

Principles for Effective Community Partnership Research

The Institute for Community Research, the Community Research Alliance and CICATS

This document summarizes guidelines to facilitate collaborative community research involving university or other institutionally-based researchers and community organizations and community service providers. Members of these research collaborations will be referred to hereafter as “research partners.” It is designed to support a collaborative framework for the research partnership. This Synopsis should be used in conjunction with the longer version of the same, entitled Executive Summary and/or the full Guidelines for Community Partnership Research which provides additional details, definitions, examples of successful and challenging collaborations, and a list of additional resources.

I. Involvement of all partners in the research process

- Research partnerships should be collaborative. Collaboration should involve joint negotiation of study topics, designs and approaches, analyses and interpretations; investigators and staff reflecting the ethnic, racial and other characteristics of the study population(s); mutually agreed upon policies regarding joint ownership of data and dissemination of research results including to the community in which the study takes place; and commitment to resolve any disagreements or conflicts that might ensue.

II. Respect for and commitment to the community where research takes place

- The study community(ies) should be clearly identified. The research partners should demonstrate an interest in and commitment to working with the study community(ies); members of the study community(ies) should agree to the study and its importance; the research partners and the identified community(ies) should demonstrate mutual understanding and respect; and all research partners should ensure that information and knowledge about the community is incorporated and applied in all phases of the research process (planning, implementation, evaluation, analysis and dissemination).

III. Relevance and benefit of the research

- All research partners should agree on the relevance and benefits of the research and identify ways to link the research to community needs and interests in an authentic way.

IV. Effective communication among research partners

- Communication and input should flow in both directions between researchers and community partners. The research partners should work together to ensure the creation and implementation of policies and infrastructure that facilitate financial and decision-making equity in the research process.

V. The ethical conduct of research

- All research must be conducted in compliance with the Office of Human Research Protections. Local community advocates and university faculty familiar with community-based research should be included on the Institutional Review Board. Attention should be paid to the risks and benefits of the study for individual participants and the community as a whole.

VI. Recruitment in community settings

- Community based/clinical trial recruitment efforts should engage research partners to improve recruitment efficiency, quality and ethical practices. Recruitment partnerships may require sufficient financial support to be viable.
- Communications to the community should include information about the project, its utility to the community, and plans regarding follow-up communications.

VII. Capacity-building, resource sharing and sustainability

- The research partnership should promote co-learning and capacity-building among all partners to include, but not limited to, funding, grant writing, improving organizational credibility, and increasing knowledge about research and about the community.
- Research partners should negotiate agreements on resource sharing across the partnership initially and re-negotiate as needed over time.