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ALLIANCE FOR RESEARCH IN CHICAGOLAND COMMUNITIES
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Engaged Research Partnerships During COVID-19:

Staying True to Principles of Engagement in Community-Engaged Research Partnerships during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Alliance for Research in Chicagoland Communities (ARCC) supports and promotes community-engaged research partnerships. During the COVID-19 pandemic, community-academic research collaborations need to consider how the pandemic is impacting health and equity in their communities and how research projects and partnerships can adjust in response to this crisis. As personal relationships are the bedrock of partnerships, the current necessary social and physical distancing may pose a challenge to the principles of community engagement and engaged research. ARCC assembled this document to specifically provide support to community and academic partners in community-engaged research partnerships navigating this challenging time. This document was created quickly to be time responsive and will be updated periodically. **For other resources related to community-engaged research, visit www.ARCCresources.net.**

Community Document for Sharing Ideas, Resources, & Questions Google document
Please share your additional suggestions, lessons learned, examples, and questions.
- ARCC created this open community google document to facilitate sharing. Any one is able to add, access, and share these resources.
- If you have any questions about this resource or ARCC, email us at ARCC@northwestern.edu

Virtual Discussion: Engaged Research Partnerships During COVID-19
ARCC is also hosting a virtual zoom gathering to share and discuss experiences, ideas, and challenges on **Wednesday, April 8, 11 am-12 pm**. Open to any interested community and academic partners. Click here for details.

Chicago COVID-19 Resource Repository: ARCC & CCH began this Google document to share info & resources about Coronavirus that may be useful to community organizations & members. It's open to anyone to add info, edit, or share: http://bit.ly/ChiCOVID-19Resources

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1. Supporting Engaged Partnerships & Relationships

- People want to know that their partners care about them as people. Express concern for the health and safety of people, their family, and their communities.

- **Checking in** should be ongoing. Not just once or at the beginning.

- Don't make assumptions about what people do or don't need. **Ask** them directly.

  Possible check-in questions:
  o How are you doing? Your family? Your community?
  o What information or support are you missing? What has been the most helpful? What's confusing?
  o What are you looking for from your research or community partners right now?
  o What is your capacity to keep working together?
  o Also share your own answers to these questions.

- **Don't pull away from engagement during a crisis.** It may seem in the moment that it is better to respond quickly than to take the time and effort to think about how possible changes can be discussed with community partners. Communities being impacted by changes should be engaged in consideration of those changes. If this is unable to happen because of time or availability, then all partners should be notified in a timely manner.

- Consider the balance between giving partners space and not creating a burden on community partners with too much outreach. Ask your partners directly what works for them during this time.

- Consider what **communication methods** will work best in this moment. Ask partners about preferred methods of communication and follow through accordingly.

- **Acknowledge the importance of mental health and balance**. Partnerships do not have to be as or more productive during the pandemic. There is also a benefit to taking time to stop, breathe, and reflect.

- Offer and receive grace. Be gentle with each other.

- **Celebrate** each other and continue to focus on assets and strengths.

- These suggestions are primarily for previously established partnerships. This will likely be a difficult time to try to begin new relationships unless the work is specifically related to COVID-19.

2. Adjusting Expectations and Work of Research Partnership

- Everyone may have different priorities and bandwidth. This includes community partners, research participants, research faculty, and research staff.

- **Acknowledge that things will be different during the pandemic**. Things won't continue at the same pace. Acknowledge clearly that this is okay.

- Shared challenges may include:
  - Child care/education responsibilities
  - Family caregiving responsibilities
  - Financial stress
  - Challenging remote work environment (may not have access to tools, documents, hardcopy assets)

- Community partners may face specific challenges including:
  - More working hours may be spent interacting with the public and less time may be available for working on research related tasks
  - Community partners may be navigating new protocols for how to conduct their essential services, e.g. transitioning to telework.

- Researchers may also face specific challenges including:
  - For researchers who are also clinicians, they may have increased clinical hours and decreased time for research due to acute demand for healthcare professionals.
  - Research protocols may need to be revised with short notice.

