

Visión y Compromiso™



# BUILDING THE FUTURE COMMUNITY-BASED WORKFORCE IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

An Assessment of CBOs Contracted by  
County of Los Angeles Departments to Provide  
Community Health Worker (CHW) Services



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***Building the Future Community-Based Workforce in Los Angeles County:  
An Assessment of CBOs Contracted by County of Los Angeles Departments to Provide  
Community Health Worker (CHW) Services***

Prepared for the County of Los Angeles Center for  
Strategic Partnerships and Alliance for Health Integration  
by Visión y Compromiso

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# An Overview

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## Project Goals

In an effort to strengthen the community health worker (CHW) workforce in Los Angeles (LA) County, the Alliance for Health Integration (AHI) and the Departments of Health Services (DHS), Public Health (DPH) and Mental Health (DMH), collectively referred to herein as “the County,” contracted Visión y Compromiso (VyC) to gather information from community-based organizations (CBOs) who contract with the County (both current and former contractors) to provide CHW services in order to learn more about best practices, identify opportunities to strengthen and improve relationships between CBOs and the County, and begin to craft a vision for the future of CHWs in LA County.

## Building the Team

VyC’s Assessment Team (VyC Team) worked closely with the County CHW Advisory Committee, responsible for guiding the design and implementation of the assessment, and a 13-member CBO Advisory Committee selected via a County application process to support the outreach efforts of the VyC Team. In addition, VyC selected three Anchor Organizations to host the listening sessions and support the outreach, event promotion and coordination activities.

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*“We are now recognized as a group of powerful promotoras who have gained the trust of the community. After many struggles we have demonstrated that the work of the community promotor is serious and important. We are the bridge. And today we are professionals who receive a salary. What has not changed in our desire to serve our community. There is purpose in this work and it is being recognized.”*

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Throughout the assessment, “CHW” was used as an umbrella term to capture a range of titles (e.g., CHWs, promotoras, peer specialists, etc.) for trusted community workers, engaged in clinical and community-based settings, whose unique roles include community education, outreach, peer support, system navigation, resource referral, linkages, and so much more. Out of 64 respondents to the post-session survey, 32 different titles for these specialized community workers were identified (see [Appendix B](#) for a complete list of titles).

Questions for the listening sessions and survey were drafted by the VyC Team and shared with the CHW and CBO Advisory Committees for input (see [Appendix D](#) for the questions asked during the listening sessions). The CBO Advisory Committee also participated in a pilot listening session and provided feedback on the questions. Sixty-four (64) people completed an online survey (see [Appendix B](#) for survey results).

## Collecting the Data

During mid-September to early November 2022, the VyC Team conducted twelve 90-minute listening sessions with 95 people representing 57 current or former CBOs contracted by LA County to provide CHW services (see Appendix A for a list of participating CBOs). Each CBO was allowed two representatives. Although two sessions were scheduled specifically for CHWs/promotoras to attend, a few CHWs were also included in the nine sessions with other CBO representatives (i.e. program coordinators, supervisors, contract managers, other administrators): 76 people representing 50 CBOs attended the sessions for CBO administrators and 14 people attended the CHW sessions. One listening session was held with CBOs who had never contracted with the County and was attended by 5 people representing 4 CBOs (see Table 1 below).

“We all use different titles for CHWs in our own organizations, but it is exciting that we are looking at how to sustain this workforce. We look to CHWs to be our change ambassadors because we think this is where change starts. By having the workforce go out in the community to interrupt cycles of trauma, help people who don’t realize there are resources available for them, and create that connection is crucial and important to all the other contracts the County funds. It starts here. CHWs are a foundational workforce.”

**Table 1: Listening Sessions**

Participants	Groups	Participants	CBOs
Current and former CBO contractors with LA County*	9	76	50
CHWs, promotoras, other community leaders	2	14	7
CBOs never contracted with LA County	1	5	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>61</b>

\* Coordinators, supervisors, contract managers and some CHWs/promotoras

# Summary of Findings

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Staff of (current and former) CBOs contracted by the County who participated in listening sessions led by the VyC Team spoke highly of CHWs' unique perspective, their knowledge about how to reach the community, their dedication and commitment, and the complex and important roles they play in the agencies where they work and in their communities. Investing in CHWs, promotoras and other grassroots community leaders is a meaningful strategy to invest in prevention and promote equity (health equity, racial equity, economic equity). CHWs and promotoras are key community and systems liaisons who can be powerful catalysts for change. Passionate about serving the community, they also receive immense satisfaction from their work, "I love what I do. I love to be able to share my own story and feel people begin to open up." CHWs and promotoras who are from the community don't just work the 9-5 shift—they go the extra mile to ensure that individuals and families are listened to and their needs are met. "Sometimes you just have to stay right there with them to, not make them do something, but just support them and maybe advocate a little bit. Otherwise, you might lose them in the system or somewhere else." But the work can be difficult, and the responsibilities, activities and time required to build community trust not always valued nor equitably compensated.<sup>1</sup>

The VyC Team shares a summary of the most common themes and key recommendations to increase support to both CBOs and CHWs here.

## 1. Innovations and Best Practices

### Hire CHWs who are from the community.

Perhaps the mostly commonly cited best practice used by CBOs contracted by the County to provide CHW services is to employ CHWs who "are already in the community." Trusted and credible messengers with a deep-rooted understanding of local community needs, CHWs are committed to "serving the people that they grew up with, the people that they know and see every day." By hiring CHWs from the community who "feel comfortable going door-to-door talking to people they know, we stay in tune with what's happening, and can meet people where they are at." Hiring community residents promotes "economic empowerment" and invests communities with the skills and tools they need to tackle challenges with local solutions. "We try to get women from the community to be promotoras because they're seen as leaders in their community or in the schools. They are the ones that can create change and best communicate these practices."

One promotora shared,

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*"I feel like I hold the master key that lets me enter the community so they will trust and confide in me. I live in South Central LA. So as soon as I say, 'I live here and my children were born here,' they know we are from the same community with the same needs and the same problems. I see them relax because they know I am not someone from the outside—we are fighting for the same rights."*

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1 In LA County, the average hourly wage for CHWs reported on employment-related websites: \$16-\$24/hour [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com); \$21.45/hour (range: \$18.60-\$24.73/hour) [www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com)

## Allow sufficient time for CHWs to build trusting relationships with community.

Getting the word out means CHWs need to participate in local activities and community and cultural events.

