



New York City's Wounded Healers: A Cross-Program, Participatory Action Research Study of Credible Messengers

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Webinar Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions – 10 min
- Project Overview – 5 minutes
- Study Overview – 30 minutes
 - Methods
 - Key findings
 - Recommendations
- Audience Q&A – 10 minutes
- Summary and Conclusion – 5 minutes



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Purpose

- Urban was funded by **NYC Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity** to understand and document
 - the evidence base for the use of Credible Messengers in human service programs
 - the historical and systemic context surrounding Credible Messengers
 - the current landscape of Credible Messenger use in NYC

Core Project Activities

- November 2020 – March 2022
 - Literature Review
 - Participatory Action Research & Community-Engaged Methods
 - Cross-Program Study
 - Dissemination
 - Workshop, Fact Sheet, Final Report, Webinar

Cross-Program Study

Cross-Program Study Purpose

Between August 2021 and December 2021, we conducted a cross-program qualitative landscape scan to shed light on the

1. Meaning and terms of Credible Messengers and lived experience;
2. Recruitment, training, and qualifications of Credible Messengers;
3. The needs and challenges of Credible Messengers and the organizations that employ them;
4. And collaborative efforts throughout NYC.

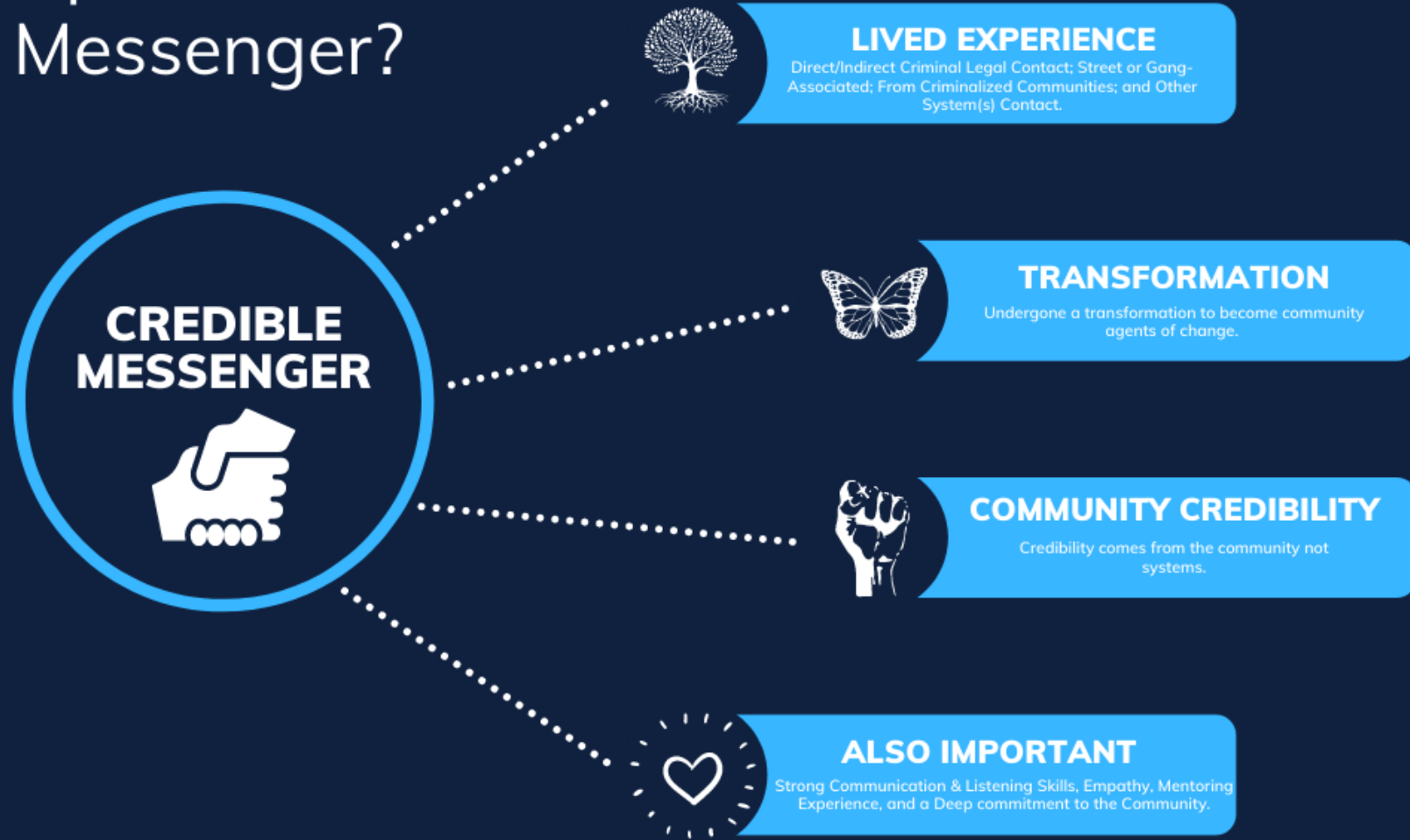
Cross-Program Study Methods

- Nine Interviews with Three Case Study Organizations
 - Organization Leaders
 - Credible Messengers
 - People receiving services from Credible Messengers
- Online Survey of 30 Organization Leaders/Coordinators
- Interviews with 17 City Officials and Stakeholders

KEY FINDINGS

How are Credible Messengers and lived experience defined?

What Makes Up A Credible Messenger?



How are Credible Messengers recruited and trained?

Recruitment & Qualifications

- Recruitment
 - Informal community channels and formal job posting
- Qualifications
 - Community Credibility and Lived Experience are the most important
 - Formal credentials or training are ***not*** viewed as essential to Credible Messenger success

“To come from a place of “vetting” is starting from the wrong place. Instead, look for people who are already doing the work and trusted by other credible messengers.”

— Study Participant

Training

- Access to available training and educational opportunities are needed for Credible Messengers to
 - Become more competent in current work
 - Address personal and professional needs/goals
 - Increase ability to advance in their desired career

Training

- The needs included both hard and soft skills:
 - **Soft skills:** communication skills, skills for emotional regulation, navigating boundaries, understanding organizational culture, and taking supervisory and professional feedback.
 - **Hard skills:** training regarding trauma (managing their own and others'), population-specific training (e.g., positive youth development, LGBTQAI++ topics), and workplace/businesses skills (e.g., time management, supervising, online calendar usage, email writing, grant writing, contracts and business development).

**What are the perceived impacts and challenges of
Credible Messengers and the organizations that
employ them?**

Perceived Impact

- Individual and community-wide healing, empowerment, and capacity building