- Consider whether community partners have access to and comfort using technology (e.g. home computer, internet access, etc.) and other virtual communications resources while working remotely.

  - **Resource:** Digital Divide Resources during the COVID-19 pandemic from NTEN

- **Timelines might need to shift** for partnership activities, research activities, dissemination, grant application, manuscript preparation.

- Time availability may be different for different partners. This may change over time.

- **Assess where partnership is in the project or work**. What's happening now? What is due to happen in next 6-12 months? What events need to canceled or postponed? What can be done virtually? What are ways that burdens of work can be reduced or postponed or relieved?

- **Check with funders**. They may have changed grant deadlines or requirements or be able to change them upon request.

- Ensure all communication about any changes in timelines for proposal submission, review, or work deadlines is communicated to all partners.

- Consider what it means to build and sustain a tight team even while social distancing.
  - **Resource:** [Building Trust While Working Remotely](#) by The Engine Room

3. Adjusting Research Protocols during COVID-19 Pandemic

- Changes to research protocols to protect the health and safety of research participants are important and many changes will be mandated by university institutional review boards (IRBs). Ensure these changes are communicated to all partners. Consider whether there should be an **engaged conversation between community and academic partners about implications of these changes in the research protocol** on community research partners and research participants.

  - What does it mean for research participants to stop or delay participation in a research study or transition to virtual participation?

  - Were there benefits or resources that research participants had access to that will now be unavailable to them?

- Are there messages related to COVID-19 that should be incorporated into communications with research participants? For example, if research project engages people with asthma, should info or resources related to increased risk or protections be incorporated?

- Should additional questions or data collection about COVID-19 impacts (health or economic or other) be added to research data collection efforts?

- Are there new research questions related to COVID-19 that should be considered? Many funders are offering specific grant funding related to COVID-19 research questions and community needs.

  - **Resource**: [Relevant research funding is being tracked by the Northwestern University Clinical & Translational Sciences Institute.](#)

- The operations of research offices at university may be impacted. This may result in changed or delayed process for payment to research staff, Community Advisory Board members, community partners, vendors, etc.

4. Considering Equity Issues during COVID-19 Pandemic

- Many communities and those focused on racial equity are concerned about widening gaps in access and healthcare that COVID-19 may exacerbate. It is likely that health and socioeconomic disparities pre-COVID-19 will be magnified and create other ripple effects that will also negatively impact communities experiencing inequities. A few articles on this topic.

    o **"[COVID-19 highlights health disparities facing African-Americans](#)"**

    o "[Coronavirus Compounds Inequality and Endangers Communities of Color](#)"

    o "[Health issues for blacks, Latinos and Native Americans may cause coronavirus to ravage communities](#)"

- **Acknowledge inequities in COVID-19 impact**- direct health implications, as well as economic and other ripple effects.

- Acknowledge that communities with high hardship and low resources may face additional challenges.

- Ensure immigrants or other limited or non-English proficiency communities have **culturally, linguistically appropriate information**.

- **Speak up against racism and xenophobia**.

- **Don't pull away from equity during a crisis** thinking that's it is better to respond quickly than to take the time and effort to think about how possible changes may impact equity. Now is the time to focus on and center equity. It is most important during times of pressure and emergency. Partnerships can't just think about end results, but must also think about means.

- Consider equity impacts of any changes in research protocol or changes at research or health institutions. Who will be burdened? Who will be advantaged?

    o If you're cancelling events or activities, can you still pay vendors, speakers?

    o If you're stopping or postponing grant activities, can you continue to pay hourly employees?

- **Advocate for institutional and government action**.
    o **Resource**: [Demands from Grassroots Organizers Concerning COVID-19](#)

- *More suggestions for action are included in the Section 6 of this document on leveraging resources.*

- **Resource:** Racial Equity Tools has a number of [resources focused on addressing COVID-19 with a racial equity lens](#).

5. Practical Tools for Virtual Digital Equity / Communication

- Your partnership may need to **build your capacity and comfort to communicate and engage virtually**. This may include communication by phone, text, email, phone or video conference calls and webinars.

