



Cultivating Community Solutions: Building Capacity for Community-Rooted Evidence in Title V Funding and Practice

October 22nd, 2024



EXPLORE

Unpacking "Evidence" in Maternal Child Health

Background on the Issue

- Traditional evidence in MCH often overlooks the lived experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities.
- Community-rooted evidence (CRE) uplifts these voices, ensuring programs are responsive to community needs.
- AMCHP convened a workgroup and is conducting research with MCH professionals and CBOs to incorporate CRE into funding and program decisions.

What is Community-Rooted Evidence (CRE)?

Community-rooted evidence is the knowledge, experiences, and stories from communities that show how well a program or policy works for them.

This approach **values often-overlooked expertise** by focusing on success defined by the communities themselves, based on their unique needs and solutions.



Why Does CRE Matter?

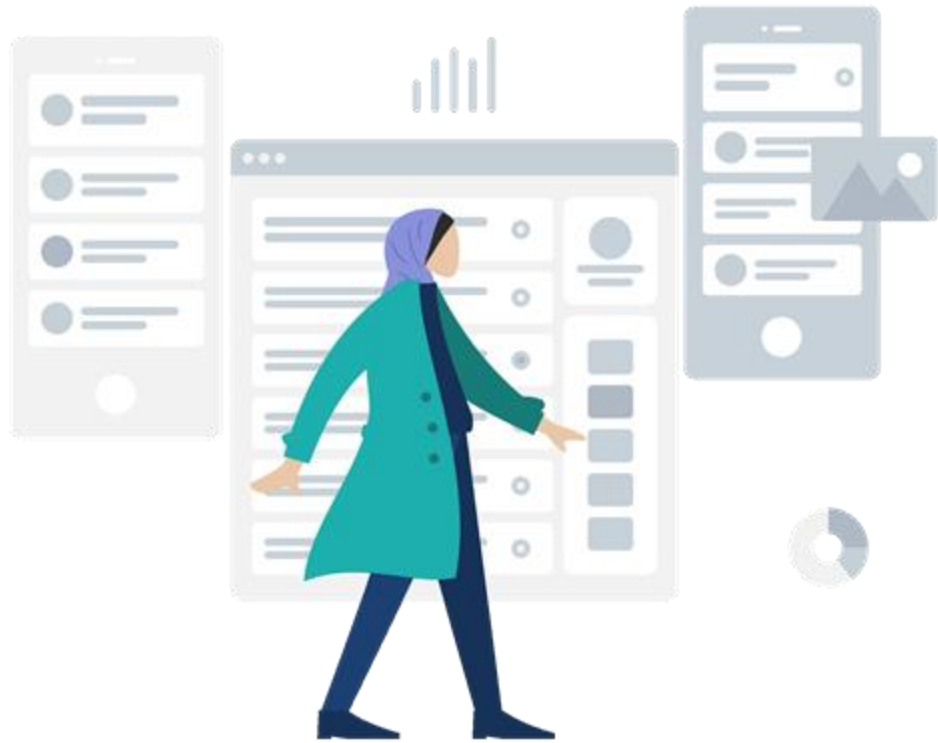
- **Builds trust** and centers the expertise of those within the community.
- Develops programs that align with the **specific needs, values, and context** of participants.
- Ensures programs and processes are grounded in **equitable practices**.
- Supports the **sustainability** of the programs created.



CRE Workgroup

We currently compensate 10 CBO members as Community Advisors and 6 Title V members as workgroup members, with about 24 members actively participating from various agencies.

Our workgroup has provided guidance on interviewing Title V professionals and CBOs to better understand their community-based work and capacity-building needs for CRE. They've supported AMCHP in the design, analysis, and are now helping create a resource to share with funders and MCH Title V leaders.



STUDY OVERVIEW

Community of Practice for the Safer Childbirth Cities Initiative: Bolstering Collaboration and Readiness for Community-Defined Evidence

Study Aims

Research Aim

To prepare the MCH field, including public health, policy, and funding partners, to advance community-defined evidence and uplift community-rooted leaders in state and local MCH work.