- Connections between communities, systems, and policy makers
- Reshaping ideas of public safety
- Awareness of systemic and societal oppression

“The serum is made from the venom. Credible messengers are effective in their name. They aren't doing something out of a book. They get the community and what it's like to go through something and overcome it. It is extremely important for someone who feels like they are going through something alone. Credible messengers are extremely valuable because they are the actual image of survival.”

– Study Participant

Perceived Challenges

- Stigma, systemic racism, and capitalism
- Low pay and lack of benefits
- Funding barriers
- Workplace challenges
- Trauma

“We have people who are putting their lives on the line every single time they go out. To question their pay and their intentions is a disrespect. Health insurance, 401(k), and all those benefits are needed. They should be able to retire. They should be able to get sick and get care. They should be able to care for their families and themselves while doing the dangerous and impactful work they are doing.”

– Study Participant

**Do cross-program partnerships and collaboration
exist?**

Collaboration & Communication

- NYC has many and strong collaborative relationships
 - However, membership consists of the same organizations and stakeholders
 - Limited effort or opportunity to bring in fresh members and perspectives, especially across disciplines/fields

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Capacity Building

- How can the results of this study help organizations/agencies grow both in *magnitude of impact* and *sustainability*?

Recommendations

1. Increase the pay, benefits, and supports for Credible Messengers
2. Allow for flexible funding for capacity building within and between organizations.
3. Reduce the time it takes to execute funding to organizations.
4. Introduce alternative and healing-based forms of evaluation and performance measurement.

“Systems measure recidivism. It is more meaningful to measure relationship building, community healing, and secondary Credible Messengers Look for societal transformation through effective organization with individual and community transformation.”

– Study Participant

Recommendations

5. Ensure the purpose of the work is driving the structure and processes of their organization.
6. Be inclusive of people with lived experience to be employed in all roles of all fields
7. Invest in Credible Messenger-led organizations and organizations who are truly a part of communities and who invest in community wellbeing
8. Increase collaboration between the city agencies, organizations, and communities

“Check the motivation and what you are trying to achieve. This is not just a new boutique model that is cookie cutter. It requires a social justice motivation and application by communities for communities...It needs to be an authentic engagement. The young people are the last to change. The system, actors, etc. need to change first.”

– Study Participant



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SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

NEXT STEPS

Factsheet

March 2022

Report

April 2022

City agencies that are interested in a follow-up meeting, with us or NYC Opportunity, to discuss how to make use of the findings and recommendations, please contact us -

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