

# Community Partnership Guide for Engaging with Academic Researchers



**Screening  
Questions**



**Plan Your  
Engagement**



**Memorandum of  
Understanding**

# Introduction to the Guide

This guide was designed in collaboration with the Health Equity Research Community Advisory Council to help community organizations successfully partner with academic research teams in research projects that involve their community. Use the guide to help decide if and how your community organization will participate or partner in a research project, and what your organization's role should be in each aspect of the project.

## Step 1: Decide Which Projects to Learn More About

Give these **screening questions** to potential academic research partners to help decide which projects to get more information about.

## Step 2: Plan Your Engagement

Once you have decided to participate, create a plan for how you want to **engage** in each aspect of the research project.

## Step 3: Create a Memorandum of Understanding

After you have planned and agreed upon your levels of engagement, your organization and your academic research partner are ready to create a **Memorandum of Understanding** to document your shared plan for the project. Use the *Memorandum of Understanding Template* at the end of this document to create this plan.

*If you are interested in community-academic research partnerships that the Community leads, see the last page for info and resources on **Community-Driven Research**.*

Please help us improve this guide by taking a few minutes to complete a user survey at this link: <https://is.gd/GuideEval>

# Step 1: Screening Questions for Requests from Academic Researchers

Your organization may be asked by different researchers to work with them to do research projects or studies. These requests may come from different researchers or students at universities, colleges, or research institutes.

Below are 7 questions that you can share with researchers who make these requests. The answers you get can help you decide if an academic research project is a good fit for your organization.

Once these questions are answered, and if the answers fit with your organization's interests or goals, move on to Step 2: Plan Your Engagement.

Dear Research Team:

Thank you for inviting our organization to work with you on this research question. To help us decide what research projects to work on, we like to start with these 7 questions below. Please provide a brief and clear answer to each question.

1. Why did you choose us as an organization?
2. How does the research benefit a) our organization, and b) the communities we serve?
3. What is your research objective, key questions, and who do you hope to enroll in the research project? Please limit your response to 3-5 sentences.
4. Where are you in the research process?
5. What is the timeline for this project?
6. What specific resources do you need from our organization? (for example, staff time, data sharing)
7. What amount of funding is available for the work of our organization on this research project? What activities (if any) are you asking our organization to contribute at no cost to the study?

## Step 2: Plan your Engagement

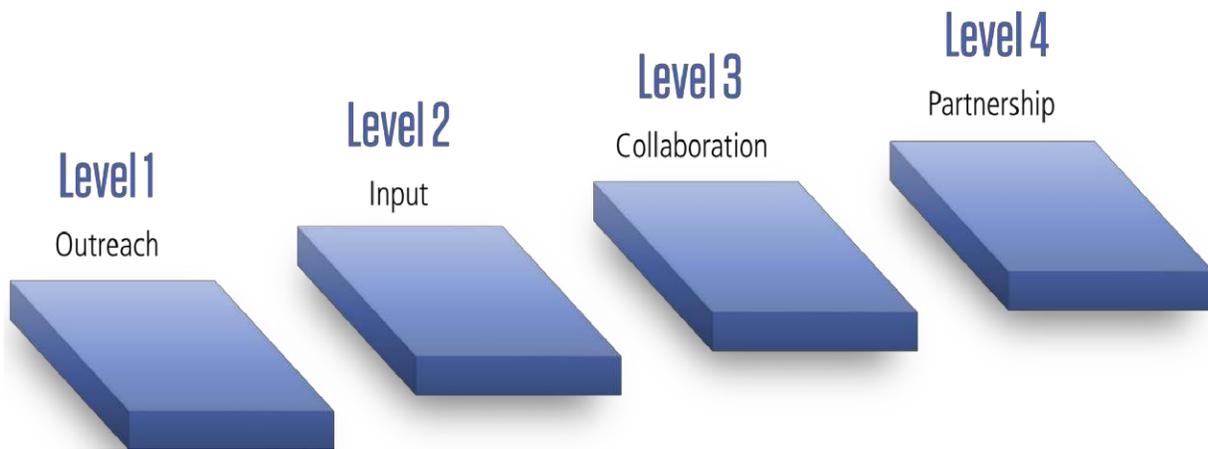
Your organization was asked by an academic research team to work with them on a research project. If you have already gone through the first step (Screening Questions), you are ready for **Step 2: Plan Your Engagement**.

Your community organization can use this part of the guide to help create a plan for how you want to engage in the research project. The guide will help you answer these questions:

1. What type of involvement do you want in the research project?
2. How will decisions be made in this research project?
3. How will funding for the project be shared with your organization?
4. How will the research results be shared?

# I. Involvement

What are the different levels of involvement that a community organization may have with the academic research team?



## Level 1 — Outreach

Organizations do outreach activities for the research project. These activities can include recruiting research participants, facilitating meetings between the academic research team and participants, or sharing your organization’s data with the academic research team.

## Level 2 — Input

Organizations provide feedback to the academic research team on the details of the research study. The opinions provided to the academic research team can be used to help make decisions on what will happen in the research study, or what research participants will be asked to do.

## Level 3 — Collaboration

Organizations work with the academic research team to make important decisions on what will happen in the research study, or what research participants will be asked to do. This level works best when the organization is involved earlier in the research process, before these decisions are finalized.

## Level 4 — Partnership

Organizations are involved from the start of the project (when it is being developed). The organization is a partner in decision making around what the research study is, what and who it will focus on, what will happen in the study, what the participants will be asked to do, and how the data will be interpreted.

