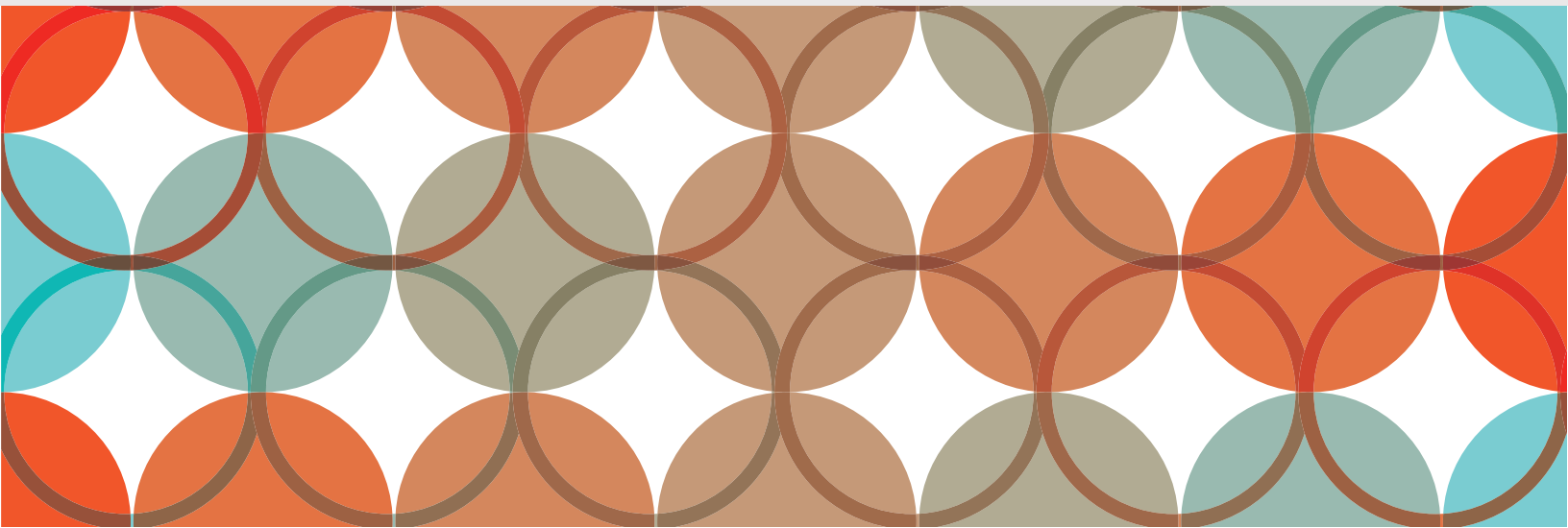


# COMMUNITY ACADEMIC RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS IN DIGITAL CONTEXTS:

Opportunities, Limitations, and New  
Ways to Promote Mutual Benefit



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# INTRODUCTION

It's widely accepted that community-academic collaborations have the potential to involve more of the people and places that a community values as well as address the concerns of the very constituents that community-based organizations care for. Just how to involve them and ensure their benefit remains highly controversial in the digital age. This report provides an overview of the concerns, values, and the roles of digital data and communications in community-academic research partnerships from the perspectives of Community Partner Organizations (CPOs) in Boston, Massachusetts. It can serve as a resource for researchers and academic organizations seeking to better understand the position and sentiments of their community partners, and ways in which to utilize digital technology to address conflicting notions on what defines 'good' research as well as the power imbalances that may exist between all involved participants. As research involves community members and agencies more closely, it's commonly assumed that the likelihood of CPOs accepting and endorsing a projects' or programs' outcomes increases if they perceive that the research itself is credible and has direct beneficial application.

Our research is informed by informal discussions with participants of events and workshops organized by both the Boston Civic Media Consortium and the Engagement Lab at Emerson College between 2015-2016. These events are free to the public and were attended by both CPOs and academics from various fields and interest positions. We also conducted interviews with 20 CPO representatives in the Greater Boston region who were currently

or had recently engaged in academic research partnerships. These representatives presented a diverse mix of experiences and were not disproportionately associated with any one community issue. The interview protocol consisted of 15 questions that explored issues related to the benefits, challenges, structure and outcomes of their academic collaborations. It also included questions about the nature and processes of data management. Our goal was to uncover patterns of belief in the roles, values, and concerns of CPO representatives in partnerships, focusing on how they understand and assign value to digital data and technology.

Unfortunately, the growing use and dependence on digital tools and technology in our modern-day research context has failed to inspire in-depth analysis on the influences of 'the digital' in community-engaged social research, such as how data is produced, used, and disseminated by community members and agencies. This gap exists despite the growing proliferation of digital technologies and born-digital data in the work of both social researchers and community groups (Wright, 2005; Thompson et al., 2003; Walther and Boyd 2002). To address this gap and identify the discourses about what defines 'good' research processes, we ask: "To what extent do community-academic partnerships meet the expectations of community groups?" And, "what are the main challenges of CPO representatives when they collaboratively generate and exchange knowledge with particular regard to the design, access and (re)use of digital data?"

