

B Stronger Grants Program – Meaningful engagement with Aboriginal communities through a community-led grants program.

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Background/Approach: Hepatitis Queensland (HQ) has developed and implemented The B Stronger Project in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across Queensland. This project aims to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health literacy and increase engagement through testing and regular care, and monitoring of chronic hepatitis B (CHB). One successful project activity was The B Stronger Grants Program which supported engaged services to conduct a community-led activity with financial and project support from HQ.

Analysis/Argument: The COVID-19 pandemic has obstructed HQ's ability to engage meaningfully with ACCHOs and provide education and activities to the community due to legitimate concerns of health and wellbeing. Additionally, many ACCHOs were forced to adapt their models of care to include telehealth appointments, fever clinics and subsequently, the implementation of vaccination clinics.

The creation and implementation of The B Stronger Grants Program has provided opportunities to reestablish connection and engagement with ACCHOs in a positive way by offering funding for community-led activities after a significant period of disengagement and cancellation of community events.

Creating a simple application package and evaluation template has also ensured success by reducing the workload for busy services.

Outcome/Result: HQ provided funding for eight (8) B Stronger Grants to ACCHOs with a reach of more than 500 community members, with activities including:

- Community BBQ and outreach events
- Elders lunch and hepatitis B education
- Community testing initiatives
- School-based education with Indigenous-inspired lunch
- Well Women's Day
- Development and launch of a community-focused comic book

Conclusions/Applications: The B Stronger Grants Program has been an innovative way to encourage ACCHOs to develop and implement community-led activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The model extends on the existing relationships that ACCHOs have with the community while providing financial support to reengage communities in a meaningful way to yarn about hepatitis B.

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