- Connecting virtually is important but different than in person. Partnerships may need to invest even more in personal connections and exchanges outside of their collaborative work. Consider including dedicated time in working meetings or separate opportunities for social connections. Consider meaningful ways to do this that are relevant for your partnership. For example, sharing recipes, sharing photos, partnership Tik Tok challenge, etc.

- Consider whether community partners have access to and comfort using technology (e.g. home computer, internet access, etc.) and other virtual communications resources while working remotely.
  - **Resource:** [Digital Divide Resources during the COVID-19 pandemic from NTEN](#)

  - **Resource:** [Everyone On: Low or no-cost internet service](#)

  - **Resource**: [60 days of Free Internet for qualifying households](#)

- **Resources for Virtual Meeting Facilitation and Icebreakers**:

  - [Online Meeting Resources Toolkit for Facilitators During Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
  - [Virtual Meeting Check-Ins and Icebreakers during a Pandemic](#)
  - [Check in Questions](#) from the Center for Story-based Strategy.
  - [Virtual Ice Breakers Help Remote Teams Break the Ice](#)
  - [Online Interaction Tools to Engage Your Audience](#)
  - [Leading Groups Online Free-e-book](#)

6. Leveraging Resources to Support Partners

- Research partner may be able to **leverage their institutional resources** to support community partners. For example, research partners may have access to more COVID-19 information, data tools, online library or learning resources, connections to health professionals.

- **Ask community partners** how research partners can help with outreach/education about COVID-19 and resources for community members.

- **Amplify community messages/request for support**.

- **Advocate** for institutional and government action

  o **Write or share op-eds or blogs** about impact of COVID-19 on communities experiencing inequities- not just in national or mass media but local community & ethnic media.

  o What are topics that research partners can lend their voice to and shine a light on?

    - Ensure that COVID-19 testing and clinical care is equitable and resource allocation is fair

    - Provide for the communities who lack basic supplies

    - Highlight the financial impact that quarantine and shelter-in-place orders have on patients and communities and explore ways to support them

    - Meet the needs of the housing-insecure, people experiencing homelessness, 'essential workers' who are unable to work remotely, and other populations who are at great risk for COVID-19

- **Help partners navigate information**: Help communities to understand and sort through the constantly changing and huge amount of available COVID-19 information.

  o Be available and willing to answer community questions or connect them with resources or people to answer questions.

  o Host a webinar/Zoom meeting to answer community fielded frequently asked questions. This may be especially helpful for more detailed level of information. For example, what does COVID-19 mean for me if I'm a diabetic?

  o Can you speak another language? Answer patient questions. Help to translate materials/messages.

- **Donate/provide financial support**. Consider whether research faculty or institutions can support efforts to support community individuals or organizations.

    o [Chicago COVID response fund](#) supports community organizations.

    o [Give Together Now](#) Chicago supports individuals and families.

- **Donate Personal Protective equipment (PPE)** to share with healthcare providers or community partners.

    o In particular, if your research project or partnership is directly engaging people with elevated risks from COVID-19 (e.g. homeless people, elders, immunocompromised people, sex workers, drug users, incarcerated people, or others) can you help them to get access to the medical and risk reduction supplies that will help them survive?

    o Illinois Department of Human Services is conducting a [survey](#) to assess community organization needs for PPE.

- **Volunteer**: Many opportunities exist to deliver food to older adults, help teach tech, babysit, etc.

- Additional opportunities to donate and volunteer are cataloged by the [City of Chicago](#) and in the last tab of this [Resource Repository](#)

- Continue to short local businesses- https://shopinplacechi.com/

- **Share resources**
    - [Chicago COVID-19 Resource Repository](#)
    - [UIC School of Public Health COVID-19 Resource Repository](#)
    - [Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights Resource Repository](#)

- **Share skills**. Do partners have expertise in data visualization, epidemiology or other relevant skills to share?

    o Sign up with [Chicago COVID Coalition](#)

Acknowledgements

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