Objectives

Understand how community-defined evidence (CDE) is currently informing programmatic and funding decisions happening in state/jurisdictional Title V programs across the country.

Understand what support and capacity building community-based organizations need to generate and share community-defined evidence with funders including state and federal partners.

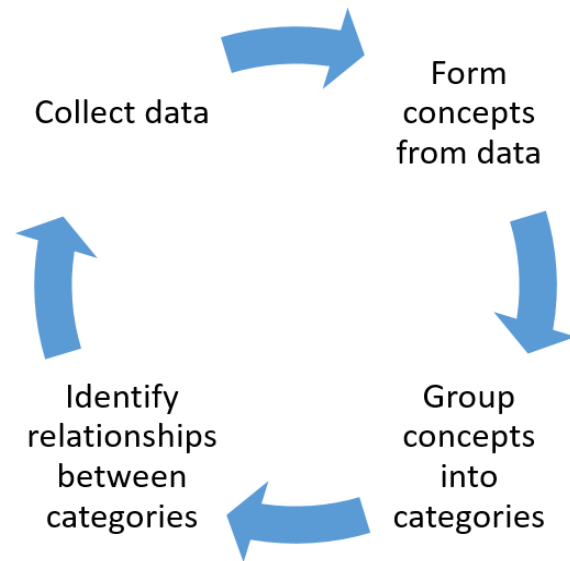
Data Collection Methods

Study Title	Community of Practice for the Safer Childbirth Cities Initiative: Bolstering Collaboration and Readiness for Community-Rooted Evidence
Study Design	Semi-Structured (compensated) qualitative interviews & online open-ended survey
Study Participants	State level MCH/Title V Professionals, AMCHP Members, CBO representatives
Participation Size	1 hour interview (11 Title V & 16 CBO interviews conducted) 0 online survey responses
Study Period	February-December 2024 (projected)

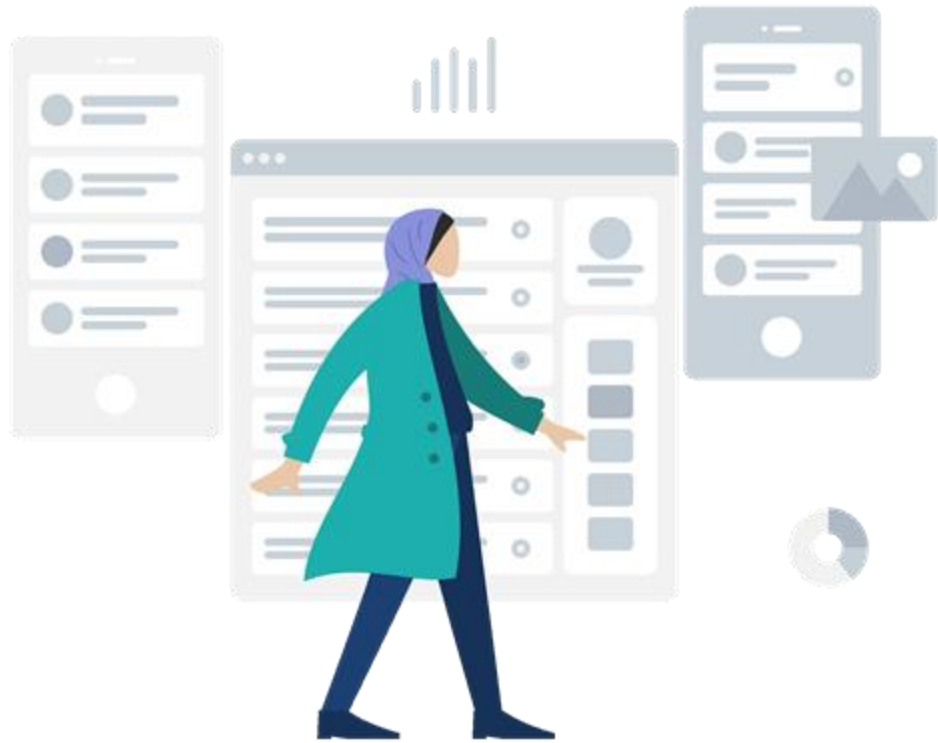
Qualitative Analysis Methods

Grounded theory approach for qualitative analysis

- Used deductive codes based on themes from the Safer Childbirth Cities AMCHP Conference Pre-day Focus group.



