

Community Belonging Measurement Project

Translational Science Benefits Model (TSBM) Case Study



COMMUNITY BELONGING MEASUREMENT PROJECT

Translational Science Benefits



COMMUNITY



POLICY

Visit <https://translationalsciencebenefits.wustl.edu/case-study/assessing-community-belonging-in-central-oregon/> to the full case study and to read more about Translational Science Benefits.

If you would like to create a TSBM Case Study in partnership with OCTRI, please contact Matt Honoré at honore@ohsu.edu

SUMMARY

A sense of belonging is crucial for physical and mental health and has long been identified as a basic human need. In close partnership with the community, researchers completed a mixed-methods study and are presenting their findings to benefit the community and support future policy decisions.

A sense of community belonging may be particularly lacking among communities that have experienced discrimination or oppression; among older adults who commonly experience shrinking social networks; and with individuals living in rural areas.

Moreover, COVID-19 precautions had far-reaching social sequelae, including increased isolation for older adults and individuals with disabilities. These pressures highlight the urgent need to understand and promote community belonging.

The “Measuring Resilience and Belonging in Central Oregon” project was created to assess community belonging in Central Oregon (Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, and North Klamath communities, as well as the confederated tribes of Warm Springs), a region encompassing approximately 250,000 people.

This project is part of a larger strategy to inform the development of health priorities, and to facilitate

community-engaged research and community-academic research partnerships, in Central Oregon. The research team comprised researchers from Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) and Oregon State University (OSU)-Cascades, in close partnership with the community.

This work is the culmination of an OHSU liaison living and working in the community for many years; this allowed OHSU to build trust and involve community members in meaningful decision-making and strategic planning.

The study used a mixed methods approach, measuring belonging in a representative sample of an adult population via a survey and focus groups, followed by quantitative descriptive statistical analyses and qualitative thematic analyses.¹⁰ Community partners partnered in each phase of the study, from planning through dissemination.

SIGNIFICANCE

The project’s process is as important as its expected impact and benefits. The Community Research Liaison (CRL) developed and maintained relationships with local partners, a process that dates back to 2015, building trust in the community and promoting collaborations between community and academic researchers. The CRL’s relationship building was integral for this and successive collaborations and partnerships.

Community members were heavily involved in the planning process (ex. developing the definition of “belonging”), improved data quality (community partners providing opportunities for improved data collection), culturally responsive interpretation and analysis, and guided subsequent use of data (ex. government agency and community organization funding opportunities and justifications).

BENEFITS

Demonstrated benefits are those that have been observed and are verifiable. **Potential benefits** are those logically expected with moderate to high confidence.

IMPACT

Community partners participated in all stages of the research, including planning, data collection and analysis, and dissemination). **Demonstrated**

DOMAIN BENEFIT



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Community-engaged research

Research findings may lead to new health services aimed at improving mental health and social relationships in prioritized populations. **Potential**



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Community health services

Data-informed programs and projects stemming from this research will improve mental health and social relationships in prioritized populations. **Potential**



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Life expectancy & quality of life

Researchers presented preliminary data to the Central Oregon Health Council, a regional committee, and plan to present full findings to other local government organizations. **Demonstrated**



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Expert Testimony

The results of this study will be used to inform the Regional Health Assessment for the Central Oregon Health Council, a regional governing committee. **Potential**



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Committee participation

Findings from this study will inform the Central Oregon Health Council's Policy Improvement strategy, part of their Regional Health Improvement Plan. **Potential**



POLICY

Policies

As dissemination for this project continues, researchers have presented their initial results to local government coalitions, with funding opportunities based in part on belonging needs in the community. Other expected benefits include the use of community-engagement research model as a tool in other distinct local areas, including measuring belongingness as a community health metric.

LESSONS LEARNED

Community-engaged research is innovative, and its benefits are far reaching, but it is not a fast process. Researchers engaged in a collaborative, iterative process through the project timeline, engaging community in processes, data gathering, data analysis and interpretation, and dissemination. Having buy-in from partners in the analysis phase not only increases data quality, but also increases the likelihood that their local communities will actively use the data in local decision making. The Community Research Liaison also continually built relationships throughout the project.

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