“We really have to go where the people are and sometimes that’s at events. In the summer, we have a lot of big luaus and we have to be present to connect with folks.” Building relationships with the community means going beyond health education to civic engagement or advocacy which requires a consistent presence in the community. We do what we need to do to “keep the relationship tight so when the next big thing comes, we’re able to just reach out and folks will give us a helping hand.” But this relationship building work takes time. It also requires that CHWs be paid to attend evening or weekend activities. One CHW highlighted the importance of building relationships with agencies and local resources: “Networking and building relationships with people in other organizations helps us serve our clients better because it lets us know who in the community and outside the community we can count on.”

## CHWs need equitable compensation, self-care and other supports.

One CHW said, “Working right now is really hard, people are losing a lot. Besides being a community worker, we have to be there to hold someone’s hand.” In addition to supporting community members, listening session participants also highlighted ways that CBOs are innovating to improve support to the CHW staff. One CBO highlighted that their best practice was recognizing “the passion our people have for helping others but hiring someone else to do the data entry, reporting, or provide support in other areas where they haven’t developed skills yet.” As local needs increased, CBOs shared the ways they pivoted to increase the support they provide the CHW workforce:

- » **Fair wages and benefits** Fairly compensating CHWs who live in the community increases economic empowerment for CHWs, their families, and their communities. Benefits include both health insurance and retirement plans.
- » **Team building** Weekly meetings “create time for us to gather together to share, learn, and train our team” and provide time for regular updates and

check-ins which increases self-confidence and belonging, “I know I am not working alone, I feel like I belong and know I have the backup of my manager and my co-workers.” Team building also increases safety and awareness “especially when you do residential door knocking.”

- » **Self-care** “The work we do is stressful and we have to take care of ourselves to be there for our community.” CBOs prioritized self-care by offering monthly self-care days, mental health services, intentional healing spaces, and team retreats for CHWs to reflect and learn from each other. Wellness stipends promote self-care and healthier at-home workspaces. Managers who are accessible help “pick up the slack” which promotes teamwork.
- » **Flexibility** Flexible schedules (i.e. remote work, evening and weekend hours, accommodations on hot summer days) promote job satisfaction and retention. For example, one administrator stated that the peer support specialists who work in mental health have demonstrated that, with the right information and support, they too can work remotely, be productive and efficient. And, they “seem happier, and stay much longer.” Moreover, flexible schedules on hot summer days (along with ensuring CHWs have sunscreen, umbrellas, tents, and water) promotes safety.
- » **Legitimacy** Identification, logos, badges, shirts, vests, and banners were effective to increase recognition and legitimacy for CHWs.

## Virtual platforms can increase CHW productivity.

Virtual platforms have increased access to asynchronous and scheduled trainings, improved communication with team members, and enhanced networking among CHWs. Being online “helped us provide families with services they didn’t have access to before due to lack of transportation” or because they were “more hesitant to access certain resources in person.” A mental health agency said, “we never thought this was a job CHWs could do remotely” but now we know it saves time, they are more productive, more efficient, and staff retention is better. However, CHWs still need technology training and support.

## 2. Challenges for the CHW Workforce

Primary Challenges for the CHW Workforce	CBO contractors*	CHWs**	Never contracted CBOs
Salaries, benefits for CHWs	×	×	×
Job security and retention	×	×	
Lack of trust and disinterest from the community	×		
Community access to services	×	×	×
Insufficient and short-term funding	×		×
Dealing with misinformation, primarily from social media, during COVID outreach efforts		×	
Cultural differences between community and CHWs			×
CHWs need entry level training			×
LA County contracting process is challenging			×

\* Includes issues raised by primarily administrative/program staff who attended the nine CBO sessions.

\*\* Includes issues raised by CHWs in the two CHW sessions.

### Short-term funding for CHW programs impacts hiring and retention.

CBOs who must meet payroll, rent office space, and expand community caseloads need longterm funding they can rely on. Moreover, CHWs need job security to support their families, “we don’t blame them when they take what they’ve learned and go elsewhere because they need a job.”

### CHWs need flexibility to meet community needs.

CHWs meet people where they are, which can mean addressing multiple topics. But when funding supports work on only one topic (e.g., COVID-19 or hypertension), CHWs can be challenged to provide all the resources that individuals or their families need. “We go beyond COVID to see the families that we work with as a whole, but sometimes with grants we’re limited and it’s difficult to navigate around that.” People need so much: interpretation, help enrolling in programs and completing forms, assistance navigating systems that they don’t always qualify for, and help decoding misinformation on social media. “We’re more than just healthcare workers, we listen without judgement and provide social support” so that people “feel heard” and supported. CHWs who work in programs that are designed to be holistic, meet families where they are at, and have the flexibility to address multiple issues are better prepared to help community members access more of the resources they need.

### 3. Resources More Readily Available Than Before

Resources more readily available	CBO contractors	CHWs
Easy access to County data and resources	✓	✓
Easy access to virtual trainings	✓	✓
Social media more widely used as a tool	✓	✓
Virtual collaboration with other CBOs to share resources		✓

Pandemic closures required CHWs to be creative meeting people in outdoors spaces and in socially distant ways. Increased availability and use of social media platforms allowed CHWs to reach into communities not previously accessible thus expanding their network. CHWs reported that because of technology use, “more people in the community have access to me now than they did before.” One CHW, who felt that telehealth had improved access to care for some people, said, “one thing that has changed is people used to have to go into the clinic to see a doctor. Now, you talk to the doctor on the phone or on a video call and they can send prescriptions to a pharmacist.” Technological resources are more widely available and accessible to both CHWs and community than in the pre-pandemic times. During the listening sessions, CBO participants voluntarily shared resources and technology tools with each other: “The resource I use that probably wasn’t available before is My Turn to schedule clients for vaccine appointments online.” Knowledge about how to navigate County resources (e.g., the DPH website) has also increased, “a lot of us didn’t even know it existed. Now we can help people in the

community and say, ‘This is where you go to look for a vaccine or get tested.’ It makes it so easy.” The Data Tracker tool also made tracking referrals easy. This tool is used by programs with DPH funding to track regional services provided such as one-on-one and group outreach or referrals for COVID-19 prevention projects. One person shared that SPA 3 “created a Google drive for CBOs to drop in and share their resources” and that was helpful. Other useful resources include:

