innovative concepts to communicate science

DURING COVID-19

Contributor

Arizona State University and University of California

Country of implementation

United States of America

Start date of the initiative

October 2020

Track

Science communication by researchers

Target audience

Spanish-speaking communities in the USA

Website

<https://covidlatino.org/>

THE THINGS YOU CAN WIN IN THE LOTERIA OF LIFE IF YOU GET VACCINATED AGAINST COVID 19



COVIDLATINO: Disseminating COVID-19 information tailored to the context and languages of minority communities

Summary of the initiative

Many minority communities do not have access to vital information on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) that is culturally and linguistically tailored. There are between 350 and 450 languages used in the United States of America (USA), making it one of the most linguistically diverse countries across the globeⁱ. A professor and researcher at the Arizona State University and the University of California initiated the project COVIDLATINO to provide critical and timely information on COVID-19, its prevention, testing and vaccines to all Latinx (people of Latin American culture or ethnic identity in the USA) communities across the USA. This initiative brings together researchers, community-based organizations and artists to produce culturally tailored, relevant, and evidence-based COVID-19 information. The team has produced over 20 animations in three languages (Spanish, English and Zapoteco), with additional languages in production. Each animation is 1-2 minutes and touches on various topics and issues fraught

with misinformation. The animations are made available on the initiative's website, Facebookⁱⁱ, Instagramⁱⁱⁱ, Twitter^{iv} and YouTube^v accounts.

Context and relevance of the project

Minority and immigrant groups and people with migration background have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and suffered unintended negative consequences of related response measures. At the same time, these communities were often deprived of timely, high-quality information. To reduce the burden of COVID-19 on Latinx communities across the USA, the project initiator set out to produce accurate and timely information tailored to their needs.

Image above: An art piece from COVIDLATINO, illustrating the wins for people who get vaccinated against COVID-19. Copyright and credit: COVIDLATINO.

Summary of the analysis



Innovation factors

The initiative's innovation is rooted in acknowledging the need to provide multilingual and culturally appropriate, evidence-based information in a multicultural country like the USA. The project has applied a user-centred design process that drew on the inputs provided by the targeted end-users through surveys and interviews during the initial development phase. The team has created a sense of local ownership through co-development of the content. For instance, by using Latinx music in the videos, the content's acceptance is increased and promotes engagement.

Accuracy of scientific information

The scientific facts, guidance and recommendations conveyed in the videos have been adapted from multiple reliable sources such as the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, and the US National Institutes of Health. All content in the videos is vetted by an infectious disease physician in the team.



Impact on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of the target audience

The responsible team has conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of the project.

For the quantitative evaluation, the team has analysed the reach of the videos. Data from the first year of analysis showed over three million views on the website and social media accounts combined.

In addition, 600 Latinx participants have been followed for two years (August 2020 to July 2022) to assess how COVID-19 impacted their communities. The study began prior to developing the videos to tailor them to the needs of the audiences. After the animations were launched, the team continued to collect feedback on the usefulness of the project: it has carried out a pre- and post-test to assess change in knowledge of topics covered in the animations. Preliminary data show that the animations increased knowledge of preventive measures. In addition, data show that the cultural content (characters, music, language, etc.) of the animations were received in a positive light by participants in the study.



Gender equality, equity and human rights considerations

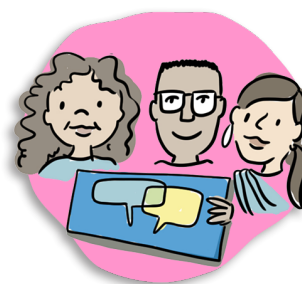
The initiative promotes equitable access to information by producing informative, culturally appropriate animations in a variety of languages. The Latinx community are 1.9 times more likely to contract the disease, 2.8 times more likely to be hospitalized and 2.3 times more likely to die due to COVID-19 compared to the white and non-Latinx counterparts.^{vi} At the same time, vaccination rates among this population are low.^{vii} COVIDLATINO set out to address these inequalities by supporting the communities to protect themselves through content tailored to their needs and in their native languages.

