



Developing and Sustaining Community-University Research Partnerships: Infrastructure Requirements

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at the University of Washington
May 2003





CCPH Mission



To foster partnerships between communities and educational institutions that build on each other's strengths and develop their roles as change agents for improving health professions education, civic responsibility and the overall health of communities



The Project



**To understand the infrastructure
required to develop and sustain
community-university partnerships
for health research**



Methods: Sampling process

- 
- **Web-based search**
 - **Snowball sampling**
 - **30 study participants**
 - 9 Principal Investigators**
 - 9 Program Managers**
 - 6 Community Partners**
 - 6 Federal Funding Agency Program Officers**



Results



Factors contributing to successful partnerships

- **Pre-existing relationships**
- **Balance between process & outcomes**
- **Mind-set**
- **Cultural awareness & competency**



Factors contributing to successful partnerships



The process is a success ‘when everyone makes a contribution to and benefits from the process,’ while the outcome is a success when you can ‘show that something has been learned and something has been achieved’—*Program Manager*

‘You can’t just walk in with the expectation of creating a partnership. It takes time to develop mutual understanding’— *Principal Investigator*



Factors contributing to successful partnerships



**‘It is key that both partners benefit, that we are clear what the benefits are, and the resources are shared’
— *Community Partner***

‘The goals should be mutually rewarding and there should not be a dominant recipient’— *Funder*



Results: Infrastructure themes



- **Institutional culture, policies, and procedures**
- **Community involvement and infrastructure**
- **Human resources**
- **Funding**



Institutional Culture, Policies and Procedures

Facilitating factors at the institutional level:

- **Prior relationships**
- **Alignment of vision & mission with CBPR principles**
- **Involvement of leadership**
- **Commitment to authentic partnership processes**



Institutional Culture, Policies and Procedures



Challenges and barriers at the institutional level:

- **Skepticism about the rigor and value of CBPR**
- **Lack of support from leadership**
- **Range of policies and procedures**



Institutional Culture, Policies and Procedures

Policies that strengthen CBPR partnerships:

- **Memos of understanding**
- **Partnership agreements**
- **Mission**
- **By-laws**
- **Process and impact evaluation**



Institutional Culture, Policies and Procedures



**‘My board allows us to attend meetings and participate in programs supporting the partnership’
—*Community Partner***

**‘Leadership is important - people at the top saying it’s important - for example, at the level of the Dean’
—*Principal Investigator***



Community involvement and infrastructure



Facilitating factors:

- **Active community advisory board**
- **Financial support**
- **Project manager/liaison position**
- **Technical assistance**



Community involvement and infrastructure



Challenges and concerns:

- **Communication**
- **Conflicts of priorities**



Community involvement and infrastructure



**‘Having an executive board chaired by the community majority has more teeth than just [the community] acting in an advisory capacity’—
*Principal Investigator***

**‘Time is the biggest issue since community agencies have fewer people and less resources’
— *Program Manager***



Human Resources



CBPR requires significant human resources

- **Multidisciplinary, diverse principal investigators**
- **Community representatives and residents**
- **Students**
- **Staff**



Human Resources



Hiring Considerations

- Partners should be involved in hiring key staff
- Priority on hiring community residents
- Require unique knowledge, skills and attitudes



Human Resources

Community-Academic Liaison: Ideal Job Description

- **Facilitate relationship building**
- **Support community advisory board**
- **Bring in new community partners**
- **Support new academic partners**
- **Assist with policy and procedure development**
- **Assist with research**



Human Resources

Community-Academic Liaison: Ideal Qualities

- **Direct personal knowledge of the community**
- **Positive track record of working in communities**
- **Interpersonal and facilitation skills**
- **Technical skills**
- **Cultural competency skills**
- **Commitment to the substantive issues and the partnership process**
- **Ability to walk in both worlds— “community” and “university”**



Human Resources

**‘Someone who can understand both sides, who can speak for the community, raise tough issues, and not just be passive, but willing to push things forward’—
*Program Manager***

**‘Any community-based organization working with academics needs a point person for the academic side. Someone who has decision-making power or can get decisions done quickly. The liaison needs to be in the know and know the bigger picture’ —
*Community Partner***



Funding

Concern that many funding agencies do not understand CBPR...

- **Timelines do not account for time to develop relationships**
- **Grant reviewers do not understand CBPR**
- **Categorical grants hinder creative problem-solving and interdisciplinary collaboration**
- **Categorical grants define the problem rather than allowing communities to define the problem**



Funding



Concern that many funding agencies do not understand CBPR...

- **Limited opportunities for community-based organizations to be grant recipients**
- **Grants build infrastructure more within universities than within communities**



Funding

‘We fund health interventions and research. Many times this may not be the community’s highest priority. They might want to work on issues of crime or economic issues’ — *Funder*

‘It is important that not all of the grants be funneled directly through the University as this may convey a message of dominance’ — *Program Manager*

‘If this type of research is clearly a priority of big funders, then the University will offer more support. Money speaks’— *Principal Investigator*



Key issues and recommendations



Key issue #1

CBPR is often viewed by the academic community at best as inferior to other forms of research and at worst as not even research.

- **Assess and expand evidence base for CBPR**
- **Increase the number of peer-reviewed journals that publish CBPR**
- **Restructure faculty promotion and tenure policies to recognize and reward CBPR**
- **Increase federal funding for CBPR**



Key issue #2

The process of developing and sustaining partnerships is not often valued and recognized by the funding and academic communities as an essential part of the methodology of CBPR.

- **Provide support for planning, relationship-building and partnership development as an essential part of the CBPR methodology**
- **Fund at least one permanent staff person who serves as a community-academic liaison for the partnership**



Key issue #3

Funding mechanisms, policies and procedures are often biased against CBPR.

- **Facilitate opportunities for funding agencies to expand their knowledge of CBPR & exchange information with the field**
- **Design funding initiatives to encourage or require CBPR**
- **Recruit and prepare reviewers to competently review CBPR proposals**



Key issue #4

Limited numbers and types of academic institutions are pursuing CBPR partnerships.

- **Continue and expand funding available for Centers**
- **Offer technical assistance and planning grants to develop the capability of a broader range of applicants**
- **Designate Centers of Excellence to serve as mentors**
- **Increase the number of pre-planning meetings around forthcoming RFPs**



Key issue #5

More barriers than incentives exist for CBOs to engage in CBPR

- **Facilitate ability of CBOs to be lead applicant & fiscal agent**
- **Advocate that research funds awarded to universities pay for CBO-incurred research expenses**
- **Require evidence of genuine community partnerships in grant proposals**
- **Develop funding initiatives that address community-identified research priorities**



Key issue #6

Conducting CBPR requires a team with a unique set of knowledge, attitudes, values and competencies that need to be cultivated and supported

- **Invest in the preparation of researchers**
- **Invest in ongoing training and professional development for all partners**



Key issue #7

Although pursuing applied research by their very nature, CBPR partnerships do not consistently disseminate their findings for practical application

- **Convene “research to practice” conferences**
- **Provide dissemination grants**
- **Engage national organizations of community-based organizations in the process of disseminating research findings**



Key issue #8

There is no coordinated education and advocacy effort on behalf of CBPR, nor is there a readily accessible “one stop” source of information about CBPR

- **Convene a national conference on CBPR with an explicit action agenda**
- **Establish an online resource center on CBPR**




Key issue #9

There are important unanswered questions....

- **Perspectives of researchers, community-based individuals and funding agencies who are not actively involved in CBPR**
- **Feasibility and impact of implementing recommendations**



For more information...

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