- » MOCHA: professional development tool helps establish clear roles on projects, shared responsibility, holistic approach
- » SMART: Decision making and planning tool
- » [www.managementcenter.org](http://www.managementcenter.org) tools and resources
- » [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)
- » [www.monday.com](http://www.monday.com) (ask for the non-profit discount): transparency and task follow up
- » <https://bit.ly/gjlaresourceguide> resource guide with mutual aid resources

## 4. What Works Well in Your Partnership With LA County?

The majority of discussion during the listening sessions focused on 1. what works well, and 2. what can be improved in CBOs' partnerships with the County. That information is presented below:

CBO/County Partnership: What works well?	CBO contractors	CHWs
Open and constant communication with County liaisons	✓	✓
Canvas (the DPH learning management system) and other trainings (COVID-19 and more)	✓	✓
Updated resources available by email and online	✓	✓
Flexibility to spend funds as needed		✓
Additional funding, easy to navigate extensions	✓	✓
Trust		✓

### COVID-19 grantees felt well-prepared.

CBO contractors funded by the COVID-19 Equity Fund were well represented in the listening sessions. They spoke highly about the communication, support, and information sharing they received. CHWs and CBO contractors appreciated the weekly newsletters and updates on COVID-19, “if we are more informed, we can keep the community up to date.” Having knowledge is powerful and being able to pass on that knowledge builds trust. Overall, participants were pleased with the information and support provided by the County that helped CHWs reduce confusion about COVID-19 (and other topics), deliver accurate testing and vaccine messaging, and engage often reluctant community members. Highlights include:

- » Regular Friday updates provided by DPH helped ensure that “every Monday before we start work, we have everything we need to talk to the community.”
- » Virtual meetings, office hours, seminars with doctors and community forums helped CHWs share accurate and up-to-date information and build community trust.
- » Key messages, talking points and flyers provided by the County that were easy to download and print allowed CHWs to “dismantle all the myths” while out in the community and have resources in-hand.

- » Data-informed alerts “let us know about hot spots or a spike in positive cases, which helped us target our outreach.”
- » County-organizing training about federal, state and local assistance programs (food, housing, health) and tips helped CHWs to better navigate systems and make referrals.
- » Canvas helped CHWs provide current information about COVID, access flyers and other resources, track system navigation referrals, and receive education and training.
- » CHWs were grateful for regular access to PPE, incentives (masks, hand sanitizer, fans, notebooks) and other small tokens of appreciation they could share with the community.

## Systems exist for CBOs and the County to communicate.

Building a relationship with someone at the County can make a big difference in confidence, credibility, and connection. CBOs who have a point of contact at the County or a partner agency liaison reported positive relationships, “I really enjoy our partnership. We meet every week to talk about the highlights and challenges. She’s very open and available, and if we have any questions or issues, she helps us bridge the gap with the County.” Others highlighted their connections with the County in other ways, “Master agreements with DPH and DHS work fabulously. We have key points of contact that make it easy from the contract side to know who to reach out to.” (Note: the VyC Team did not ask about specific Master Agreements). “DMH liaisons are amazing and always available to support our staff with consultation and even training.”

## CBOs appreciate autonomy.

CBOs appreciate the trust demonstrated by the County. They “let us take control of the partnership. We do the hiring, pick the people we want to go out in the field, and choose our strategies. It authenticates our efforts and helps us build trust with the community.”

## What Works Well With the County?

### QUOTES ABOUT SPECIFIC DEPARTMENTS

#### DHS

*“I believe a good aspect of our partnership with DHS is having a direct program manager that we deal with. They are the liaison who lets us know what’s expected of us, checks in with us every two weeks or so, and gives us updates about what’s expected of us by the County,...that connection with DHS is pretty cool.”*

*“We have master agreements with both DHS and DPH. Having a key point of contact has worked fabulously.”*

#### DPH

*“My organization works with both DHS and DPH, but I work in the program with DPH. The best part is they are very responsive ...we have found they respond within a few hours or on the same business day. This keeps us motivated to complete that task or objective...also, every Friday we receive the highlights and key messages....so before we start on Monday we have everything (we need)...These two things are working well for us.”*

*“DPH has the Canvas website link that is really helpful...it gives you all the information you need and even has flyers to print out for the community or to share on social media and other resources too. It has been very useful for CHWs.”*

*“DPH uses Canvas to help CHWs track our referrals and also see what resources are available...But CHWs themselves have a hard time using it. I don’t know how DPH can expect community members to find information on it. There is a need for the County to disseminate information to the community so that it can actually be utilized.”*

#### DMH

*“Our DMH liaisons are amazing. They are always available to support our staff for consultation and support cases, even with training... they also had a very quick turn around to get us PPE to provide in the field.”*

## Training CHWs builds their skills and improves outcomes.

Knowing which vaccine to get or when to get a booster can be confusing. But now there is “an abundance of trainings we could not always attend when they were in person.” DPH provides training, videos and information on their website which “we know we can always visit to educate ourselves” when needed. Training and technical assistance was often highlighted as an area in their relationship with the County that works well for CBOs. Participants found great value in the information, resources and learning they received from various programs at the County. In all of the listening sessions, however, participants identified other areas where CHWs and supervisors need more training. Some people appreciated the unique trainings that presented new ideas in new ways, “the trainings with Urban Peace Institute and Lumos were really good because they opened up our minds and taught us a little bit about partnerships.” There is interest in virtual, in-person and asynchronous training as well as stipends or paid training time. The online survey completed by participants after the listening session identified additional training topics (respondents could check all that apply) that might increase CHWs’ and CBOs’ skills and capacities such as Understanding the Diverse Role(s) of CHWs, Professional Development for CHWs,

Creating Effective Work Plans for CHWs, Working With the Community, Personal Development for CHWs, Cultural Competence/Cultural Humility, and Funding and Sustaining CHW programs.

Other training topics mentioned during the listening sessions included: mental health first aid, self-defense, de-escalation training, trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, unconscious bias training, communication skills, empathy, “soft skills” (eye contact, creating a safe environment), and technology for different virtual platforms (see [Appendix C](#) for a more comprehensive list of training topics). Participants in almost every session said they struggle to find resources for people who are unhoused and need more training about how to better support these individuals.