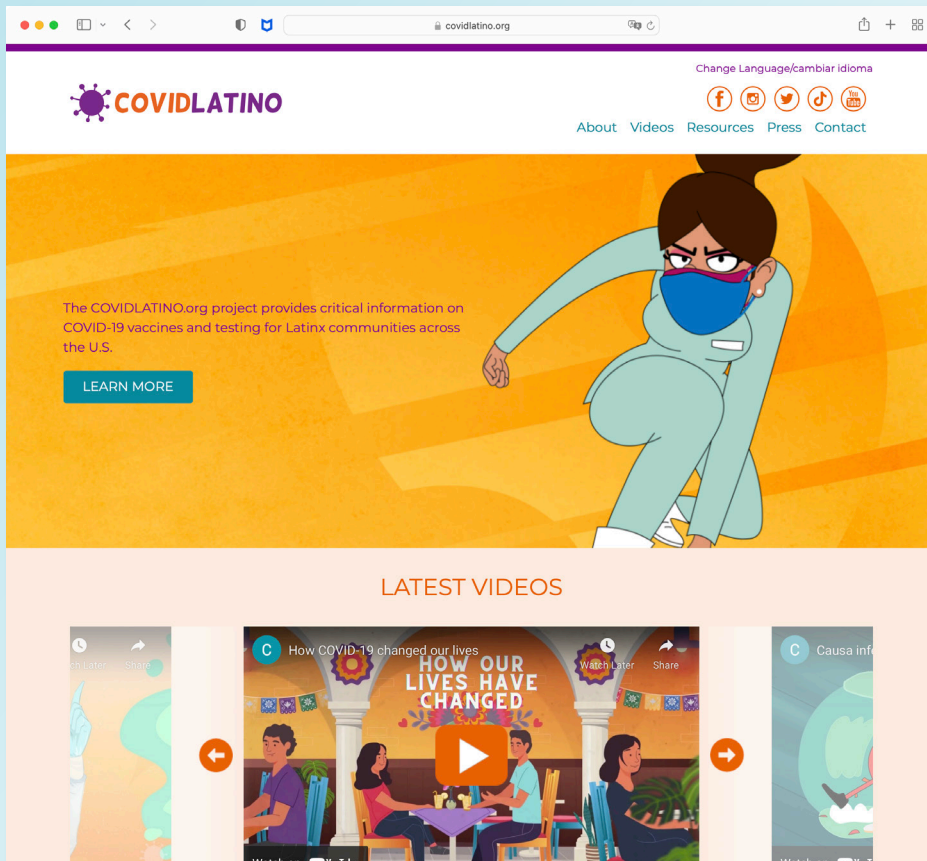
The responsible team has considered prioritizing the needs of the minority communities, researching the information gap in these communities and their information preferences, including format and style. The project team shared the results of its survey with the community to promote a continuous dialogue.

By selecting a medium that relies on audio-visuals, the initiative has ensured that people with low literacy levels can access and understand the content.

