

Request for Proposal

Overdose Prevention – Baseline study in LA County

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Los Angeles County

Date: October 12, 2024

ABOUT VITAL STRATEGIES

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. Our team uses innovative evidence-based strategies to develop and support sound public health policies and programs, including through the use of strategic communication campaigns for policy and behavior change. Our programs include tobacco control, road safety, maternal and child health, food policy, RESET alcohol, and overdose prevention. We work with governments and civil society in 105 countries to design and implement evidence-based strategies that tackle the most pressing public health problems. Our goal is to see governments adopt promising interventions at scale and as rapidly as possible. We use policy advocacy and strategic communication to urge governments to adopt proven strategies and partner with them to build the systems to implement these life-saving public health “best buys.”

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Vital Strategies is partnering with LA County as the implementing partner for a five-year media campaign effort to promote the expansion of health-oriented and supportive services for people who use drugs, and to reduce stigma around drug use and towards people who use drugs.

For more than ten years, overdose death rates have continued to climb and have become a leading driver of deaths nationally and in LA County. 2023 saw the first plateau of climbing death rates and preliminary data from 2024 suggests that rates will continue to stall. However, overdose rates in marginalized communities, particularly Black, Latine and Indigenous communities continue to climb.

In response, LA County has invested in a multimillion dollar expansion of community-based services for people at risk of overdose, including syringe services, drug checking resources, drop-in clinics and street teams (services often referred to under the umbrella term “harm reduction”). However, there are low levels of awareness among the public – and among people who use drugs – and poor understanding about of the role that these services play in the spectrum of responses to the drug crisis. Vital Strategies’ media campaign will build public support and awareness among drug users so that community-based supportive services for people who use drugs receive the public support they need to thrive.



Using community based media (posters, leaflets, tabling), earned media/public relations and paid media advertising, the campaign will spotlight the human-centered policies and evidence-based practices and services that enable residents of Los Angeles County to lead healthier lives, and increase **public understanding, and support for existing community-based health services**. The campaign will uplift the voices of people who use drugs and their loved ones who are disproportionately impacted by overdose.

Vital Strategies is seeking the services of a research agency to conduct two complementary studies:

- (1) A representative public opinion survey, which will also serve as the baseline for evaluating an upcoming media campaign.
- (2) A qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with selected stakeholders to assess knowledge, attitudes and behaviour towards drug and substance use-related services in the community. We ideally hope to interview a mix of stakeholders, including not just those who are supportive of harm reduction services, but also those who may be neutral or apathetic toward such services.

Research agencies may submit proposals for one or both studies. Preference will be given to a single agency that can conduct both studies in-house.

RESEARCH DETAILS

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the public opinion survey are to:

- Examine knowledge, attitudes and concerns related to opioid overdose deaths as an issue in the local community, including perceived susceptibility and severity of the problem.
- Assess public knowledge, attitudes, fears of and beliefs about supportive public health and community services for people who use drugs (PWUD)
- Assess perceptions of PWUD and any associated stigma (including self-stigma among PWUD)
- Explore "Not-in-my-backyard" (NIMBY) attitudes and their influence on support for public health and community-based services for PWUD in local communities.
- Assess public support for the same services.
- Identify socio-demographic variations on all of the above, including differences among PWUD, caregivers or those with personal experience of drugs, and all others. Identify subgroups of the population, in particular those who are most likely to support, or most likely to be persuadable to support, health and supportive services for PWUD in the local community.

The objectives of the complementary qualitative study that includes in-depth interviews (IDI) are to:

- Assess stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes, and perspectives toward community-based health and support services for PWUD in local communities. Identify any "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) attitudes held by stakeholders.
- Assess stakeholder perception of public concerns, misconceptions, and stigma related to these services, and their perceived impact on communities.

- To explore stakeholder perspectives on how support for these services can be built, including identifying key power brokers, key tactics and messages that may neutralize NIMBY opposition and enable services for PWUD in communities.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Study 1: The Public Opinion Survey

Sample and Method

The methodology must be capable of producing a scientific, representative sample in Los Angeles County. Sample **inclusion** criteria: The sample should be representative of the Latino, Black and Asian non-Caucasian adults in Los Angeles County aged 18+ years. Sample **exclusion** criteria: The sample will exclude those that work in tobacco, alcohol and market research industries, and those who are not local residents. The target sample size is **1,500** reflecting key socio-demographic groups (age, sex, race, socio-economic class). Please also provide cost-estimates for a sample of 1000.