Code Frame	Sub Code	Description
Intellectual Property	Ownership	CBO's ownership of ideas, materials, and anything coming out of their project. This includes replication and citation of their work.
	IP power dynamics	Power dynamics, such as imbalances and shifts in power, between CBOs and funders as it relates to intellectual property.
	Examples	Examples of intellectual property.
	Suggestions	Suggestions for how to improve intellectual property considerations.
Defining CRE	Components of CRE	Any aspects, descriptors, and/or elements of community-rooted evidence.
	Challenges in defining CRE	Any challenges or barriers to defining community-rooted evidence, including challenges in reaching consensus or a shared understanding of concepts related to CRE (e.g., definition of community).
	Examples of CRE	Examples of community-rooted evidence in action.
	Suggestions	Suggestions for how to better define or explain community-rooted evidence.
Funding Opportunities and Reporting	Burden	Pertaining to the level of effort, staff time, resources, capacity, etc. needed for CBOs to meet the requirements laid out by funders.
	Degree of alignment in evidence expectations	Degree of alignment, including "gap" or "disconnect", rein what funders are asking for and what CBOs are either already collecting or can provide.



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Preliminary Results from CBO Interviews

Code Frame: Intellectual Property

- **Funding Decisions:** Intellectual property concerns can influence which organizations CBOs apply for funding with.
- **Extraction:** Grant applications can sometimes be exploitative, taking ideas without fair compensation.

"They had a question, "In 500 words or less, tell us how racial equity shows up in the way you do your work. If we use your concepts, we'll credit you," was the actual question. I didn't want to answer it, but again, it was a mandatory question. I said, "Racial equity is the bedrock of everything, period." I was not going to get into specifics. It was just so boldly extractive. It was startling." - CBO Respondent

Code Frame: Defining Community-Rooted Evidence

- **Community Voice:** community's input is seen as critical in shaping what counts as valid evidence.
 - *"If the community is at the center, they have the chance to say what evidence is, instead of having someone from the outside dictate what matters."*
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** recognizing and respecting cultural values, traditions, and histories of the community.
- **Critique of "Typical" Evidence:** at times fail to capture the richness and complexity of community experiences.

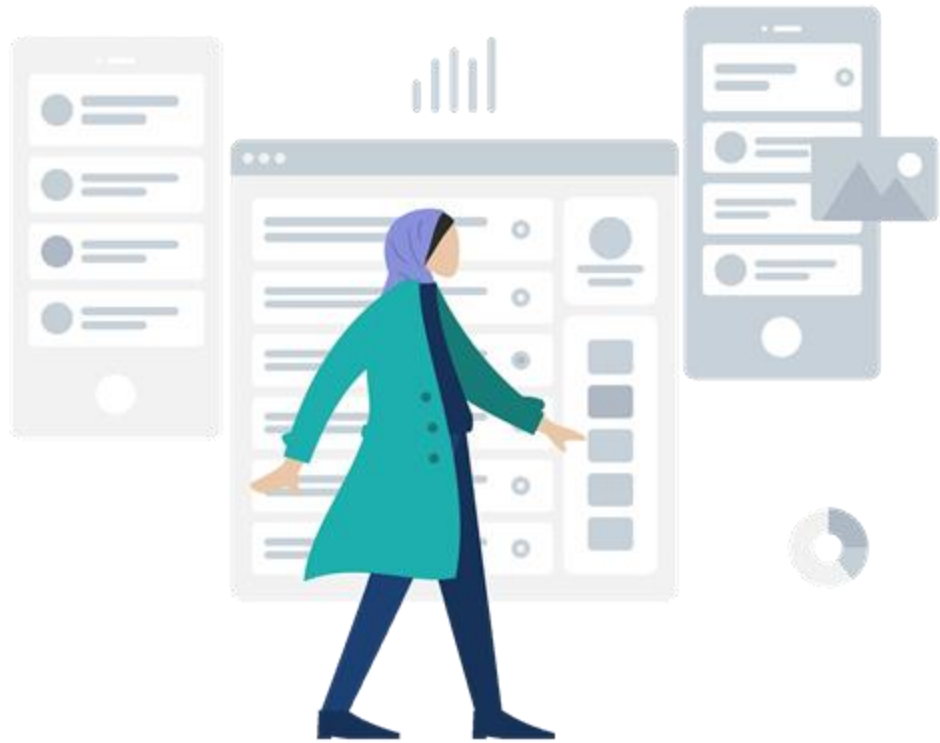
Code Frame: Funder & Reporting Considerations

