Community Engagement: Best Practices for Academics

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Objectives

• To introduce concepts of participatory research
• To identify best practices in participatory research and offer examples of each
• To showcase resources for Faculty to access to improve their efforts in creating true partnerships for participatory research
Nine Principles of Community Based Projects From Community Based Participatory Research for Health

• 1. Recognize community as unit of identity
• 2. Utilize community assets
• 3. Create equitable partnerships
• 4. Develop co-learning and capacity
• 5. Balance research and action
• 6. Focus on local solutions in general context
• 7. Encourage systems development thru iteration
• 8. Disseminate in various forms for differing audiences
• 9. Realize that community partnerships are long term!

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• 1. Recognize community as unit of identity

Communities have individuals with diverse skill sets to contribute and can also benefit from training and skills building related to research. It may be beneficial to extend a research partnership beyond a specific community (e.g. defined geographically).
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2. Utilize community assets

Community expertise is invaluable to your research success.

Paulo Freire is a Brazilian educator who is a leader in the concept of co-creating knowledge through a process of community engagement that honors these assets.
No one educates anyone else nor do we educate ourselves, we educate one another in communion in the context of living in this world.

~ Paulo Freire
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3. Create equitable partnerships

Hire community members on staff
Integrate community members *before* you write your proposal and obtain funding
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• 4. Develop co-learning and capacity

Academics can learn from community members: cultural, political and social considerations
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• 5. Balance research and action

Your work is important to you but not necessarily to the community. Consider when the work needs to move from research to action.
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• 6. Focus on local solutions in general context

Following the previous 5 principles will allow partners to take ownership and create their own solutions to challenges that arise
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7. Encourage systems development thru iteration

Tolerance for trial and error and endurance are key, as is a commitment to create sustained systems to facilitate long-term relationships
I live by trial and error, but mostly error. A shit ton of error.
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8. Disseminate in various forms for differing audiences

Peer-reviewed academic journal articles aren’t sufficient. Consider social media, traditional media, local champions and leaders as resources to disseminate findings
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• 9. Realize that community partnerships are long term!

Just because the grant runs out doesn’t mean that your responsibility has ended. You remain obligated to stay in relationship if you want to return to this community or work in other communities.