

## Research Partnerships on a Continuum: Community Involvement and the Role of the Researcher

<i>Increasing Community Involvement and Authority in Research</i>			
Research Phase	Researcher as the Expert	Researcher as a Consultant	Researcher as a Co-Learner
<b>Issue Selection</b>	Researcher identifies an issue of academic and perceived social relevance	Issue might be researcher defined, might be community-initiated or suggested	Community seeks assistance addressing a health concern
<b>Defining the Research Question</b>	Researcher defines a research question that has academic relevance	Researcher-defined with some level of community involvement	Consensus reached between researcher and collaborators through co-learning
<b>Research Design</b>	Researcher defines, does or does not communicate to partner	Researcher defined with varying levels of community involvement	Consensus reached between researcher and collaborators through co-learning
<b>Data Collection</b>	Conducted by researcher and/or a team of university affiliates. Minimal – if any – community involvement	Researcher and/or team or university affiliates; might ask for community input or allow community some degree of involvement	Researchers invite community members to participate in data collection Should community partners desire it, researchers train them in data collection process
<b>Data Analysis &amp; Interpretation</b>	Conducted by a researcher and team of university affiliates. Minimal – if any – community involvement	Conducted by researcher and/or team of university affiliates. Community might have some input	Community partners invited to participate in data analysis & interpretation; role established for them in that process if they wish
<b>Dissemination of Findings</b>	Academic peer-reviewed journal and conferences	Researcher reports findings to partners and/or larger community; community partners help create dissemination materials	Researchers and community partners determine a culturally appropriate and relevant dissemination plan. Community partners final authority on what is used
<b>Taking Action</b>	None; or just dissemination of findings. Community left to take action and apply research on their own	Some support for a minimal action plan, very little researcher contribution	Researchers work with partners and other collaborators to develop a goal and strategy for accomplishing that goal

\*The role of the researcher can vary between – or even within – the phases of the research process. At various stages, the researcher may act as an expert, consultant, or co-learner (Israel et al. 1992).

## Research Partnerships: Common Pitfalls & Best Practices

Research Phase	Common Pitfalls	Resulting Challenges	Strategies for Prevention	Strategies for Mitigation/Repair
<b>Issue Selection &amp; Research Question</b>	Community only approached once issue and research question have already been determined	Issue selected is not relevant; research question would not provide the information that the community needs; loss of community and/or partner trust	Work with the community to identify a priority issue and research question that you have the expertise to study	Approach potential partners with humility; re-allocate funds toward partner support even if they weren't included in the original grant; consider modifying research question to address community concerns
<b>Research Design</b>	Research design over- or under-estimates partner capacity, and/or is culturally inappropriate or not feasible	Project cannot be implemented as planned; community loses trust in partner org and/or researchers	Clearly define partner roles; collaboratively develop budget; solicit feedback on research design	Engage in open dialogue with partners about how to define roles moving forward; re-align expectations and capacities
<b>Data Collection</b>	Does not involve partner organization or other members of the local community	Trouble identifying/accessing sampling sites; mistrust of local community resulting in low recruitment rates and small sample size	Develop relationships with community stakeholders with help from partners; pay partners or local stakeholders for help with data collection; partner assistance with "ground-truthing"	Seek partner assistance to rework the data collection plan; be prepared to re-allocate resources/change data collection strategy
<b>Data Analysis &amp; Interpretation</b>	Partners not involved or consulted in the process	Important contextual variables left out of analysis and interpretation; results less compelling or useful	Discuss results with community partners as they are collected; solicit feedback on confounding variables	Share preliminary results and solicit feedback
<b>Dissemination of Findings</b>	Findings not disseminated to partners and/or to participants	Findings not communicated clearly; might cause fear; materials not culturally appropriate or relevant; participants feel abandoned	Researcher reports findings to partners and/or larger community; community partners help create dissemination materials.	Be prepared to re-allocate resources/modify your approach
<b>Taking Action</b>	Partners not involved, or no action takes place	Results may be used in a way that undermines local advocacy efforts, or community has to use their own resources to take action	Allocate time and resources for action; develop plan with partners <i>in the proposal stage</i>	Create space for dialogue with partners and other stakeholders; demonstrate care.