



**HARVARD
T.H. CHAN**

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Center for Health Communication

2025-2026

ANNUAL IMPACT



REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

When it comes to our health, public understanding of scientific evidence no longer flows top-down from a handful of institutions. It is also conveyed and shaped by individual creators, journalists, and community members who have earned the trust of their audiences. And it is filtered by AI, social media, and the other digital technologies we use every day.

This means we must build the infrastructure that creators, journalists, and other trusted voices need to make evidence understandable, relevant and actionable for their communities. And we must reimagine how we train tomorrow's public health professionals, equipping them to become faithful and trusted translators of evidence themselves.

These realities have driven the Center's work over the past year. We embedded practical, digital-first communication training across Harvard Chan, focusing on skills like strategy, messaging, storytelling, persuasive writing, listening, and empathy. We expanded the world's premier health journalism fellowship, turning a 9-day residential fellowship into a lifelong learning community. And we expanded the nation's largest health creator community, while using it as a living laboratory to study how creators—and creator-public health partnerships—influence health beliefs and behaviors at scale.



Each of these efforts reflects the same belief: Communication is not peripheral to public health. It is essential.

We want to equip *public health leaders of all kinds* to translate evidence into public health action. We hope the pages that follow give you a sense of what we've built this year—and why we believe this work matters.



Amanda Yarnell

Senior Director, Center for Health
Communication
Lecturer, Department of Social & Behavioral
Sciences

THE CREATOR PROGRAM

More than half of Americans now turn to social media for health information, making creators among today's most influential health communicators. Many have built audiences that rival or even surpass the reach of traditional newsrooms and influence how patients think and act on their health, long before they arrive in the doctor's office.

The Center's Creator Program equips these trusted voices with evidence-based information, connects them to leading experts, and fosters a community of practice that sustains them, personally and professionally. **More than 1,300 creators with combined reach of hundreds of millions have joined the program since 2025, making it the nation's largest community of health creators and inspiring organizations like APHA to build out their own creator partnerships.**



Expanded our creator community

- Recruited 400+ new creators with 80M in collective reach in 2026
- Onboarded Meharry School of Global Health, an HBCU in Nashville, as 2026 cohost
- Piloted and evaluated a paid creator fellowship with Housing Narrative Lab and the Initiative on Health and Homelessness that resulted in >5M views

Helped creators learn, connect, and thrive

- Initiated a popular new monthly series of creator-led community calls
- Launched new toolkit and playbook libraries that support evidence-based content making
- Welcomed a select group of leading creators to our annual in-person summit

Built infrastructure for the future

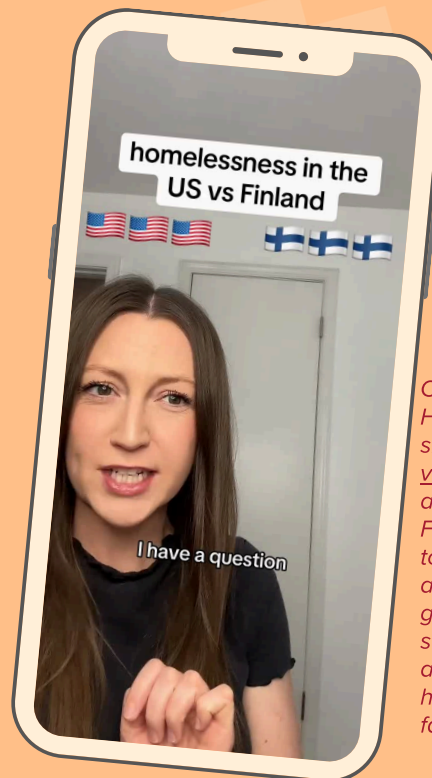
- Attracted \$1 M+ in new philanthropic investment
- Launched a digital learning platform and community infrastructure, in collaboration with our creators
- Convened a creator advisory board to guide the program

Key collaborators: Meharry School of Global Health, FrameWorks Institute, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Doris Duke Foundation, WellWithAll Foundation

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

The Creator Program has become a rare living laboratory where creators and researchers work side by side to discover what actually works in digital health communication right now.

By embedding rigorous research into the program itself, **we're building the evidence base that helps public health organizations, funders, and policymakers invest in communication strategies that work.**



Our 2026 research with Housing Narrative Lab showed that watching [this video](#) by program member and lifestyle creator Roya Fox persuaded even the toughest-to-convince audiences that the government has a role in solving homelessness—and that the cost of housing and economic factors contribute to it.