## Strategic partnerships leverage CHW resources and create a bigger impact.

In general, collaboration between CBOs can help facilitate a warm hand-off to local resources (or even a specific person) and promote a broad, holistic and multi-service approach. Even virtual convenings can reduce confusion, minimize duplication of services and support the community in intentional ways. “One of the beauties of the pandemic is that we have become so familiar with having meetings like this where we can be together in the same virtual room.”

## 5. What Would Make the CBO/County Partnership More Successful?

How County/CBO partnerships might be improved	CBO Contractors	CHWs
More funding for programs that will impact local communities	✓	✓
Ongoing, long-term funding for projects	✓	✓
Funding decisions should reflect CBOs' perspectives and experiences	✓	
Fund items such as work clothing, equipment or transportation to support community to join the workforce		✓
Monitor the Data Tracker to avoid duplication of outreach and education in assigned areas		✓

### Multi-year funding and consistent contracts sustain CBOs and the CHW workforce.

Funding for CHW programs “should become a municipal priority like we fund public safety or mental health.” CBOs invest a lot of time and effort in training CHWs “so being able to keep them through longer-term funding is beneficial for the County, the CBO, the community, and the CHWs.” Uncertainty about future funding limits growth, “Our agency was not built to have a workforce this large, so an extra 15 people means we are busting at the seams!” Areas to improve the partnership include:

- » CBOs who can provide full-time employment opportunities are able to provide their employees (including CHWs) with more economic stability. Short-term contracts and uncertainty about future funding can negatively impact staff retention.
- » Late notification about contract extensions increases stress and staff turnover. “Staff were first hired for two months, then there was a pause, then two more months, and so on. Now, this is the first time our staff know their employment is guaranteed for a whole year.”
- » Fund grassroots organizations. “Make sure some of those dollars touch the grassroots organizations on the ground and that smaller organizations are in the conversation about where to focus dollars.”
- » Flexible, unrestricted funding supports smaller CBOs in particular, “it was nice when it was up to us to decide how to spend the money, as long as we met our deliverables.”

### Smaller CBOs need support to build capacity and infrastructure.

Many small or young CBOs and especially small CBOs never contracted by the County are under resourced compared to larger CBOs. Moreover, smaller grassroots organizations may not have the infrastructure and the experience to carry out all the activities in the contract, “but they do what they do well.” Listening session participants identified many ways to make the partnership with the County work better, especially for these smaller organizations.

- » Prolonged contracting processes can adversely impact smaller CBOs who do not have the resources to front large sums and are therefore unable to initiate recruitment and hiring. This can lead to a series of delayed start dates, late reports, and incomplete deliverables.
- » Small- and medium-sized CBOs (again, who do not have the reserves to front large sums of money) cannot hire staff and begin project implementation before the County reimburses CBOs for these services. This, in fact, can destabilize agencies. “One improvement I would suggest is to speed the process of sending the grant funds to CBOs which can be a very slow and sometimes painful process.”
- » Mentors or technical assistance consultants can help to ensure success for smaller CBOs.
- » Recruiting, hiring and onboarding staff requires more time for smaller CBOs who may struggle with employing people full-time because they don’t have the infrastructure to offer benefits. Resource smaller CBOs to help set up full-time positions with

benefits. “Hiring new staff put us on a new level for HR. All of a sudden, our payroll increased, our insurance policies doubled because of our general liability, and our employment practices all changed. But we don’t have a full-time HR department.”

- » Small CBOs may require more time to fully train staff. Trainings that are mandatory within a certain time frame are unrealistic if CBOs are still trying to hire and onboard staff.
- » Create cohorts of small organizations with access to mentors or other partners who know the system, can increase information sharing about the County, and decode new language.
- » Offer capacity building training related to program and organizational budgets, employment and other laws pertinent to nonprofits, and how to capture data for reports. “Provide accounting and HR consulting as a shared resource” and assistance to diversify funding sources to increase long-term sustainability for the CHW workforce.
- » Minimum insurance coverage requirements for each CBO can be restrictive and difficult to acquire. Consider strategies for CBOs to pool resources.

In the listening session with CBOs who had never contracted with the County, the question asked was: “What can County departments do that would encourage you to apply for funds?”

- » Support small CBOs with funding to build infrastructure and resilience, offer mentoring or coaching to assist with preparing the applications, and support organizations who are awarded a grant to plan for how to receive the funding.
- » Be clear about the funding distribution process when CBOs attend training, especially if there is an expectation that CBOs will be able to access funds after completing the training.
- » Grants in some communities need to be flexible enough to support community members’ many and different needs.
- » Continue to allocate grants through third-party administrators or collaborative grants that allow smaller CBOs to pursue contracts with the County.
- » Offer more pilot grants and multi-year funding.

### Hiring restrictions limit genuine community participation.

Restrictions about hiring people with lived experience, set by the County contract, can limit community participation and excludes experienced and trusted messengers. One participant shared the following example of how hiring might be restricted: “Last year we did not need to conduct background checks for CHWs but this year we do. Because of the community we reach, we intentionally hire people who may have a conviction.” Another CHW said, “For many of us who are promotoras, it is impossible to be hired by the County because we don’t have a bachelor’s or master’s degree. It would be nice to know that there is a possibility for some type of equivalent experience or educational certificate they would accept.”

### Engage CBOs in strategic decision making.

Some participants identified a disconnect between CHWs’ work and decisions being made about their work; cookie-cutter approaches are not effective. CBOs are experienced leaders who can contribute valuable lessons from the field that may lead to improved policies, increased trust, and better community outcomes. Suggestions to better engage CBOs in decision making about their work included: create (paid) oversight committees or advisory boards with majority CHW representation to provide feedback, identify infrastructure needs, or help build systems to support their work. Participants highlighted that CHWs and County representatives can “work hand-in-hand” to create opportunities, test new ideas, and engage in conversation to better understand what is best for the community. One CBO representative said, “We know we want to continue this work with the County and we know we can give some structure or framework around what that looks like” to better support CHWs (“and others who are in roles like most of us on these calls”).

