

Overview of Community Engaged Research

Involving the community in research design and implementation can increase the relevance of the research, improve how the study is designed and implemented, and increase uptake of research findings. Increasingly funders expect researchers to incorporate community engagement methods as integral parts of health services research.

The field of community engaged research is quickly expanding, resulting in a variety of frameworks and models.

A Comparison Between Traditional Research and Community Engaged Research

| COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH | | |
|---|--|--|
| | Traditional Research | Community Engaged Research |
| RESEARCH OBJECTIVE | Based on epidemiologic data, prior research findings and funding priorities | Community input in identifying relevant issues and questions |
| STUDY DESIGN | Design based entirely on scientific rigor and feasibility | Researchers work with community to ensure study design is also culturally acceptable |
| RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION | Based on scientific issues and “best guesses” on how to best reach community members | Community provides guidance on recruitment and retention strategies |
| INSTRUMENT DESIGN | Instruments adopted/adapted from other research and tested w/psychometric methods | Community provides guidance on instrument modification to improve community fit |
| DATA COLLECTION | Conducted by academic researchers or individuals w/no connection to the community | Community members involved in some or all of data collection |
| ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION | Academic researchers own the data, conduct the analysis, & interpret the findings | Academic researchers and community members work together to interpret results. |
| DATA COLLECTION | Results published in peer-review academic journals | Community assists in identifying additional appropriate venues for dissemination and results shared by researchers and community members |

We recommend *Partnerships, Processes, and Outcomes: A Health Equity-Focused Scoping Meta-Review of Community-Engaged Scholarship* which summarizes core community engagement frameworks and provides a good overview of a generalizable logic model for community engaged research.¹ Researchers can start by considering the various ways community engagement can support their research questions and goals as well as the resources available to them to support community engagement.

A Multilevel Approach to Stakeholder Engagement²



¹ Ortiz K, Nash J, Shea L, Oetzel J, Garoutte J, Sanchez-Youngman S, Wallerstein N. Partnerships, Processes, and Outcomes: A Health Equity-Focused Scoping Meta-Review of Community-Engaged Scholarship. *Annu Rev Public Health*. 2020 Apr 2;41:177-199. doi: 10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040119-094220. Epub 2020 Jan 10. PMID: 31922931; PMCID: PMC8095013.

² Boyer AP, Fair AM, Joosten YA, Dolor RJ, Williams NA, Sherden L, Stallings S, Smoot DT, Wilkins CH. A Multilevel Approach to Stakeholder Engagement in the Formulation of a Clinical Data Research Network. *Med Care*. 2018 Oct;56 Suppl 10 Suppl 1(10 Suppl 1):S22-S26. doi: 10.1097/MLR.0000000000000778. PMID: 30074947; PMCID: PMC6136953.

Identifying and Engaging Community Partners in Research

Community-based health and human services organizations (CBOs) can be outstanding research partners. However, CBOs and researchers often have differing incentives, timelines, and cultures, and careful attention is needed to cultivate respectful and authentic partnerships over time to address issues that can contribute to frustrations and erosion of trust or potential harm.

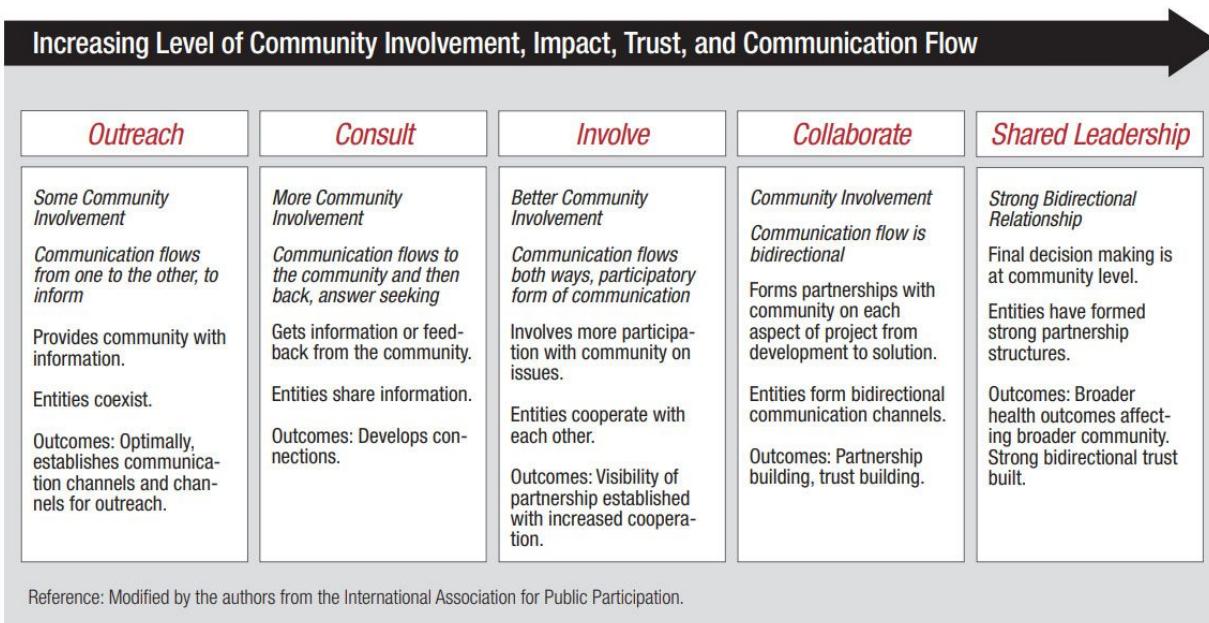
To support quality partnerships for Community-Based Research, we encourage researchers to:

