



Best Practices for Community Based Participatory Research

The purpose of this letter is to provide tools and guidelines for best practices when conducting community-engaged and community-based participatory research (CBPR) to ensure ethical and equitable relationships between community partners and UMass researchers. The UMass Amherst Center for Community Health Equity Research affirms and builds upon the guidelines established by the Five College Holyoke Campus Community Compact to help university administrators, staff and researchers form mutually-beneficial relationships with community partners. We expect that this will be a living document setting forth best practices of public service and community engagement that will continue to evolve as researchers learn how to better serve the interests of our community partners.

1. Create mutually-beneficial collaborations for participating partners.

- Partners will work together to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that explicitly states each partner's interests, motives and commitments to the partnership, as well as formalized agreements about decision making, roles (e.g., who is responsible for data collection and analysis), data ownership and use, authorship of publications, and the equitable distribution of resources.
- Open and clear communication from all partners is necessary to develop a shared understanding of the partnership.
- Collaborations should be a good fit based on shared values, mutual benefit and equal commitment.
- A clear governance structure should include a direct mechanism for community partners to have input.

2. Recognize the community partner's expertise and value to research through respect, compensation, shared decision making and trust.

- Power needs to be shared between all parties. Academics and university staff should enter the partnership acknowledging that power is leaning in their favor because they have knowledge and access to secure rights, recognition and resources. Sharing power is a constant negotiation that rests on trust in the partnership, and changes through different stages of the project.
- Trust, honesty and respect need to be established so that both parties can work together effectively.
- All participating members need to recognize and take into account and understand the sensitivity of race, class, culture, gender, immigration status, language, sexuality and age differences.
- Understand that the community partner has expertise in their community and understands the culture and needs of the community that will be valuable

knowledge to research. Build long term relationships that facilitate co-learning and empowerment.

- While it is difficult to place a discrete financial value on the contributions community partners make to community-based research, UMass representatives must make every effort to equitably compensate community partners for their knowledge, time and effort in building community trust and other valuable research-related activities.
- Organizations and/or individuals who contribute to CBPR research should receive authorship in all products, including presentations and publications stemming from the collaborative research.

3. Ensure that the partnerships are based on community needs and keep their needs as the priority.

- Research and collaborations should be grounded in understanding the population or assisting the population with what they need.
- Coordinate with community-based organizations to ensure that the research being done is aligned with the mission and goals of their organization and the community.

4. Ensure members of the UMass-Amherst community who are engaging in community partnership are equipped with the skills and training to carry out the work appropriately.

- Create a protocol for the recruitment, orientation and training of UMass-Amherst faculty, staff and students engaging in community-based research.
- Research practices should be culturally-appropriate and ethical for the community partners.
- Campus representatives should foster support around community engagement and be responsible for the execution of collaboration so that CBOs are not burdened.
- Recognize and work to repair past negative experiences that many local communities have experienced in previous partnerships with UMass-Amherst.

5. Establish and maintain sustainable and equitable partnerships that create positive change for communities.

- Collaborations should not be short-term projects that leave the community on their own once finished but rather long-term relationships that may consist of multiple projects.
- Partnerships should be built on relationships of co-learning and empowerment.
- Campus representatives should commit to long-term relationships with community partners and dedicate financial and institutional resources to help sustain them.
- Community partners should have input into all phases of research design, conduct and dissemination.

- Research findings should be disseminated to all involved partners and communities.

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