### Some County systems are challenging.

The LA County vendor system is “not an easy system to navigate and I’ve done the training. It’s very glitchy. The relationship can be improved by updating the system so we can use it, eliminating it, or not requiring us to use it.” Recommendations to improve challenging County systems to support CBOs that provide CHW services included:

- » Streamline the ordering process for items like masks and test kits.
- » Designated canvassing turf (blocks or census tracts) assigned to CBOs by County staff were challenging when the CBO did not have contacts or relationships there. “We contacted the churches in the blocks we were assigned, but it wasn’t easy and I was rejected many times. We have relationships in other areas. You really need to know people who go to those churches and then work through them.”
- » Rural areas are unique. CHWs who live in rural areas can be consulted beforehand so that turf assignments are appropriate.
- » Reporting is extensive and takes time away from the actual work. “Streamlined, simple reporting is more useful and, at the end of the day, shows the County trusts our leadership.”
- » Hire County staff who reflect the community served. “It’s important to have an ally in these departments, someone who knows us and can be a voice for us.” “Just like we hire from our community, the County needs to hire from our communities too so that when we sit at the table to discuss the issues, we know we are dealing with someone who understands our community.”

### Create workgroups and learning communities that foster collaboration.

CBO administrators and CHWs who participated in the listening sessions were appreciative of the opportunity to come together in this way. These listening sessions afforded them the opportunity to meet, network, strategize, and support one another. Participants highlighted the need for regular gathering spaces—in-person and virtual—such as mixers, retreats, conventions, forums, trainings, learning cohorts, or networking sessions. These convenings are a way to invest in this workforce, promote peer learning, and provide an opportunity for networking and support. “It is really great to learn from each other—even just posting comments (here in the chat) anonymously helps us confidently say what we want to say and get support.”

The County is uniquely positioned to be a hub for workgroups, learning communities, and/or regional cohorts that can foster networking, collaboration, and peer support.

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*“Setting us up in regional groups, by location, or by what we do in our work can help us support each other when we need to troubleshoot or share success stories. There’s so much knowledge in each organization, but there’s a lot of intersections and crossover too.”*

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Developing a model that facilitates a self-determination process among CBOs contracted by the County supports them to identify their needs and strategies to address those needs while also fostering relationships among CBOs and CHWs.

### CHWs are a foundational workforce.

If the County funds just a few larger organizations, this will not ensure that sufficient resources will reach “a community that needs help.” The COVID Equity Fund supported many smaller grassroots CBOs with large amounts of funding that truly supported and reached local communities. Programs were well run, and the quality of their work was able to demonstrate that “this model works.”

# Key Recommendations

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By investing resources in CBOs and CHWs who are part of the fabric of local communities, the County will promote equity and economic security and instill communities with the skills and tools to tackle challenges with local solutions. To build the future community-based workforce in LA County and support long-term sustainability for both organizations and the CHW workforce, the VyC Team proposes the following recommendations under two primary themes:

## ① Support CBOs who hire CHWs who have lived experience and reflect the community.

### Hiring CHWs and staff retention

- » Support CBOs to hire CHWs who have lived experience and who share characteristics with the community to be served.
- » Ensure that CBOs can pay equitable salaries and fringe benefits to CHWs, lead CHWs, and coordinators of CHW programs.
- » Eliminate restrictive hiring and contracting criteria for CBOs who hire community members which may include English proficiency, educational attainment, number of years of experience, background checks, driver's licenses, and/or immigration status.

### Training and capacity building for CHWs

- » CHWs are happy with the trainings they have received and want more (see [Appendix C](#) for a list of training topics mentioned); training can be virtual, in-person or asynchronous training.
- » Support CBOs to strengthen CHWs' skills through formative and ongoing training to meet their unique needs.
- » Allow CBOs to hire other staff to support CHWs in areas where they have yet to develop new skills (e.g., data entry, reporting).
- » Fund certificate programs, GED completion and access to scholarships for college/higher education opportunities.
- » Provide newsletters, regular updates, key messages, and talking points when relevant (especially on rapidly changing topics such as

COVID-19 or MPOX) to help CHWs feel confident and prepared to share current data and dismantle myths.

- » More resources, training and funds are needed to address the growing mental health and homelessness crises that CHWs are increasingly having to address.

### Ongoing support and networking for CHWs

- » Encourage CBOs to create integrated systems of care to support CHWs (personal and professional development and training, flexible and remote schedules, team building activities, self-care and emotional wellness supports, incentives, mental health services).
- » Ensure CHWs have the flexibility they need to attend cultural and community events that promote information sharing and build mutually respectful relationships.
- » Provide CHWs with IDs, logos, badges, shirts, vests, and banners to increase legitimacy.
- » Include a link to the contracted CBOs on the County's website; spotlight a CBO one to two times per month to share what they do and the services they offer.
- » Organize an event to recognize CHWs and the organizations.
- » Create regional meetings with CHWs who work on the same (or similar) projects to connect them and share ideas and resources.

## 2 Support CBOs to build their capacity and strengthen their infrastructure.

### Funding and contract design

- » Provide CBOs longer-term and flexible funding to increase stability and CHW retention.
- » Resource smaller CBOs to help them set up full-time positions with benefits for CHWs; allow more time for these CBOs to complete any mandatory training
- » Speed up the grantmaking/contracting process so that small and medium-sized CBOs do not have to front large sums of money.
- » Assign a systems navigator to provide technical assistance and support to smaller CBOs and CBOS that have never contracted with the County to help them navigate applications and contracting processes, and to increase access to internal and external resources.
- » Ample notification about contract extensions can reduce stress and improve staff retention.

### Foster networking and collaboration among CBOs

- » Create a hub to foster peer support, work groups, networking, communities of practice, regional cohorts, and/or other opportunities to help CBOs learn from each other.
- » CBOs and CHWs are hungry for fruitful collaboration and sharing. Networking groups by location or by focus of the work can increase support among CBOs, promote troubleshooting, cross-fertilization and sharing success stories.
- » Create cohorts of small CBOs with mentors or other technical assistance partners who know the system and can decode new language.
- » Encourage opportunities to submit applications collaboratively.
- » Create an up-to-date directory of CBOs
- » Create a portal to submit suggestions.

### Infrastructure support and capacity building for CBOs

- » Create tools for CBOs to share resources (e.g., SPA 3 created a google drive for CBOs to add and update resource information).
- » Hire consultants and pool resources to support the current capacity building needs and invest in the future success of smaller CBOs (e.g., shared HR services, hiring/onboarding, finance, operations, audits, insurance coverage).
- » Continue the Partner Assistance Liaison model which supports CBOs through responsive communication, two-way information exchange, and real-time technical assistance.
- » CBOs are happy with Canvas, Data Tracker and other trainings they have received and want more (see [Appendix C](#) for a list of training topics); increased knowledge about how to use County websites and the information available there streamlines information sharing.
- » Update the LA County vendor system or create a more user-friendly version.
- » Provide support to measure and evaluate impact in effective and non-threatening ways, streamlined, simple reporting is more useful and demonstrates trust.