It is anticipated that the survey will be conducted either online or via telephone. Please provide justification for the method recommended. Please describe in detail what your sample frame will be, and how the sample will be drawn. Please provide different sample size options with margin of error ranging from 3% – 6%. The sample size should be sufficiently large to enable statistically valid comparisons on the following variables: gender; age; race; education; SES (high vs. medium vs. low). To improve the efficiency of the sample, you may use quotas for critical variables. Please describe in detail how you will decide what the quotas for these variables ought to be. Please also describe the appropriate statistical adjustments (weighting) that will be applied to enable accurate analysis of the aggregated data. Please describe in full detail what your statistical adjustment approach will be.

Whatever the approach you choose to take (quotas/ oversampling etc.), **please include a table in your proposal that describes these** and please also explain how you have arrived at these estimates (i.e., what data sources you have used to calculate the expected number of completes). Please note: Response rate will need to be tracked and reported. VITAL STRATEGIES will base its research agency selection decision on the quality and scientific-validity of the research methods proposed.

Questionnaire and Analysis:

We anticipate survey length to be 30 minutes (please also price out the costs for a 20 minute survey). Vital Strategies will work closely with the selected agency on the development of the questionnaire. The agency will be responsible for translating (and back-translating) the English questionnaire to Spanish. *The questionnaire must be pilot tested prior to launch of full launch of data collection.*

Analyses of the data should include standard descriptive statistics (frequencies, means) with significance testing (t-tests, chi-squares etc.) and comparisons of key groups like gender, age, SES etc, to be decided prior to the analysis.

Multivariate approaches (like regression analysis, segmentation analysis, Latent class analysis, Propensity score matching, difference in difference) must be used to differentiate population segments by NIMBY attitudes and support for the services of interest in local communities.

Study 2: In-depth Interviews (IDIs)

Vital Strategies will provide a list of stakeholders for in-depth interviews (IDIs), in addition to those recruited by the agency. Stakeholders may include workers involved in the delivery of services, members of neighbourhood councils, community groups, business owners, religious leaders, journalists, and others. The sample will exclude those that work in tobacco, alcohol and market research industries. We believe that at least 15-20 participants must be interviewed in total but welcome agency input on the total number of interviews.

Each interview will last 60-90 minutes and may be conducted either in person or via online face-to-face methods. The agency is expected to justify the recommended method.

Guidebook and Analysis

Vital Strategies will work closely with the selected agency on the development of the guidebook. The agency will be responsible for translating (and back-translating) the English guidebook to Spanish. *The guidebook must be pilot tested prior to launch of full launch of data collection.*

Analyses of the data should include descriptions of the participants (gender, age, SES, ethnicity, occupation, etc.) including a clear rationale of their selection.

Please describe the protocol to ensure that the thematic analysis is **rigorous and reliable**; such as clear and consistent method for coding and analysing the narrative data, and how these were derived; setting checks for consistency of coding, verification of transcripts by participants, etc.

AGENCY DELIVERABLES

VITAL STRATEGIES will require a research agency to provide all of the following in English and Spanish:

1. Produce research tools, translate, and back-translate the questionnaire and guidebook;
2. *For the survey:* Design a scientifically valid sampling plan and methodology; provide detailed documents that describe the sampling plan and relevant details. If weighting is conducted, then all relevant parameters, and basis for the development of the weights, must be provided;
3. *For the survey:*
 - (a) Training interviewers;
 - (b) Printing necessary materials;
 - (c) Overseeing all field activities and preparations;
 - (d) Pretesting the survey instrument(s);
 - (e) Monitoring quality of data collected; and
 - (f) Ensuring that agreed upon timelines and protocol are adhered to.
 - (g) Share the documents related to sampling;
 - (h) Develop weights and share the documents related to development of weights;
 - (i) Calculation of response rate;
 - (j) Share the documents related to quality control;
4. *Data requirements for the survey:*