- **Funders' Expectations and Misalignment:** what funders expect as "evidence" (usually quantitative) and what community-based organizations can provide (often qualitative and context-specific) can differ. The need to educate funders is very apparent.
 - *“Sometimes funders consider evidence as things we have no control over...it’s not realistic for the work we do to have a direct impact on some of the things they’re measuring.”*
- **Burden of Reporting:** reporting process often diverts resources from core activities.
- **Need for Flexibility:** need for funders to allow more narrative-based, qualitative reporting.

Code Frame: Capacity Building

No One-Size-Fits-All

"Understanding that capacity building is not such a monolith in the conversations because every CBO is going to need money. That's always a constant. However, they don't all need money in the same way, and they don't all need money in the same amount. Capacity building for us being almost a decade into the game is going to look different from an organization that just started two years ago. It should not be this assumption that it's the same for everyone across the board." - CBO Respondent



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Results from Title V Interviews

Code Frame: Defining Community- Rooted Evidence

CRE Provides Context Around Qualitative Data

Quantitative data alone is often not **“an accurate reflection of the experiences of people in communities”**.

Community Trust and Engagement

Ensuring that the community feels heard and involved in the decision-making process is a significant part of how participants define community-rooted evidence.

Challenges of Extractive Practices

Participants raised concerns about ensuring that CRE collection does not become extractive, where communities feel overburdened or are asked to provide input without seeing benefits in return.

- **“We’ve done some projects where we lean into the community so much that become a burden for the community. When you have the same champions in every meeting, they get overwhelmed.”**

Code Frame: Mindset Around Evidence


Collaborative and Inclusive Decision-Making

Bringing people together – whether through advisory councils or roundtable discussions – was seen as key to ensuring that community voices influence the priorities and strategies.

- “Our Family Advisory Council has up to 55 parents with lived experience. We pull them together four times a year to share our work and get their feedback on strategies, and we really rely on their input to drive our programming.”

Barriers Aligning Community Evidence with Formal Systems

Integrating CRE into state and federal systems is challenging as formal structures prioritize quantitative data and traditional evidence-based research, leaving little room for qualitative insights.

- “Our state health department often challenges us...they want to know how something will impact maternal and infant mortality, and it’s harder to justify initiatives that are based on community-rooted evidence.”
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Code Frame: Funding Opportunities & Reporting

Barriers in Aligning Federal Priorities with Local Needs

Several respondents mentioned a misalignment between federal funding priorities and the actual needs of their state or community, which makes it difficult to address local issues effectively.

- “There’s a mismatch between our highest disparities, particularly in American Indian and Black populations, and where our funding is going...we don’t have the resources to meet those challenges.”

Innovation and Flexibility in Evaluation

Respondents express the need for more flexible and innovative approaches to evaluating the success of programs, allowing for adjustments based on real-time feedback from communities.

- “There needs to be room for demonstration grants that allow programs to change direction if something isn’t working, but many funding opportunities don’t allow that kind of flexibility.”
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Code Frame: Capacity Building

Offering Grant Writing Support

Title V can build CBO capacity to become more competitive applicants for future funding opportunities and have a larger impact where they are at by providing grant writing support to CBOs.

