

The Three Ds of COE (Community Outreach and Engagement): A Data-Driven, Partner-Engaged Approach to Refining Cancer Priority Focus Areas and Fostering Engagement for Action

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1. Background

National Cancer Institute (NCI)-Designated Cancer Centers are critical components of the national infrastructure to drive strategies to reduce the cancer burden across the United States. Yet there remains insufficient community input to inform how centers choose priority areas and use strategies to disseminate impact back to the community. To address these gaps, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center partnered with community stakeholders to provide feedback on the New York State (NYS) Cancer Control Plan through a series of roundtable discussions. The goal was to ensure that community perspectives inform strategies to reduce the cancer burden, and that stakeholders are engaged in cancer control activities.

2. Goals

This initiative aimed to:

- Engage diverse stakeholders in reviewing priority areas of the NYS Cancer Control Plan
- Strengthen community-driven approaches for data collection, analysis, and dissemination
- Identify actionable strategies to reduce cancer disparities

3. Solutions and Methods

Nine roundtables were conducted, each focused on a priority area: health equity, health promotion and prevention, early detection, treatment, palliative care, survivorship, and health care workforce. Seventy-one stakeholders participated, including 33 community stakeholders, 20 community outreach and engagement staff, and 18 cancer center experts. Discussions were facilitated by structured questions, and feedback was captured through surveys and descriptive notes. Descriptive notes were analyzed using qualitative analysis. Two independent coders used an inductive approach to identify recurring themes and codes. The frequency of themes across roundtables was used to consolidate findings into three priority areas that aligned with the NYS Cancer Control Plan. Survey data were entered into Excel and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

4. Outcomes

Community feedback indicated high levels of satisfaction (mean = 4.79) and perceived value (mean = 4.62), with 97 percent reporting empowerment to take action on a cancer priority area. Key recommendations included expanding patient navigation, improving cultural and linguistically tailored materials, addressing transportation and financial barriers, and leveraging trusted community voices for outreach. Priorities such as mobile health units, telehealth expansion, and survivor-led education emerged as critical next steps. The roundtable process was intentionally designed to facilitate not just priority setting, but community engagement in subsequent action plans. As such, engagement continued after the roundtables. Two weeks after the roundtables, notes and summaries were provided to participants to engage stakeholders in member checking and respondent validation. Stakeholder participant feedback was incorporated into a second round of analyses, and a final report, titled the Community Action Plan, was created. This plan outlines community-focused priorities and action items to address the cancer burden in Western New York and was disseminated to participating roundtable stakeholders.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

We developed a structured process for developing, reviewing, and refining cancer-related priorities that can be replicated and scaled in other contexts. Our results show the feasibility of this strategy for integrating community expertise in cancer action plans, and the ability to foster engagement through this bi-directional process of priority setting.

Figure: Strategic Framework Outlining Community-Focused Priorities and Actions to Address Cancer Burden in Western New York (WNY)

OUR FOCUS AREAS	PRIORITIES TO ADDRESS	OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION	TRACKING IMPACT	OUR GOAL
 PREVENTION	Community education: lung, breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer; early detection & screening, tobacco cessation services, financial health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Programming: Financial & health literacy education, Cancer 101 series • Research Advocacy Initiatives: ROCKstar Program • Prevention: HPV, Tobacco Use • Engagement: Using social networks to join the fight against cancer; I CAN 	Increase in ROCKstars, engaged community partners, community-led events at 907 Michigan	 Foster community partnerships that contribute to needs-based services and programs that reduce the cancer burden in Western New York
 EARLY DETECTION	Increasing access to community cancer screening: lung, breast, prostate, colorectal cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Detection Driven to You (EDDY) Mobile screening for lung, breast, prostate cancer • Tailored navigation services • Cancer-screening programming • Cancer advocate-led screening initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in late-stage cancer and mortality rates in WNY • Increase in screening and utilization of mobile units • Survivorship stories and advocate engagement 	
 CANCER CARE	Community-centered care: financial toxicity, wellness, caregiver support, treatment adherence, clinical trials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources & Workshops: financial empowerment, cancer caregivers, community education for cancer research • Clinic-based support • Peer/Support Groups 	Increase in workshops, cancer research education programs, patient navigation services, support/peer groups, access to clinical trials	

This report is a strategic framework outlining community-focused priorities and actions to address the cancer burden in Western New York (WNY) across three priority areas: Prevention, Early Detection, and Cancer Care. This report was informed by community stakeholders who attended the Cancer and Community Roundtable Event in May 2025. In partnership with Roswell Park's Community Outreach and Engagement team, this report will guide needs-driven cancer-related health services delivery.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Identify priority cancer types
- Promote screening and prevention
- Improve cancer care experiences
- Engage the community through education, advocacy, and support
- Measure impact through specific metrics including cancer screening rates, engagement of community members in cancer education, and support