- (a) Clean and analyze data; Provide SPSS syntax file used for data analysis and data cleaning
 - (b) Create data tabulations/data tables in Excel (in English) by sub groups like age, gender, awareness of campaign and driving status etc.;
 - (c) Create a data file in SPSS format (in English); this datafile must contain all the variables calculated for the analysis, including weights;
5. *For the IDIs:*
- (a) Create and submit audio recordings, and narrative transcripts of the IDIs;
 - (b) Create and submit an NVIVO data file (compatible with NVIVO 20 on Mac OS), along with the coding framework utilized;
6. Prepare and submit topline and final reports in ppt/word format in English. Also submit PowerPoint version of the findings for use in stakeholder presentations;
7. Provide Vital Strategies with regular contact and meeting reports on progress of the research initiative until the project is complete, including at least four conference calls to discuss:
- (a) the requirements of this project
 - (b) the protocol/questionnaire, to ensure it is clear;
 - (c) the practice exercise, and
 - (d) the overall impressions of this initiative once the survey is complete.
8. Any other tasks the agency deems necessary for successful implementation of the pre-testing protocol, and/or has been requested by Vital Strategies.

Deliverables for this RFP for both the studies are as follows:

1. A technical proposal, which includes research methodology, sampling (in detail), research objectives, areas of inquiry, deliverables of the study, timeline and work plan including quality check measures, recruitment etc.;
2. Clear project management plan, including time frame with key milestones and activities indicated for pre-testing;
3. Evidence of the agency's capacity to conduct this study successfully:
 - A clear statement of agency personnel, capabilities, capacity and experience
 - Primary contact
 - Detailed CVs of the actual person(s) involved in the study (including moderator(s) and his/her experience, data analysis person, project manager, investigators, report writer and other people who will be involved in the study)
 - Demonstration of previous experience with similar studies (i.e. road safety), or other public health issues for multilateral, international, governmental or academic clients.
4. Quote of fees in US dollars and in local currency, inclusive of taxes and any additional charges;
5. Timeline of activities based on fieldwork (start dates required).
6. Relevant experience and capability: All information on relevant experience needs to be shared in annexes. Organization's capability in terms of its field offices (country specific and international), staff, etc. also needs to be provided. The format for sharing a list of relevant studies would be:



List of the relevant studies

Sr. No	Assignment Name	Name of the Client	Study (quantitative) methods and details	Total sample and sampling strategies
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Conflicts of interest

Vital Strategies will not entertain proposals from agencies that currently or within the past 2 years have held contracts or business relationships with tobacco, e-cigarette, or alcohol manufacturer or distributor industries.

Ethics and Internal Review Board (IRB)

Considering the scope of work outlined for this study, the agency will ascertain and advise Vital Strategies if for such studies, involving no or minimal risk, it needs ethics or internal review board approval as a human subjects research activity before proceeding with the work. In the event ethics or internal review board approval is required, the agency shall undertake the IRB work to obtain necessary approvals.

Timeline and Selection of Agencies

The scientific rigor of the proposed methodology will be a key factor in agency selections. The successful research agency will be selected by a panel of selectors within Vital Strategies based on the scientific merit, ability to deliver against project goals at the highest quality and within the scheduled time, and value for money.

How to Apply

Please send completed proposals, including a cost proposal with detailed budget, to Melina S. Magsumbol (mmagsumbol@vitalstrategies.org) by Midnight PT on November 8th, 2024.

Budget

Please include a cost proposal and budget detail with your submission. We will consider a range of cost estimates and review these for best value and cost-effectiveness, however we anticipate that our available budget for this work will be approximately \$125,000.

Informational Webinar

Interested vendors are encouraged to attend our informational webinar on **October 18th, Noon ET / 9am PT** for a more detailed discussion about this project, and an opportunity for a question and answer session prior to submitting proposals. Please register here:

- https://vitalstrategies.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_k06ZxdcnSda0qrhSxVHuzg

Note: Agencies are encouraged to submit proposals for both studies; however, if they prefer to focus on only one study (either the public opinion survey or the qualitative study) based on their expertise, that is also acceptable.

For more information, please contact:

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Vital Strategies
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