

Isles Research Principles 2003

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Isles, Inc. values research as an important aspect of its business. Research is conducted for several reasons.

- ◆ To gain knowledge to improve Isles systems and programs.
- ◆ To share knowledge with other communities and organizations.
- ◆ To partner with communities and other organizations to address concerns.
- ◆ To implement strategies that are uncovered by the research experience.
- ◆ And to evaluate the quality of life.

Isles has adopted a community based approach to conducting research within it's organization and with the community. Community based research works best when community and researches establish relationships that are committed and extend beyond a single research project or funding period. Also, Isles has developed a set of research principles (described below) that will serve is the cornerstone of that partnership.

"Community-Based Research" is a collaboration between community groups and researchers for the purpose of creating new knowledge or understanding about a practical community issue in order to bring about change. The issue is generated by the community and community members participate in all aspects of the research process. Community-based research therefore is collaborative, participatory, empowering, systematic and transformative (Hills & Mullett, 2000).

Research built on strengths.

Isles research begins with and builds on strengths and resources within the community. Research will build on skills and assets of individuals, caring and helping networks of social relationships, and mediating structures such as churches and community-based organizations. Isles strives to identify, support and enhance these strengths and resources that enable community members to work together to improve community health and quality of life.

Expect equity in all aspects of the research process.

Isles emphasizes the development and maintenance of collaborative, equitable partnerships, in which all partners share influence and control over all aspects of the research process, starting with the identification by Isles staff and community partners of the issues and concerns to be addressed. Efforts to create equitable partnerships should include the creation of structures and processes that facilitate sharing information, decision-making power, and resources among members of the partnership, with explicit attention to incorporating the expertise of Isles staff & community members.

Facilitation of co-learning and capacity.

Research projects should promote co-learning and the reciprocal exchange of knowledge, skills and capacity among all partners, with the goal of enhancing the effectiveness of the total research effort, as well as strengthening other endeavors in which partners are involved. For example, researchers learn from the local knowledge that community members have about their community's history, culture, politics and broader social context, as well as from their administrative and management skills. Similarly, community members may further develop skills in areas such as, conducting research and evaluation, and grant proposal preparation, and smaller community-based organizations may enhance their capacity to serve as fiduciary for partnership grants.

Disseminates of results.

Dissemination of research findings must include all partners involved, using language that is understandable and respectful. Feedback of data occurs on an ongoing basis and results are used to guide action towards, intervention, education and/or policy activity. The dissemination of findings extends beyond the partnership itself, and involves all partners as reviewers and co-authors of publications, and as co-presenters at conferences. Any publications resulting from the research will acknowledge the contribution of participants, who will be consulted with prior to submission of materials and. All participants will jointly agree on who has access to the research data and where the data will be physically located.

Respect and recognition.

Isles research projects are conducted according to the norms of partnerships: mutual respect; recognition of the knowledge, expertise and resource capacities of the participants in the process; and open communication.

Research must have relevance.

The Research must have a high degree of relevance to the community and/or the work of Isles, Inc. Research question should be developed to provide information that will be directly useful to the community and/or Isles staff.

Balance between research and action.

Research will seek a balance between research and action for the mutual benefit of all partners. Community-based research aims to contribute to knowledge related to the determinants of health and well-being while combining and balancing that generation of knowledge with change efforts that benefit the communities involved. Partnerships may agree that all research efforts not involve an intervention component, but they commit to the translation of research findings to intervention strategies that will address the concerns of the community.