



**THE COMMUNITY COALITION FOR EQUITY IN RESEARCH** creates tools and materials for researchers to help address common issues identified during the study review process. This guide offers best practices for fostering connections with community members and organizations before conducting research. It also offers tips on how to approach the community.

## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Developing meaningful relationships with community members and organizations is vital to conducting equitable, community-driven research. Forming these relationships can be difficult and researchers often do not know where to start. It is important to create truly bidirectional relationships between researchers and community members as this will increase collaboration on both current and future projects and ensure that community priorities are centered in research.

## ACTION STEPS FOR CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

### Finding the right fit



- Closely examine an organization's history, mission statement, and staff. At first glance, two organizations may appear to have similar missions, but they may actually serve distinct parts of that population or community. For example, the Queer Neighborhood Council and the Mayor's Office on LGBTQ+ Advancement both work on queer rights; however, their reach, approach, and scope are different. One is a grassroots organization focused on community-identified needs and the other is a governmental office that has a broader citywide mission.
- Use word of mouth to find people and organizations that best represent your study populations. Look beyond traditional nonprofits – such as community health centers, faith groups, educational leaders, and community advocates.
- Be intentional about who you engage/approach. For example, the lead organizer, CEO, or director may not be as involved in everyday community matters as other staff members.

### Creating interest in your research idea



- Be open to change. There might be something else of more importance to the community than your research project. Work together to find alignment or redirect where possible.
- Get advice from people who know the community on the best ways to share information about your research study.
- Connect with people by sharing why this research idea or topic matters to you.
- Share the potential day-to-day impacts of this research as they relate to this community. Be careful not to overpromise, but think creatively about relevant information or resources that may be useful.
- Be aware of previous research activities within this community. Bringing together a representative group of community members could help you learn about their previous experiences with research, including any feelings of fatigue or burnout. You should also ask community leaders what their expectations are from this research.

### Practicing reciprocity



- Share skills, opportunities, networks, and/or resources that can benefit community members.
- Facilitate and support connections between community members, organizations, and research groups in your network.
- Other examples of giving back could include adding community-generated questions in a survey, helping the community frame the findings of a study to help with fundraising, or helping them apply for grants.

## TIPS FOR CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY



**Use** plain language in all content and explain terms where needed. We recommend using this [plain language checklist](#) for your materials.



**Make** content available in the languages best suited for your audience. We recommend these [local and certified translation and interpretation services](#) for your materials.



**Build** budgets that provide equitable resources for community partners working on research projects and ensure inclusive recruitment of diverse research participants. Connect with community leaders to think about appropriate compensation. We recommend these practices for [building equitable budgets in research](#).

### REVIEW YOUR STUDY WITH US:

The Community Coalition for Equity in Research serves as a free resource for high-quality community input on research proposals and protocols, as well as a trusted communication channel between researchers and community stakeholders.

Please email [community@catalyst.harvard.edu](mailto:community@catalyst.harvard.edu) if you are interested in having your research study reviewed by our coalition members.

### OTHER RESOURCES & READING:

[“Toolkit for Developing Community Partnerships”](#) (p.11-13; 16)

This toolkit developed by Southern California CTSI broadly introduces community based participatory research principles, guidance on developing community partnerships, and case examples of partnerships.

[Fostering Partnerships for Community Engagement](#) Developed by the Urban Institute, this gives a comprehensive step-by-step guide to developing strong community partnerships and includes guiding questions to consider for each step.

[Building trust in communities](#) – The University of Minnesota Extension School gives easy, concrete examples on how to build trust with communities and why it is important.