

## Implementing a Community-Driven Research Partnership: The Backyard Initiative Community Health Survey Methods and Approach

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### What Is the Purpose of This Study?

- The Backyard Initiative (BYI) is a partnership between Allina Health, the Cultural Wellness Center, and the Backyard Community to improve the health of residents living in the backyard area located in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- In 2013, the BYI Partnership designed the “BYI Research Plan” to collect, analyze, and interpret data on health-related factors, disseminate the findings, and inform ongoing and future BYI activities and research.
- The first aim was to design a Community Health Survey to collect information on five health-related priority areas: stress, social support, social cohesion, health literacy, and “activation” or health empowerment, as well as demographic information.
- The purpose of this specific study was to pilot a community-centered method and determine if it is a feasible approach for collecting meaningful and valid health-related information.

### What Is the Problem?

- Many approaches and partnerships to community health improvement call for institutions to partner with the “community” to understand and improve health; however, issues such as creating the appropriate setting in which community members, rather than outsiders, and creating research processes and outcomes that are relevant to “everyday living” still remain largely unachieved.

### What Are the Findings?

- Our unique community-centered method enabled us to achieve our recruitment goal of 200 survey participants, reach groups of people who are often underrepresented in research, provided meaningful insights on study design, and facilitated the collection of meaningful, relevant, and valid health-related data.
- The largest cultural groups of survey participants were African American/African at 37% and Native American/American Indian at 34%.
- When asked about their general health status, 39% of respondents rated their health as excellent or very good, and 30% rated their health as fair or poor.
- The role of the host, which was created intentionally by community members to lead the survey sessions and to establish trust with participants, was important because hosts were able to customize the sessions to the participants, manage the room dynamics, and draw on their experience as a survey participant.
- Our achievements indicate that it is possible to develop and implement a community research partnership process, use high-quality study methods (e.g., use validated questions), and collect meaningful, valid health-related data.

### Who Should Care Most?

- Partners in community health improvement partnerships.
- Researchers engaged in community-based participatory research.
- Hospital community benefit workers.

### Recommendations for Action

- Take the time and effort to develop a strong and effective partnership.
- Establish shared ownership (e.g., develop principles of collaboration and a shared vision).
- Establish a mutually beneficial partnership (e.g., identify relevant issues and shared goals).
- Recognize and use the expertise, experiences, and resources of all partners involved.
- Implement community-centered study methods (e.g., use personal invitations, customize to cultural values, beliefs, and preferred language).