### Staffing and leadership opportunities

- » CBOs are full of experienced leaders who can contribute valuable lessons from the field. Paid opportunities for CHWs to sit on community advisory or oversight groups may lead to improved policies, increased trust, and better community outcomes.
- » Hire County staff that reflect the community served.

# Appendix A: List of Participating CBOs

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1. AADAP, Inc
2. Amity Foundation
3. Amity Foundation-Broadway
4. Antelope Valley Partners for Health
5. Armenian Relief Society of Western USA, Inc.
6. Ascent LA
7. Asian Resources, Inc.
8. Aviva Family & Children's Services
9. AYC
10. Best Start Metro LA
11. CD Tech
12. Center for Living and Learning
13. Central City Neighborhood Partners
14. Clinica Romero
15. Community Build
16. Community Warriors 4 Peace
17. Dignity Health Northridge Hospital
18. Drumming for Your Life Institute
19. East Los Angeles Women's Center
20. East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
21. Empowering Pacific Islander Communities
22. Esperanza community Housing
23. Flintridge Center
24. Gender Justice LA
25. Hands for Hope aka Hands4Hope LA
26. HELPER Foundation
27. Heluna Health
28. Homeless Healthcare Los Angeles
29. HOPICS
30. Jazz tepping Stones
31. JOY Youth Services Inc DBA Minnie's Shell
32. Khmer Girls in Action
33. Latino Equality Alliance
34. Legacy LA
35. Maryvale
36. Meals On Wheels West
37. On my Grind
38. Pacific Asian Counseling Services
39. PATH
40. Paving the Way Foundation
41. Project Joy USA
42. Proyecto Pastoral/Promesa Boyle Heights
43. Saahas For Cause
44. Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA)
45. SoCal PICRT
46. Soledad Enrichment Action, Inc.
47. Southern California Resources Services for Independent Living
48. SRD Straightening Reins Foundation
49. St. John's Community Health
50. Tarzana Treatment Center
51. Thai Community Development Center
52. The Children's Center of the Antelope Valley
53. The Community Action League
54. The Wall Las Memorias
55. The Wellness Center
56. Via Care Community Health Center
57. Visión y Compromiso
58. Vista Del Mar child and Family Services
59. Westside Coalition
60. Whole Systems Learning
61. WLCAC

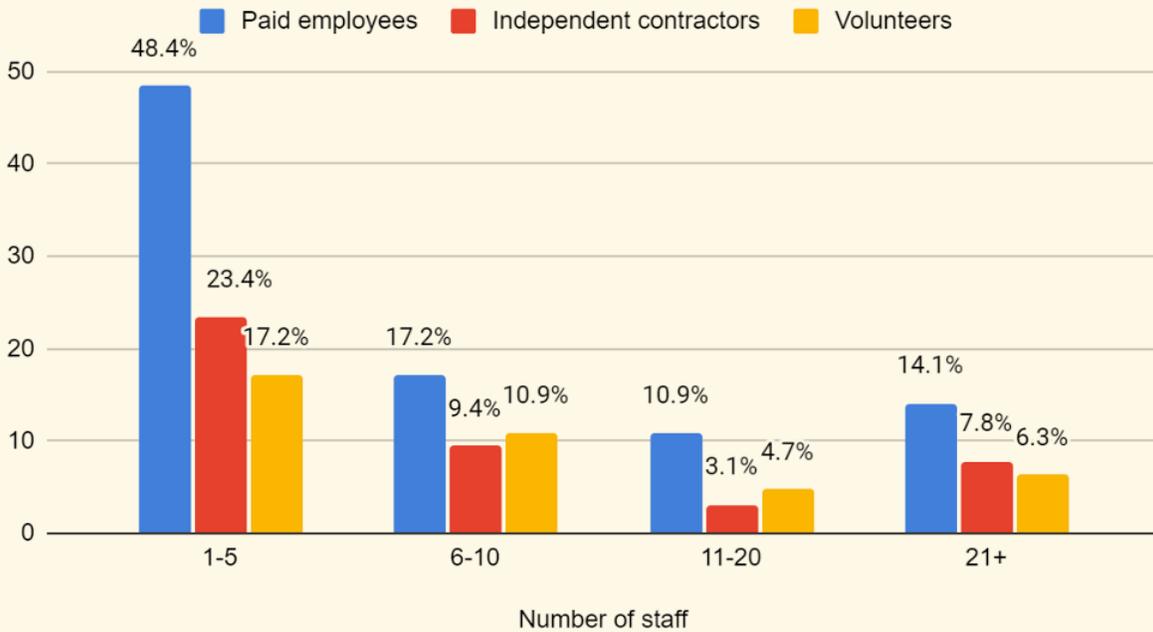
# Appendix B: Online Survey Results

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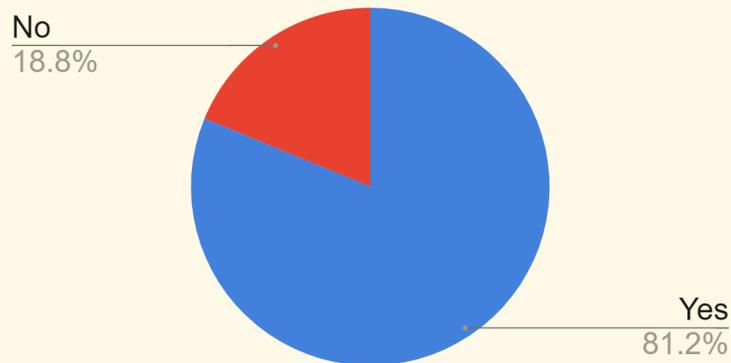
## Job Titles Used by Survey Respondents

1. Advocate
2. Canvasser
3. Case Manager
4. Certified Community Health Worker
5. Child and Family Specialist
6. Community Care Coordinator
7. Community Health Advocate
8. Community Health Coordinator
9. Community Health Educator
10. Community Health Information Specialist
11. Community Health Outreach Worker
12. Community Health Worker
13. Community Outreach Worker
14. Community Worker
15. Diabetes Educator
16. Family Support Specialist
17. Health Advocate
18. Health Representative
19. Helper/Supporter
20. Home Visitor
21. Lactation Consultant/Specialist
22. Lifestyle Coach
23. Outreach Specialist
24. Outreach Worker
25. Parent Partner
26. Patient Advocate
27. Patient Navigator
28. Peer Leader
29. Promotor(a) de Salud (health promoter)
30. Promotora
31. Systems Navigator
32. Trabajador/a Comunitario/a

## Type of Employment for CHWs Working at CBOs Surveyed (n=64)



## CBOs With a Formal Training Program for CHWs (n=64)

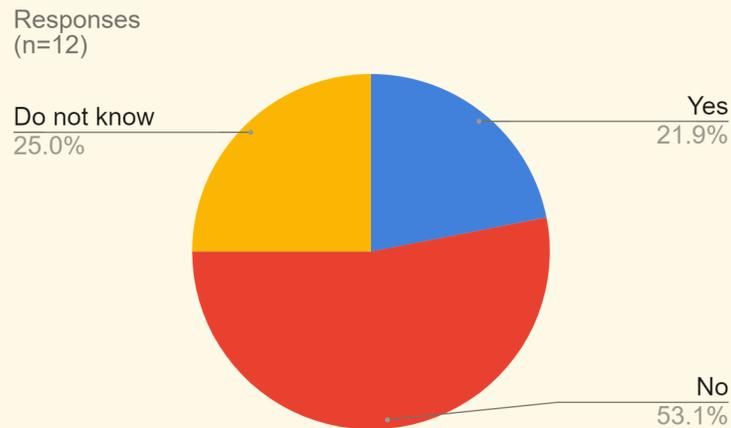


## Content Training Topic Areas Provided for CHWs by CBOs\*

- » On-the-job training (77%)
- » Content-specific training related to a particular project (47%)
- » Core skills and competency training for CHWs and promotoras (31%)
- » Contract with another organization or training provider to train CHWs (17%)

\*Respondents were asked to check all training competencies that applied

## Do CBOs Require CHWs Have Formal Training, Credential, Certificate, or Other Certification? (n=12)

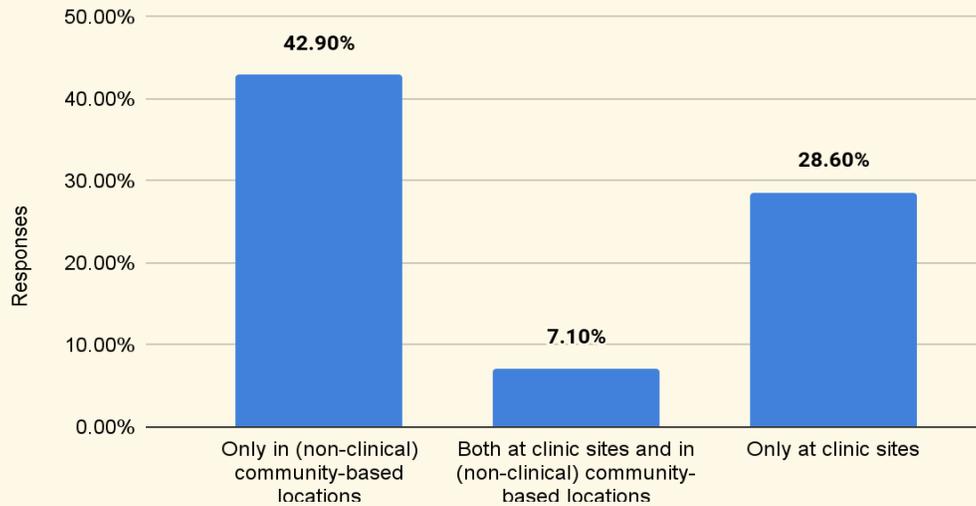


## Type of Training, Credentials, Certificates, or Other Certifications Required (n=14)\*

High school diploma or GED	43%
Bachelor's degree (BA, BS)	29%
Certificate from a certified training program	29%
Associate's degree (AA, AS)	21%
Trade school/Certificate	7%
Master's degree (MA, MS, MSW, MPH)	7%
Do not know/Do not gather this information	14%

*\*Respondents were asked to check all that applied*

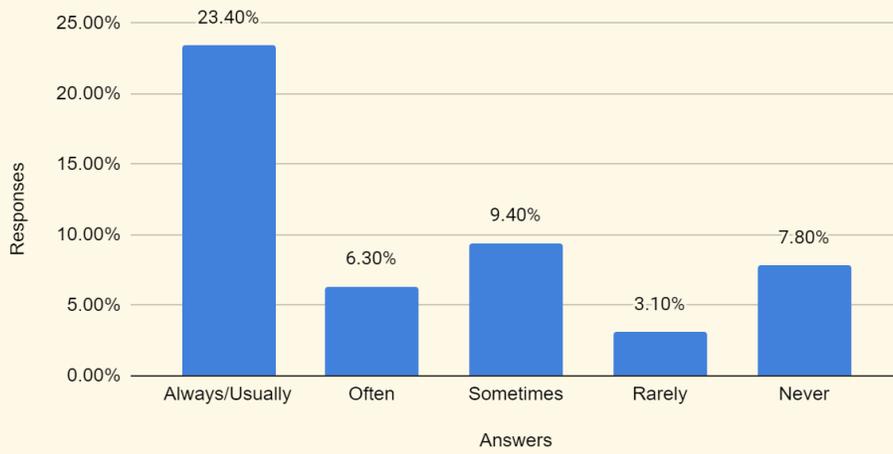
## Locations Where CHWs Work (n=55)



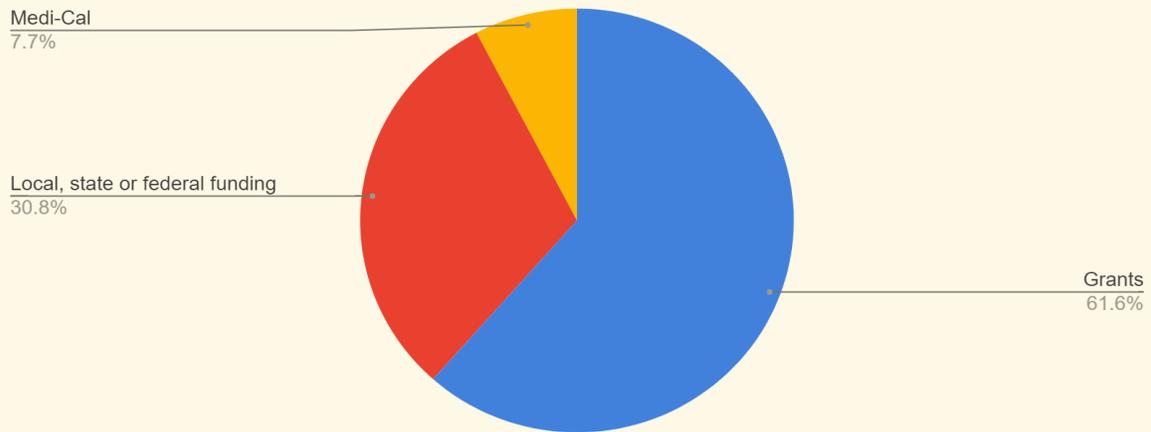
## Top 10 Activities or Services Provided by CHWs

1. Link to social services
2. Health education
3. Link to medical services
4. Assistance with making medical appointments
5. Case management
6. Follow up calls
7. Link to behavioral health services
8. Conduct individual/family needs assessment
9. Enrollment into health and public assistance programs
10. Serve as a bridge for connecting communities to providers

## Frequency of Funding for CHW Services (n=32)



## Funding Sources (n=21)



# Appendix C: Training Topics Identified

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1. Assessment for individual and organizational learning
2. Group facilitation
3. Broad skills for CHWs based on EQ and relationships
4. Bureaucracy navigation cohorts (between newer CHWs and more legacy CHWs)
5. Communications
6. Conducting community surveys
7. Cultural sensitivity
8. Culturally inclusive training that will enhance understanding of our ethnic groups in LA County
9. Data management
10. De-escalation
11. Digital literacy learning opportunities
12. Financial planning for CHWs
13. Budgeting for CBOs
14. Health certifications
15. How to assist clients in difficult situations
16. Interpersonal relationships
17. Introduction/onboarding/HR for new CHWs
18. Mental health and trauma-informed education
19. Support CHWs working with communities impacted by intergenerational trauma
20. Mental health crisis/suicide prevention
21. Mental health first aid
22. Navigating systems
23. Program management for career advancement in CHW/promotor/a careers
24. Safety
25. Self-care and emotional wellness
26. Capacity building and infrastructure supports (e.g., HR, accounting, insurance) for small CBOs
27. Social media/digital outreach
28. Soft skills trainings
29. Community outreach techniques
30. Health issues
31. Standardized training and certifications for all levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced).

# Appendix D:

## Listening Sessions and Survey Questions

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### LISTENING SESSIONS

#### Questions for CBOs with current or past contracts with the County

1. Please share one innovation or best practice for working with CHWs in your organization.
2. What are the top 3 challenges for the CHW workforce today? (Poll)
3. What resources or innovations are currently available that makes it easier for the CHW workforce to do their job, but was previously not available?
4. What is working/has worked best about your partnership/contract with LA County?
5. What are some ways your partnership/contract with LA County could be/could have been improved?
6. What would make these partnerships with the 3 LA County departments more successful?
7. What is your vision for the future of the CHW workforce in Los Angeles County in the following areas? (Poll)
  - a. Funding
  - b. Workforce opportunities/Professional Development
  - c. Programmatic supports
  - d. Collaborations amongst CBOs and LA County
8. Is there anything else you want to share with us?

#### Questions for CBOs that never had a contract with the County

1. Please share one innovation or best practice for working with CHWs in your organization.
2. What are the top 3 challenges for the CHW workforce today? (Poll)
3. What resources or innovations are currently available that make it easier for the CHW workforce to do their job, but were previously not available?
4. What needs to be in place in order for your organization to solicit funds from the County?
5. What can the county departments do that would encourage you to apply for funds?
6. What is your vision for the future of the CHW workforce in Los Angeles County in the following areas? (Poll)
  - a. Funding
  - b. Workforce opportunities/Professional Development
  - c. Programmatic supports
  - d. Collaborations amongst CBOs and LA County
7. Is there anything else you want to share with us?

## ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Participant information
2. Email address
3. Title
4. Date of listening session attended
5. How does your organization currently work with community health workers and/or promotoras?
  - a. If not working with CHWs/promotoras please state the reason why:
6. Community health workers and promotoras (CHW/Ps) are known by a great diversity of job titles. What job title does your organization most frequently use to refer to these community workers (check all that apply list with option to add other)
7. Please estimate the total number of FTEs for CHW/Ps currently engaged by your organization as paid employees
8. Please estimate the total number of FTEs for CHW/Ps currently engaged by your organization as independent contractors
9. Please estimate the total number of FTEs for CHW/Ps currently engaged by your organization as volunteers
10. Does your organization provide a formal training program for your CHW/Ps?
  - a. If yes, what training does your organization currently provide CHW/Ps? (Check all that apply)
  - b. If not, who trains CHW/Ps in your organization?
11. Training organization(s) and training title(s) if applicable: (Open-ended)
12. Does your organization require CHW/Promotoras who are hired to have specific formal training, credentials, certificates, or other certification?
13. What formal training, credentials, certificates, or other certification does your organization require?
14. At which locations do CHW/Ps in your organization work? (Check all that apply)
15. In which (non-clinical) community-based locations, do CHW/Ps perform their work (i.e., education, outreach, navigation, etc)? (Please check all that apply)
16. What types of activities/services are currently provided by CHW/Ps in your organization? (Please check all that apply)
17. Does your organization receive payment or reimbursement for CHW/promotoras' services?
18. If "always/usually" or "often," from what sources does your organization receive reimbursement for CHW/Ps' services?
19. If "sometimes," "rarely" or "never," how does your organization financially support CHW/Ps?
20. What training topic areas would increase your organization's capacity to work with CHW/promotoras? (Check all that apply)
21. What topics for technical assistance or training would be most useful to your organization to better support the CHW/Ps in your organization? (Open-ended)
22. What topics for technical assistance or training would be most useful to your organization to provide adequate supervision to the CHW/Ps in your organization? (Open-ended)
23. Are there any other emerging topics regarding the CHW workforce that you would like to see addressed? (Open-ended)

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