Funding Collaboration Work

Title V needs more funding to support the collaboration work that is being asked of them in federal grants. Title V is expected to have a certain level of collaboration with community groups and other partners but does not have explicit funds dedicated towards this.

- “the notices of funding opportunities, there's a lot of description about how we have to collaborate, whether it's with other partners or with the community, how we have to embed engagement into the process. There's really not dedicated funding to do that, so I'm relying on programmatic staff to try to do that to the best of their ability...I don't have dedicated outreach and community engagement staff who can really focus full time on that important thread. The ability to really collaborate is limited when the funds are restricted to certain use.”

Code Frame: Funder & CBO Relationship

Formalizing and Compensating Community Roles

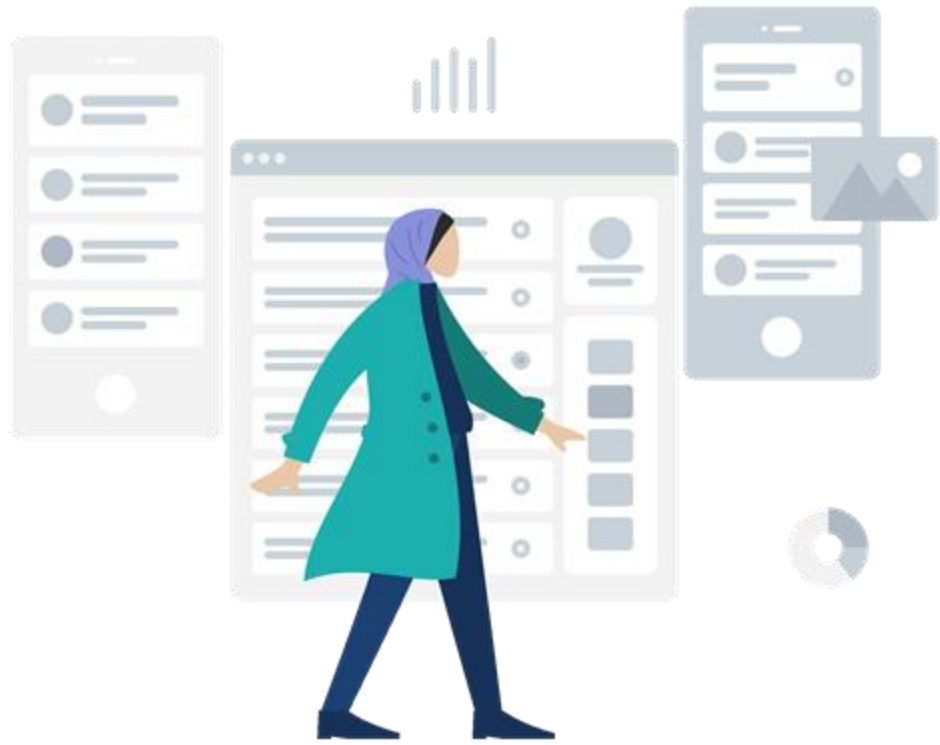
Title V should ensure that structures are in place to compensate community members for their time and expertise. As relationships with community members form, it is important to move towards creating formal roles for these individuals.

- “You get a champion and then they're at every meeting. They're overwhelmed before it's over with the inundating of people just seeking them, them, them, them, them. That certainly is a problem as well that you deal with when you have this community aspect of the work.”

Opportunity for Bi-directional Learning

Title V can learn from communities about engagement, what questions to ask, cultural values, etc. And in return, Title V can help CBOs apply a data lens to their work and educate them on Title V and the state-level MCH landscape and infrastructure.