## II. Partnership Governance

What are the different ways that a community organization can be involved as a partner with an academic research team? How will decisions be made?



### Level 1 — Contacts

The academic research team communicates with the organization through just one or a few members of the organization's staff. Decisions are made between the academic research team and these organizational contacts.

### Level 2 — Key Leaders

The academic research team communicates with key leaders in the organization, but these leaders may get information from others to help with decision making. At this level, most decisions are made between the academic research team and these key leaders.

### Level 3 — Project-Specific Board

Some projects are governed through a board (council, committee, working group, advisory board) that meets regularly, and uses a decision-making process. This board is involved in all parts of the project, from developing and planning the research project to sharing results. The academic research team and community organizations have representation on the board.

### III. Budget/Resources

How will funding and resources be shared for this research project?



#### Level 1 — Consulting

Members of the organization work with the research team and are paid by the research team directly (usually as consultants). Payment is usually based on time spent working on the project.

#### Level 2 — Inclusionary Budget

The organization is included in the project budget and resource plan. The organization or its staff members are paid for resources used on the project, and all of the time the staff spends on the project.

#### Level 3 — Collaborative Budget

The budget and resource plan is developed and implemented collaboratively by the research team and the community organization together. Decisions on budget and resources include both the organization and the academic research team.

### IV. Dissemination of Study Findings

How will the results of the research study be shared?

#### Level 1 — Input on Dissemination

*Dissemination of results to the community.* The academic research team shares the results with the organization at the end of the study. When results can be shared publicly, the organization may take the lead on



sharing these results to the community (for example, through social media, community newsletters, listservs, meetings).

*Academic Publications:* If individuals from the organization want to be involved as co-authors on academic products (such as articles for medical journals), a plan needs to be created (ideally at the start of the project) to involve individuals from the organization as authors. This plan should include author responsibilities and authorship order.

## **Level 2 — Partners in Dissemination**

*Dissemination of results to the community.* The academic research team and the organization work together on sharing information with research participants, the community, and in academic journals. As in Level 1, the organization may take the lead on sharing these results to the community, once the results can be shared publicly.

*Academic Publications:* The organization and the academic research team work together on the co-authorship plan for all academic products.

## Step 3: Memorandum of Understanding Template

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a voluntary agreement between [name of community organization], herein referred to as Community Organization, and [name of academic research team], herein referred to as Academic Research Team. This MOU outlines the desired level of engagement between the Community Organization and the Academic Research Team. The document highlights each partner's roles and responsibilities as a part of their involvement in [Name of Research Project/ Program], herein referred to as Research Project.

Under this agreement, the Community Organization agrees to partner with the Academic Research Team on the research project. The research project covered through this MOU is expected to last from [expected start date] through [expected end date].

### Part I: Project Description

List the scope, objectives, and goals of this research project.

### Part II: Project Details and Plan

[List and describe the activities that are planned for the partnership and who will do what depending on desired level of engagement (*outreach, input, collaboration, or partnership*) as outlined in the engagement guideline portion of this document. For each activity, list additional details, including but not limited to: the responsible partner, funding source, resources (such as facilities, equipment), staff time, and deliverables with due dates.]

While this MOU is not a commitment of funds, the MOU does provide an estimate of funding available from the project funding source for each of the Partner Activities below depending on their level of responsibilities related to budget allocation and resource planning.

[Activity #1 Responsible Partner  
Level of Engagement Funding  
Source Other Resources Staff Time  
Deliverables with due dates]

[Activity #2 Responsible Partner  
Level of Engagement Funding  
Source Other Resources  
Staff Time  
Deliverables with due dates]

### Part III. Governance and Decision-Making

(Academic Research Team, Community Organization, or Community Advisory Board) will govern the project and academic-community partnership involved in this project. Decisions will be made by consensus, and when consensus cannot be met, (Academic Research Team and Community Organization, or Community Advisory Board) will jointly make decisions.

Intellectual Properties and Data Ownership:

[List the owners of the expected data to be collected from this research project and how decision will be made on intellectual properties, if any]

Interpretation of Study Findings:

[Describe the shared decision -making process for interpretation of study findings]

Dissemination:

Academic Products and Authorship:

The following individuals listed below will be co-authors on all scholarly products (manuscripts, presentations, etc.) based on results from this research project. It is expected that all authors complete their responsibilities by reasonable deadlines set for each scholarly product.

[List the authors and expected responsibilities] Sharing of

Results and Other Dissemination:

[List the responsible party to determine the date, time, and place for sharing of results].

**Part IV: MOU Signatures**

This MOU is based on the mutual consent of authorized officials from (list partners) and may be modified by them. This MOU will become effective upon signature by the authorized officials from the (list partners) and will remain in effect until modified or terminated by any one of the partners by mutual consent. In the absence of mutual agreement by the authorized officials or (list partners), this MOU will end on (end date of partnership).

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: (Partner signature)  
(Partner name, organization, position)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: (Partner signature)  
(Partner name, organization, position)

# Do you want to lead Community-Driven Research?

Community-driven research occurs when a community organization initiates a research project based on an identified area of need, and then seeks out a research partner. In this situation, the project and research questions may be initially designed by the community organization.

At this level:

- Strong relationships and trust should be developed through shared leadership.
- Final decisions will be made by the community organization.
- The research should facilitate better health outcomes for the broader community.
- The two teams should establish authorship and ownership rights for all publications and intellectual properties resulting from the research.
- The result of this collaboration should be a sustainable, long- term relationship between the community organization and the research team.

**For additional resources, visit:**

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/get-started>

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents>