

Community Voice Community Choice

A dynamic digital-first approach to flexible and sustainable community-centered engagement.

The challenge for program administrators and funders:

A large body of research confirms that effectively engaging parents and other grassroots-level stakeholders and centering them as partners is critical to creating and improving programs and services grounded in the needs of the people being served. However, community engagement strategies can be challenging to implement consistently.

The opportunity:

Equity-Centered Community Engagement (ECCE) is **flexible** and enables **authentic and sustained** interaction with community members. This approach ensures community perspectives are centered—without overburdening families, stakeholders, or program administrators. ECCE is a digital-first approach that offers multiple pathways and opportunities for community members to participate. It creates a pool of community participants who are ready and willing to share insights on an ongoing basis and then provides a channel to inform those community members of opportunities to share their insights.

How does it work?

1. A community-specific campaign is developed around the ECCE opportunity, with a name, logo, and messaging all developed with and tested by the stakeholder audience (e.g. parents, service providers, other grassroots stakeholders).
2. In partnership with parents and community members, a grassroots outreach plan is activated. Potential participants are invited through an incentivized digital-first approach that can be shared organically across social media, text, web or print-based mediums. Recipients register on their platform of choice and become members of the ECCE opportunity.
3. Participants receive ongoing engagement opportunities via text or email.
4. For deeper engagement, participants can opt in to focus groups, interviews, or advisory group opportunities. Participation is always voluntary and incentivized.



Case Study: Families and Educators Advocate for Kids in LA County

VIVA developed and implemented ECCE for First 5 Los Angeles (F5LA) and Quality Start Los Angeles County (QSLA) as part of an early childhood planning process aiming to understand experiences of families and educators of young children and unravel racist practices that have perpetuated a significant opportunity gap.

What VIVA did: *Families Together for Kids in LA County* and *Early Educators Advocate for LA Kids* are the two survey panels, developed in English and Spanish in direct partnership with families and early childhood professionals in LA county. To ensure that F5LA and QSLA priority populations (by race and zip code) were adequately included, VIVA used specific paid and organic targeted marketing techniques, while simultaneously enlisting the influence of partners and incentivized parents directly.

The impact: Almost 1000 family members and over 500 early educators of young children signed up to join QSLA and F5LA's Equity-Centered Community Engagement survey panels for ongoing engagement. VIVA was successful in reaching targeted zip codes, as well as race, language, and immigration status diversity.

Additional digital engagement (text, email) phases throughout the summer of 2021 have resulted in a **robust longitudinal data set** that can be broken down by key demographics. Key insights about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young children and what resources families need to alleviate these challenges can be analyzed by race, zip code, and household income. Parents and providers alike provided detailed information on their plans and what influences their decision-making to inform the county's resource allocation.



What are the benefits of ECCE?

- Rather than spending staff time and resources to support one-time outreach, ECCE is a platform for ongoing engagement with community members.
- Participant engagement is not limited to a single topic or program area; insights can be collected and leveraged across initiatives.
- Engagement opportunities can be developed in response to emerging priorities, providing opportunities for real-time data collection, testing ideas, and tracking needs over time.
- Ongoing engagement is efficient and effective. It creates a culture of community-centered decision making that advances equity by honoring the perspectives and experiences of parents and other grassroots stakeholders and eliminates the need for assumptions that may stem from systemic bias.

How does ECCE equip funders and program administrators to work differently?

- Creates a large engaged community with transparent needs and solutions
- Provides actionable information in real time, longitudinally
- Ensures that program and service development centers the needs and ideas for solutions from those who are intended recipients
- Meets community members where they are and honors their partnership by offering different options for engaging

We look forward to continuing the conversation!

Please contact Lucia Cazares to learn more at lucia@vivasocialimpact.com