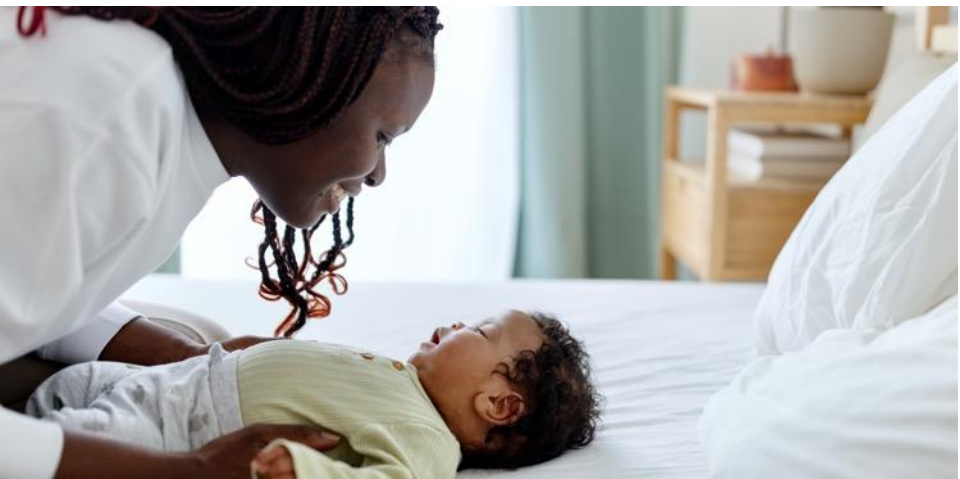
REFLECT

Initial Recommendations for Title V

Initial Title V Recommendations

To prioritize a more intentional approach to integrating community-rooted evidence into decision-making, the following key steps should be emphasized:

1. **Adapt evidence-based practices** to fit the cultural contexts of communities, fostering trust and engagement through continuous feedback.
2. **Avoid extractive practices** by providing reciprocal benefits to communities, ensuring collaboration is meaningful.
3. **Create inclusive decision-making spaces** and use culturally relevant strategies for respectful and effective interventions.
4. **Embed community-rooted evidence** throughout action planning, not just in assessments, to ensure community voices shape priorities and outcomes.
5. **Educate CBOs** about Title V, federal MCH programs, data analysis, and applying data lenses to their work.
6. **Support Title V staff** in developing qualitative data skills to tell their own stories.
7. **Provide resources** for community engagement, and invest in staff training to bridge gaps between formal practices and community-centered solutions.

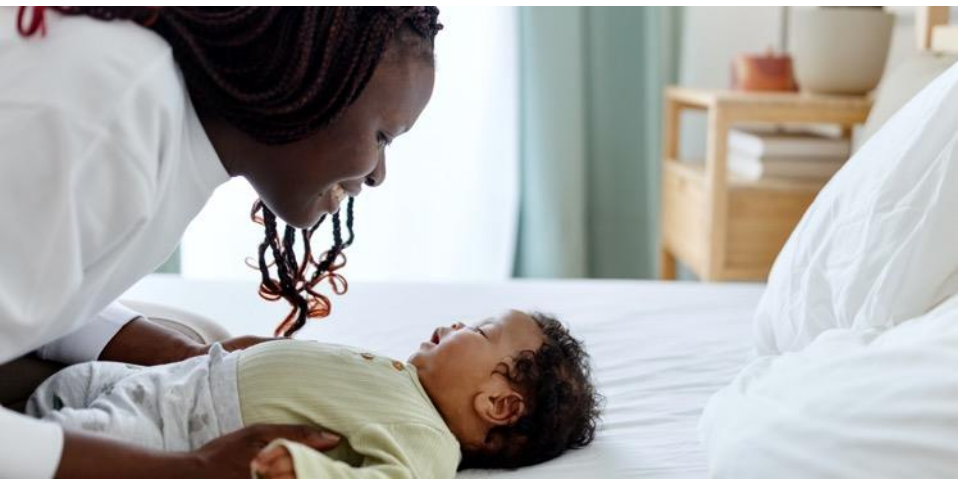


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ASSOCIATION OF MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS

Group Discussion & Prioritization Activity

Questions?



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ASSOCIATION OF MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS

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