This report is divided into three sections. In the first section, *Overview: The Current State of Partnerships*, we provide a broad context of current community-academic partnership trends and patterns. Here, we review the factors that may influence partnership dynamics and the efforts to involve community partners in the development of knowledge. We discuss the literature on research review processes as well as participatory research methods to focus our analysis.

The following section is focused on major themes from our research: **The Need for Digital Tools and Strategies to Support Communication, Satisfaction with Research Partnerships, and the Instrumentalization and Life Cycle of Data**. We provide examples and excerpts gathered from our interviews to elaborate upon prevailing discourses. In each section, our results reveal gaps and barriers to equal decision making, open communication, and access to digital data. This raises questions about the extent to which digital tools and technology can present new challenges for CPOs in their efforts to achieve desired outcomes and goals.

We then acknowledge how CPOs emphasized that a key to successful academic collaborations is their ability to weigh in on the goals and the development of research projects early on. Based on the major themes of the study, we then offer a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) template that can be used (and modified according to specific needs) by CPO representatives upon entering partnerships to help them work through problems at the onset of research and as they arise, and in tandem with other partnership agreements. Although the template's content and terms are based on the specific themes identified from this research in Boston, it is intended as a tool for any CPO working with digital communication and data in partnership with academic researchers. We

recommend both academics and CPOs to use and reflect carefully on the template at the start of the research process to ensure that there is agreement on the design, goals and expected outcomes. To date, there remains a scarcity of MOUs that exist to specifically explore the expectations of CPOs and ensure that digital technology does not impede the legitimacy and fairness of the entire research process.

Though the findings can only be understood in the context of this study, we suspect that our findings are more generalizable. This is in part because Boston is one of the nation's leading research hubs - with over 60 universities and research institutions located within its greater metropolitan area - and the the involved CPOs work with diverse segments of society and have a plethora of experiences on public participation processes. Future research could investigate the similarities that Boston's CPOs experience with other CPOs in different cities. All in all, our hope is that this report and the MOU template serves as a useful resource for practitioners seeking productive ways to manage research partnerships in the digital age, and as a launching pad for future research focusing on the perspectives of CPOs.

# OVERVIEW

## THE CURRENT STATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Community-based interventions and research is fairly well established in the public health fields (Hacker, 2013; Seifer, 2006; Israel et al., 1998), and it is an increasingly accepted form of academic scholarship within qualitative social sciences (Bergold and Thomas, 2012; Bilandzic and Venable, 2011; Weerts and Sandmann, 2008). Its growing popularity is based on the assumption of mutual exchange and ‘knowledge translations’ (Bassler et al. 2008; 3). In other words, participatory research methods may enable academics and community groups to offer and receive something of value. For researchers, collaborations can provide better insight into complex community problems, for example. For community groups, researchers may help address the needs of underserved populations who lack access to valuable resources including libraries and information networks (Hicks, 2012; O’Fallon and Dearry, 2002; Fawcett et al., 1995). Thus, both sides may benefit from research processes as knowledge may be produced in actionable form for communities, and at the same time, in the form of traditional academic publications (Bassler et al, 2008).

Despite the strong emergence of community-academic partnerships as a research approach or framework, many CPOs still face barriers to controlling how complex community problems are defined and addressed by

their academic partners. In this vein, Hamm (2015) points to how research may not only yield results that are irrelevant for community partners, but also outcomes that run contrary to their interests. Unfortunately, many studies that examine the functionality and benefits of collaborative research approaches are devoid of community perspectives, focusing primarily on the implications of research for student learning, pedagogy and academic outcomes (i.e. Sutton and Kemp, 2006; Van de Ven 2007; Norris et al. 2007). The studies that do consider the effects and outcomes of community-engaged research from the side of CPOs have mainly focused on health research (i.e. Minkler and Salvatore, 2012; Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute, 2012; Trickett et al. 2011; Minkler et al., 2008).

Community-engaged research entails establishing relationships with specific groups of people based on such factors of geography, special interest, and situations, and with respect to issues affecting their well-being (CDC: Principles of Community Engagement, 1997). Community engagement activities may take various forms, such as teaching, research and service, and also employ a number of research tools and techniques including interviews and surveys (Calleson et al. 2005). Thus, the distinguishing factor between collaborative research strategies and traditional research paradigms is not

methodology, but rather the location of power (Cornwall and Jewkes, 2010). Indeed, it carries the promise of a more equal relationship between researchers and field actors, and aims to produce socially beneficial knowledge by converging both science and practice (Hamm 2015; Bergold and Thomas, 2012; McDonald, 2006). By building on the premise that knowledge itself is a form of power, community-engaged research may evoke positive social change for the benefit of people other than students and faculty (Strand, 2000).

