

This project is part of a transnational research project partnership, and comprises four Principal Investigators and their teams from four participating T-AP participating countries from both sides of the Atlantic. They are Professor Thomas Bryer (Lead PI) from the University of Central Florida in the United States; Professor Mebs Kanji from Concordia University, Quebec, Canada; Victoria Foster (PhD) from Edge Hill University, United Kingdom; and, Piotr Modzelewski (PhD) from University of Warsaw, Faculty of Economic Sciences Poland.

COVID-19, and the economic collapse triggered by it, laid bare the precarious financial, educational, and social situations of residents in communities around the world. The collapse has exposed and exacerbated enduring economic and social inequities by pushing those precariously employed, housed, clothed, educated, and fed deeper into a low or no-access abyss and pushing those who were moderately well-off into the uncertainty of hardship. Organizations that serve this high need/high-risk population have also been challenged by new resource constraints, different capacities to adapt, and various levels of capacity for collaboration and to enhance performance in light of unique, widespread need. This research focuses on two areas: reducing inequalities and vulnerabilities and fostering democratic governance and political participation.

Using organizational theories, organizational behavior theories, sociological theories, and democratic theories, with a focus on adaptive capacity, inter-organizational relations, performance, and bureaucratic responsiveness, the research asks four questions across four countries: (1) What health, social and economic wellbeing inequalities both real and perceived emerged for vulnerable populations during COVID-19 pandemic, pre- and post-vaccine, and why did they emerge? (2) How did single and collaborative organizational (government, nonprofit) adaptive capacities affect (in)equitable outcomes for vulnerable populations, pre- and post-vaccine, such as individual felt exclusion and trust in social support organizations? (3) How did single and collaborative adaptive capacities affect policy compliance and behavior for vulnerable populations? (4) What digital tools will facilitate a sustained international and domestic collaboration to enhance global and local action to reduce inequities, increase inclusion in decision-making, and strengthen trust and universal policy compliance? For the purposes of addressing these questions, vulnerable and general population surveys will be carried out during the study, and the results will be elaborated with qualitative and quantitative methods.

It includes both internal and external organizational capacity factors within a single study and extends the external focus to include democratic elements heretofore not directly examined within adaptive capacity research. It also advances theory and practice of collaborative governance through examination of dynamic collaborative practices during a crisis. Addressing four research questions that link the disciplines of public administration, organizational science, political science, economic science, and social science, the project will produce scholarly outputs as well as establish a framework for a sustained community of practice for government and nonprofit organizations within and across countries to enhance adaptive capacity for future public health and other crises.

The key anticipated results include the following: peer reviewed scholarly publications in international journals, and in country-specific journals, policy playbook for local government and nonprofit organizations with recommendations for enhanced adaptive capacity to prepare for future public health and other crises.