Generated new evidence

- **Showed that creator training increases viewers' informal learning about a health topic and equips viewers' with new health skills** (randomized controlled trial, [Computers in Human Behaviors Reports](#))
- Showed that convening creators changes how they communicate about health (mixed methods, [Journal of Health Communication](#))

Built the infrastructure for discovery

- Embedded research into the Creator Program so that new interventions can be evaluated in real-world settings
- Built data collection directly into the program's digital platform
- Launched a new randomized controlled trial evaluating creator playbooks

What's next

- Welcoming a 2026-2027 Civic Science Fellow who will use the Creator Program as a living laboratory
- Launching new experiments on how creators drive mindset shifts, trust, and off-platform action
- Developing creator-engaged, AI-powered research methods for studying health communication at scale

Key collaborators: Meharry School of Global Health, FrameWorks Institute, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Doris Duke Foundation, Rita Allen Foundation

THE HEALTH COVERAGE FELLOWSHIP

Strong public health depends on strong health journalism. As newsrooms shrink and misinformation spreads, journalists need trusted sources, expert guidance, and a community of peers.

The Health Coverage Fellowship is the world's premier health journalism fellowship. Over the past 25 years, it has helped nearly 300 health journalists report accurately, independently, and with confidence—fortifying another essential pillar of the health information ecosystem.



Expanded journalists' access to our supports

- Convened a highly rated 9-day residential Fellowship for journalists from *The Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *CNN*, *NPR*, *KFF*, *the Economist*, and *BBC Africa*
- Welcomed our first overseas fellows
- Expanded the Fellowship into a year-round learning community, with regular virtual programming reaching all 300 alums

“There is no way I would have gotten Calley [Means] to talk on the record had it not been for your seminar.”

—2026 fellow Sheryl Gay Stolberg, *The New York Times*

- Connected journalists with newsmakers from across government, industry, and academia, leading directly to high-impact reporting on health issues affecting millions.

What's next

- Sustaining support for overseas journalists to match demand (75 applicants per slot during 2025-2026 pilot)
- Designing a worldwide network that lets journalists around the world collaborate in practical and forward-looking ways
- Endowing slots and/or the program, to ensure it continues to serve journalists for years to come

Supporters: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, Bower Foundation in Mississippi, Connecticut Health Foundation, Fledgling Fund, KFF, Maine Health Access Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation, Rita Allen Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and, in Texas, the Episcopal Health Foundation, the H.E. Butt Foundation, Methodist Healthcare Ministries, and St. David's Foundation.

REIMAGINING COMMUNICATION EDUCATION

Evidence can only improve lives if people understand and trust it, making communication skills just as critical to effective public health leadership as training in epidemiology or biostatistics. Yet communication remains one of the least systematically taught skills in public health education.

The Center has **launched practical courses and modules designed to help Harvard Chan students serve as trusted translators of evidence in an increasingly digital, AI-fueled world.** Together, these efforts are beginning to shape new models for communication education at Harvard Chan. And they have the potential to inform public health training far beyond it.



“This class challenged me to rethink how we communicate in public health.”

—Aleah Jensen, MPH '26

- Hands-on, digital-first courses in strategic communication, engaging the press, and public speaking
- Residential and online offerings
- Instruction by some of the nation's top media and communications leaders in public health

Embedded comms across Harvard Chan

- Communication modules piloted in MS and PhD programs
- WHO's Gabby Stern as Journalist in Residence
- Networking with communications leaders via our seminars and the Creator Summit
- Partnership with Harvard Chan's Studio to host conversations about communications and trust in public health

Grew our impact beyond campus

- Call to Action newsletter (grew subscribers by more than 30%) and Resource Library (added 50K new visitors)
- Designing digital health communication curriculum for Harvard Chan's Advanced Learning Academy

THE CENTER TODAY

A living laboratory for studying
digital health communication



 Civic Science Fellows

**Modern, digital-first
communication
education**



**The nation's largest
community of health creators**



1,300+

Creators who have
joined the program
to access our
toolkits, playbooks,
and summits

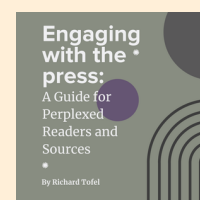
**The world's premier fellowship
for health journalists**



300

Alums from outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, *NPR*, *BBC*, *The Economist*, *The Financial Times* and *Indian Express*, as well as local news outlets across the US

**Infrastructure built to
scale best practice**



OUR GOAL: Equip *public health
leaders of all kinds* to translate
evidence into public health action.



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