1. Build bi-directionally valuable relationships with CBOs over time when feasible. Additional details on creating equitable partnerships are reviewed in the *Geisel Model of Community Service Learning* section of these resources.
2. Understand that CBOs generally prioritize direct service delivery over research.
3. Recognize that multiple researchers may be approaching the same CBO at the same time, which can generate stress and be burdensome for CBOs.
4. Acknowledge power/privileges you hold, and clearly communicate that research partnerships are optional and independent of other work the CBO has with the Dartmouth and/or Dartmouth Health system.
5. Invite a clear, bi-directional conversation about the respective “wins” of a research partnership. Who will get paid and who will not? What unplanned stresses will the project create? What is each partner willing to “give to get”? What value will the organization and its clients gain?

Community involvement in research can happen at various “levels” of engagement and these levels may evolve during the study period.

Levels of Collaboration

Community engagement may take many different forms and may change through the course of a project or initiative. There is not one standard way to engage communities and the characteristics of the engagement may change over time, but there are several frameworks to guide the valuable work of building partnerships.



This schematic, *Increasing Level of Community Involvement, Impact, Trust, and Communication Flow*, is a well-recognized diagram of levels of collaboration.³ Numerous other frameworks have been described and various terms used to refer to the different levels of collaboration. Several notable contributions from other frameworks include:

³ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34466996/>

- *Ignore*: Typically located prior to *Outreach* and used to describe that some projects exclude community members, denying access to information or decision making and effectively communicating that the community does not matter.
- *Defer to*: Typically located after *Shared Leadership*, this category goes beyond shared leadership to describe the scenario in which the community assumes full power and governance.

The utility of the frameworks is to create a shared understanding of the goals of collaboration and to use the framework for planning and implementing important processes that will nurture the partnership and help achieve shared goals. The following resources offer practical methods and tools at each step along the collaboration spectrum:

- **Vermont Department of Health Community Engagement Guide:**
<https://healthycommunitiesvt.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Community-Engagement-Guidance-and-Best-Practices.pdf>
- **Boston Public Health Commission Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit 2020-2023 Section II:**
https://imagine.boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2021/03/BPHC%20Community%20Engagement%20Toolkit%202_Final.pdf
- **CDC Principles of Community Engagement, 3rd Edition:**
<https://health.ucdavis.edu/media-resources/crhd/documents/pdfs/pce-3rd-edition.pdf>
- **Facilitating Power The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership:**
<https://movementstrategy.org/resources/the-spectrum-of-community-engagement-to-ownership/>
- **New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Community Engagement Framework May 2017:** <https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NYC-community-engagement-framework->

- **Harvard Catalyst. 2022. Getting started with community engagement:**
https://catalyst.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HCAT_CEP_CommunityEngagement-Accessibility.pdf
- **Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health:**
https://iaphs.org/equitable-population-health-improvement-requires-community-ownership/?fbclid=IwY2xjawF7hZ9leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHdATssNgT5jrddI2_BFPJXTHU15JXoQXXJs53CmL29wdIT6x03E8N5JO6A_aem_5qfkgqhoRb879OUmlwwmhQ

Models for Community Engaged Research

This model, *Community Engagement Impacts in Research Taxonomy*, was developed to provide a common vocabulary and set of activities to assess the value of community engaged research and to facilitate shared learning by identifying standard domains of research activities.⁴ The model was created by community constituents working with researchers to identify the impact of community engagement in research. This model provides a guide for organizing research activities and evaluating impact.



⁴ Stallings SC, Boyer AP, Joosten YA, Novak LL, Richmond A, Vaughn YC, Wilkins CH. A taxonomy of impacts on clinical and translational research from community stakeholder engagement. *Health Expect.* 2019 Aug;22(4):731-742. doi: 10.1111/hex.12937. Epub 2019 Jul 18. PMID: 31321849; PMCID: PMC6737764.

At the core of the framework are four domains that impact all research activities; each explained in a module:

- Ethics
- Process improvement
- Engagement
- Communication

At each stage in the research cycle, researchers should be incorporating the values and principles described in these domains into activities.

