



What to Expect When Joining a Community-Based Research Team

You have been invited to join a research team so that you can contribute to the process in a meaningful way. This may be a new experience, so here are some things to expect and some tips for ensuring you and the research team are able to get the most out of your involvement.



What is COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH (CBR)?

CBR is conducted by the community, for the community. Its collaborative framework foregrounds Indigenous Knowledge and a commitment to community involvement, relevance, and benefit, and ensures that all contributing voices are valued equally.



“Many Hats to Try On”

You may volunteer or be asked to do a variety of activities throughout the project process. There will be plenty of opportunities to be involved in different ways. CBR values each voice equally, and recognizes each other's role in shaping both the content and the process of the research project. So, whichever role or activity you may be involved in, if they are new to you or not, your contributions will be meaningful and highly valued.

The community decides who they want on the research team, which can include community members, academics, and service providers. Roles generally include **co-applicant, knowledge user, collaborator, and peer researcher or research assistant***. These roles involve supporting the main goals of the research project, remaining involved throughout the research process or contributing as needed when new or unexpected issues emerge.

* These role titles are mainly used in grant and ethics documents submitted for approval to continue the research project – it is up to you how involved you will be and what role you will take, and each role, voice, and contribution is valued and appreciated equally.



Here are some of the roles and activities you may be involved in:

- Inviting people to join the research team
- Helping to write research questions
- Facilitating workshops, sharing circles, and storytelling
- Sharing your own experience/stories
- Deciding where the research will happen
- Helping to prepare funding application and proposal drafts
- Helping to manage the research budget and funds
- Participating in analyzing the ‘data’ (information) collected
- Preparing and sharing research results with communities and other stakeholders
- Translating and using the knowledge in your community



“Group Dynamics”

The research project team will bring together a diverse group of people who come from many backgrounds. This is a wonderful way to make sure the different perspectives and ideas from everyone involved are contributed to the work. The more voices represented, the better the outcome will be!

There can be as few as 10 and as many as 75 people on a team. With any sized group of people uniting for a shared purpose, conflict can happen – people are involved which means that their values, perceptions, and ‘politics’ will influence the process from start to finish. The fact that community members, organizations, scientists, policy makers, academics, etc. are involved in collecting and sharing information means that differing protocols and conflicting perspectives may arise.

Here are some tips for working in a diverse group:

- Be open-minded and sensitive to diverse perspectives
- Be ready to share space, ideas, and engage in conflict resolution processes – creative new ideas often emerge out of the dynamics of group interaction.
- ‘Shared ownership’ – a sense of shared responsibility for the research process can ensure the team also has a sense of unity and relationship in the face of pressures and stresses that may come up.



“Always Expect the Unexpected”

You are regarded as someone who is an expert on your experience. However, Community-Based Research intends to expand community and participant capacity, so to get the most out of being involved in this research process, don't be afraid to try your hand at new things!

The nature of CBR is also adaptive, flexible, and ever-changing: it may not follow an exact step-by-step process, so feel free to dive in and get involved when and wherever you can.

The team will also be a safe space to voice concerns and issues – if you disagree with anything, please speak up! This way, the process and research findings will reflect the real voices of all participants.

References:

Pooyak, S. & Amirault, M. (2015). *Aboriginal community-based research*. Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Aboriginal Aids Network.

Ely, R. J., & Thomas, D. A. (2001). Cultural diversity at work: The effects of diversity perspectives on work group processes and outcomes. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 46(2), 229-273.

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We have no conflicts to declare



What to Expect When Joining a Community-Based Research Team:

Part Two



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Conference Calls 101

Conference calls are a common way for team members to hold meetings without having to travel to be in the same location. Conference calls can be awkward without the ability to see the people you're talking to because communicating and relating can be difficult without facial expressions and hand gestures. It's good to learn some strategies to help meetings go as smoothly as possible.

Here are some tips for being on a conference call:

1. Find a quiet space, preferably where you can be alone without distractions or loud outside noises.
2. Familiarize yourself with the meeting agenda beforehand so that you can follow along easily.
3. Mute yourself when you're not speaking.
4. Speak loudly and clearly.
5. Introduce yourself and ask for other participants to introduce themselves if they don't automatically – it's good to be familiar with who and how many people are on the call.
6. Save personal questions or conversation that doesn't include everyone for offline/after the call.
7. But don't be afraid to ask questions to clarify information to ensure you understand what others are saying, and to ask people to repeat themselves if you had trouble hearing them.
8. Leave with a goodbye. It's best to announce when you're hanging up or signing off once the meeting is determined to be over.



What to Expect from Researchers/ Project Coordinators

The project you are joining is meant to be a collaborative process that enhances the holistic well-being of participants, researchers, and the communities that the research is meant to benefit. The goal is also to build relationships between these groups so that the project continues to bring good things to everyone who uses the knowledge the project creates. Therefore, **you can expect to be treated with respect, understanding, and reciprocity.**

 Team 'leaders' or coordinators will create space for participants to get to know each other as individuals and learn what skills and knowledge each person brings to the team in order to decide who will do what and how the team will work together. **You can also expect flexibility and understanding around your life situation and availability.** It is understood that everyone has different life responsibilities and stressors, so your role will be shaped around your capacity in a way that makes sure your participation will be meaningful for the project and for yourself.

 **You can also expect to be credited for your contributions accordingly.** All members of the research team will be able to review and comment on research findings before they are published or presented. Coordinators will make sure you have a say in if, when, and where your name will appear in materials that may be published.



Avoiding "Tokenism"

The most important thing to remember is that you are the expert in your experience and **your involvement on a community-based research team should feel good.**

If you feel as though you have been invited to a team just to provide an Indigenous perspective but don't think your contributions are being respected or honoured, this may be a situation of "tokenism". You have every right to speak to somebody about this or leave the team. Each member of a community-based research team's voice is valued equally, so make sure yours is too!



"What does that word mean?!"

People who have been doing research for a while or who are leading the research team may use a lot of words or acronyms that are new to you. Try to familiarize yourself with research and organization jargon and acronyms so that you have an easier time understanding who or what is being talked about in research team discussions. For help with this, **see our jargon-busting fact sheet** available in print from AHA Centre Staff or at: *** put hyperlink for electronic version ***.



That being said: Prep-work helps, but don't be afraid to ask questions about meaning and your understanding. The team will understand that some parts (or every part!) of the research process may be new to you, so it is okay to not know everything and to learn as you go along.

References:

Huth, E. (1986). Guidelines on authorship of medical papers. American College of Physicians. *Annals of Medicine*, 104, 269-274.

Pooyak, S. & Amirault, M. (2016). I've been invited to a research team: Now what?. Montreal, QC: Canadian Aboriginal Aids Network.

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