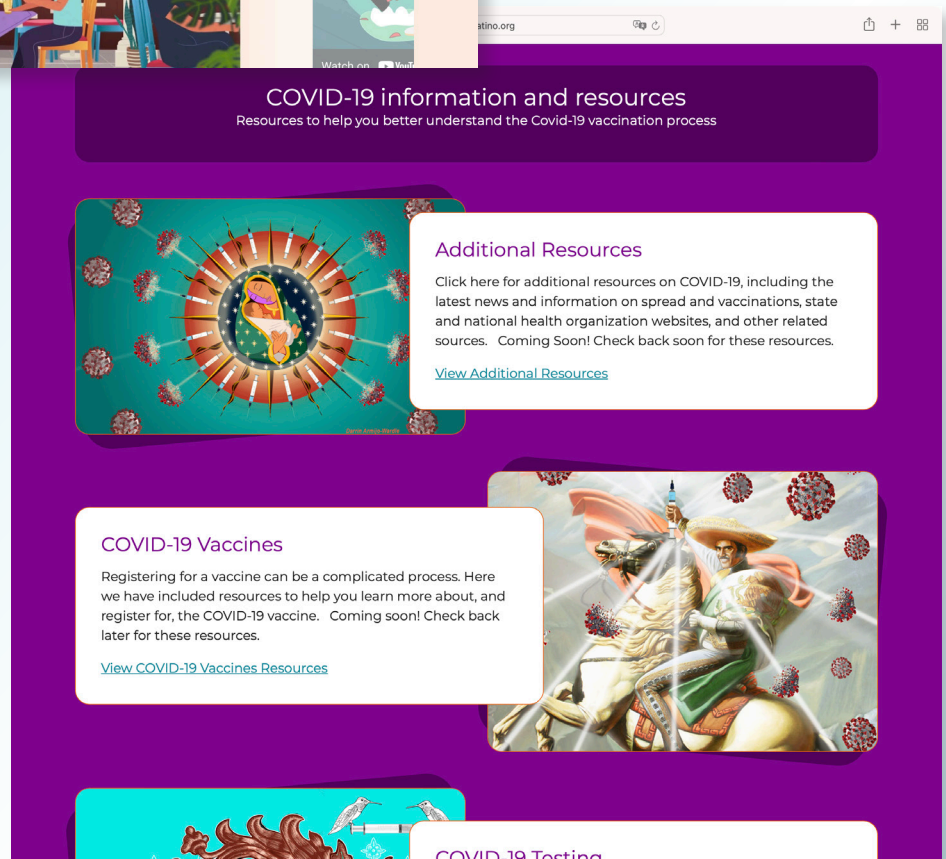
Gender representation is equal in the animations, and no stereotypical roles have been supported. For example, women have been displayed in scientific work environments such as the laboratory for COVID-19 vaccine development.

Some of the animations have covered sensitive topics around COVID-19 vaccination, for example whether COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility or whether they contain microchips for tracking individuals who might not have legal documentation. The frequently asked questions are answered in a culturally sensitive manner in line with community beliefs. The team has also featured important and frequently neglected areas such as children's mental health during the pandemic.





Screenshot of the homepage for COVIDLATINO.



Screenshot of a COVID-19 information and resources page for COVIDLATINO.



Limitations

COVIDLATINO is a project funded through grants and thus the project's sustainability significantly depends on the availability of funding. The siloed nature of academic disciplines rendered the project unfunded in the beginning as it was seen as an arts project by health organizations, and a research project by humanitarian and arts organizations.



Looking forward

The team has plans to apply for funding that will allow the scaling up of the project in two ways:

- 1) by creating more content on relevant topics such as vaccine acceptance, since the vaccination rates among the Latinx community is stalling; and
- 2) by expanding the project to countries in Latin America that are severely affected by COVID-19 and often experience vaccine hesitancy.

References

- i. Translators Without Borders. Language data for the United States of America (<https://translatorswithoutborders.org/language-data-for-the-united-states-of-america>).
- ii. COVIDLATINO Facebook account (<https://www.facebook.com/Covidlatino.org>).
- iii. COVIDLATINO Instagram account (<https://www.instagram.com/covidlatinoproject/>).
- iv. COVIDLATINO Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/covidlatino>).
- v. COVIDLATINO YouTube account (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOJV3HICXxcqp8QmpVpTKqQ>).
- vi. Risk for COVID-19 Infection, Hospitalization, and Death By Race/Ethnicity. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>).
- vii. COVID-19 vaccination: Helping the latinx community to come forward. Diaz AA, Celedón JC. Lancet. 2021; 35 ([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(21\)00140-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(21)00140-1/fulltext)).

Illustrations by Sam Bradd

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