Community engagement concepts can be included at every stage of the research cycle. The following table, adapted from Stallings et al., provides suggestions for local resources as well as the outline of the original table.

| Research Stage | General concepts | Dartmouth/Dartmouth Health specific resources |
|---|--|---|
| Pre-research: <i>Deciding the research focus</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question • Significance and rationale | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Advancing Rural Health Equity https://www.dartmouth-health.org/carhe/contact-us • Community Health Needs Assessments: Summaries of what the community identifies as barrier or facilitator to health (see <i>Sources of Demographic Data and Health Outcomes</i>) • Dartmouth Cancer Center Data Portal https://cancer.dartmouth.edu/scientists-researchers/catchment-area-data-sources-research • Center for Rural Health Care Delivery Science Community Engagement and Outreach Core: https://www.dartmouth-health.org/rural-healthcare-science/cores#ceocore • Preparing for Discussions with Possible Research Partners https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/cch/docs/arcc-resources-directory/35-preparing-for-discussions-with-possible-research-partners.pdf |
| Research infrastructure: <i>Building community partnerships</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Team roles • Compensation model | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CARHE Partnership Opportunity https://www.dartmouth-health.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/carhe-partnership-opportunity-2024.pdf • Gradients of Agreement: https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/gradients_of_agreement_can_help_move_groups_forward • Tools and Resources for Project-Based Community Advisory Boards https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/104938/tools-and-resources-for-project-based-community-advisory-boards_0.pdf • Dartmouth Cancer Center resources for Community Engaged Research https://cancer.dartmouth.edu/scientists-researchers/support-community-engaged-research • Community-researcher team formation https://www.tuftsctsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/SelfAssessment_Community_looking.pdf • Community Member Participant Compensation: There is a range of compensation rates from \$35-\$100/hour range for community experts. We recommend a compensation rate of \$100/hour. If you |

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| | | <p>are a Dartmouth Health or Dartmouth College researcher, we recommend contacting your research finance office to understand most efficient mechanism for participant payments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCORI Compensation Framework for Engaged Research Partners https://www.pcori.org/sites/default/files/PCORI-Compensation-Framework-for-Engaged-Research-Partners.pdf |
| Study design: <i>Planning the study</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal development Study population Person-centered methods Person-centered protocols | <p>The Center for Rural Health Care Delivery Science and the Dartmouth Cancer Center Community Outreach and Engagement team are available for advisement on Community Engagement Studios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center for Rural Health Care Delivery Science Community Engagement and Outreach Core: https://www.dartmouth-health.org/rural-healthcare-science/cores#ceocore Dartmouth Cancer Center request for support from Community Outreach & Engagement https://redcap.hitchcock.org/redcap/surveys/?s=9998AWWWDLMYL4F7 |
| Implementation: <i>Putting the design into action</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operations Framing Data collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CDC's SMARTIE Goals https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/document/dsu-cdc-smartie-objectives.pdf Enhancing program performance with logic models https://logicmodel.extension.wisc.edu/ Center for Rural Health Care Delivery Science Statistics, Informatics, and Qualitative Methods Core https://www.dartmouth-health.org/rural-healthcare-science/cores#sigmcore CITI Course on Community-Engaged Research (CEnR) and Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) https://about.citiprogram.org/course/community-engaged-and-community-based-participatory-research/ |
| Analysis: <i>Making sense of the data</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretation | <p>The Center for Rural Health Care Delivery Science and the Dartmouth Cancer Center Community Outreach and Engagement team are available for advisement on Community Engagement studios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center for Rural Health Care Delivery Science Community Engagement and Outreach Core https://www.dartmouth-health.org/rural-healthcare-science/cores#ceocore Dartmouth Cancer Center request for support from Community Outreach & Engagement: https://redcap.hitchcock.org/redcap/surveys/?s=9998AWWWDLMYL4F7 |
| Dissemination: <i>Sharing results in an impactful way</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audience and Methods Health/Scientific literacy Culturally adapting messaging | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dartmouth Center for Implementation Science https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/dcis/ |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of Research Findings to Community Audiences https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/cch/docs/dissemination-of-research-findings-to-community-audiences.pdf • Dissemination of Research Findings to Community Audiences https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/cch/docs/arcc-resources-directory/22-engaging-community-in-preparing-journal-publications.pdf |
| Post-research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation • Health policy • Research policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Relations https://www.dartmouth-health.org/newsroom/media, https://communications.dartmouth.edu/services/media-relations • Dartmouth College Government Relations Office of State Government Relations and Community Engagement Community & Campus Life • Dartmouth Health Government Relations https://www.dartmouth-health.org/about/health-policy |



Evaluation of Community Engagement

Evaluating community engagement activities is essential for understanding their impact, effectiveness, and areas for improvement. This process involves assessing both the implementation and outcomes of engagement initiatives to ensure they are meeting their goals and evaluating the quality of the engagement. Understanding how well the engagement worked (or did not) will help researchers improve engagement practices.

Many engagement surveys exist, but two surveys are gaining increasing use across Dartmouth community engaged research efforts. Moving toward a small set of common survey tools will facilitate learning across projects and across our academic environment.

- *Quality of Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Instrument (QPCOR)*:⁵ This research instrument, developed by Dartmouth Health researchers, may be valuable to enhance the quality of community engagement research practices.
- Research Engagement Survey Tool (REST)⁶: The REST survey measures the level of partner engagement. Designed for use in research studies, this tool has also been used in non-research partnerships. The brief REST survey consists of 9 items and can be used to measure engagement across projects and over time.

⁵ <https://qpcor.org/>

⁶ <https://publichealth.nyu.edu/w/casiph/rest>