For some institutions, most notably land-grant universities and historically black colleges and universities, addressing the concerns of civil society groups through collaborative research and education has traditionally been a central mission. For other institutions, financial and other pressures have recently served as a motivating force for initiating partnerships with local communities (Fulbright-Anderson, 2001). On top of that, Hamm (2015) underlines that agencies in state, economy and civil society sectors have realized that collaborations can yield highly efficient processes, and by grounding scholarship in 'reality' and 'serviceability', engagement strategies may help address the decline in public confidence in the practicality of research (Weerts and Sandmann, 2008). In effect, as partnerships with community groups gain popularity in a myriad of fields, there's a growing recognition that the repository of knowledge that community groups hold is valuable - both commercially and academically.

In mapping a path forward, scholars have increasingly pointed to the barriers that university-based collaborators face when developing and sustaining partnerships with civil society actors (Sandmann and Weerts, 2006; Knox, 2001). Challenges are often linked to

the priorities, timelines and goals of research institutions. For instance, Richards (1996) underlines how academic faculty roles and reward policies tend to prioritize publishing scholarly articles over demonstrating an active commitment to civic progress. Simply put, "[community] capacity building doesn't lead to tenure, but publications do" (Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute, 2012).

Underlying this culture is the litigation-fearful bureaucracies that structure research processes. Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are the national regulatory apparatus which examines the ethical issues in academic research. One perceived impediment with IRBs is that it is predominantly geared toward the biomedical research enterprise. As such, it is not effectively designed to tackle critical issues in anthropological and other social and behavioral research. Moreover, community partners are generally not involved in evaluating the benefits and risks of research with members of the IRB. In this vein, Gordon (2003) argues that federal regulations seemingly protect the interests of researchers and their institutions, rather than research subjects and participants. The lack of community influence over IRB review processes also means that issues may not be politically, socially or morally sensitive to the communities under examination.

Although current academic research processes and regulations may limit the benefits accrued by CPOs, 'self-interest' is a powerful force motivating communities to engage with institutions (Fulbright-Anderson, 2001). In other words, institutions have human, financial and intellectual resources, and through partnerships, CPOs may tap into these resources and acquire the technical expertise they otherwise lack. On this note, one CPO explained how community organizations usually never reject an opportunity to partner with

well-resourced colleges and universities in the hopes of acquiring assistance and support.

In an attempt to level the playing field while collaborating with academics, some community groups have taken matters into their own hands by developing alternative partnerships models. These models aim to explicitly match institutional research goals to community needs. For instance, community-based review processes and community-IRBs have been established and may operate independently, in conjunction or in partnership with IRBs based at institutions. Community-IRBs tend to focus on hyper local issues relevant to the communities at stake as well as the cultural competency of investigators (Albert Einstein College of Medicine, 2012). These models, however, are primarily employed for clinical and biomedical research (Minkler, 2005; Nyden, 2003; Israel et. al. 1998). Undoubtedly, the importance of community-academic partnerships spans well beyond the fields of health and medicine.

As digital technologies reconfigure how organizations interface with communities, both in how data is sourced and analyzed, the need for the clear articulation of roles in social research is amplified. The ability of community partners

to make use and access data and digital tools may be shaped by structural, financial and technological limitations (Pinkett, 2003). Continued efforts to advance mutually beneficial partnerships require deep examination into the interactions between digital technology, data, and partnership dynamics spanning various fields.



# FINDINGS

## THE NEED FOR DIGITAL TOOLS AND STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT COMMUNICATION

A clear theme in our research was a CPOs' 'struggle' to respond and stay up-to-date with research-related inquiries. One CPO representative explained how various different "[researchers] often want to interview me about what we do, our work...this takes a lot of my time." In many instances, these sorts of inquiries from researchers were not associated with long-term partnerships spanning more than a year. Rather, questions or surveys, commonly sent by email, related to short-term partnerships the length of a Spring or Fall academic semester. These types of inquiries were largely regarded by representatives as being unproductive interruptions or distractions to their day-to-day work.

Several participants also underlined the difficulty of keeping track of email inquiries that spanned various research subjects. This difficulty made it particularly challenging to follow conversations or email threads over time. Some representatives added to this by explaining how during certain times of the year, students need "information from us fast." Near approaching academic deadlines and exams typically correlated to an overload of emails in the inboxes of representatives, and as emails piled up, representatives felt overloaded too. Largely for this reason, feeling overwhelmed by research activities in Boston was a frequently

stated remark by interviewees.

In order to cope with the email and information overload, some CPO representatives noted the need for more efficient modes of communicating and disseminating information to researchers online. One representative mentioned that the organization hoped to experiment with the idea of inviting researchers to video conference, which would be scheduled on a monthly basis. As an alternative to emails, ringing phones and voicemails, the goal of scheduling one conference call each month was to address researchers' inquiries in 'one shot'. In turn, this idea could potentially minimize the burden of gradually processing and sifting through a plethora of research-related email messages. To improve the efficiency of communication between her organization and researchers even more, this representative also expressed an interest to prerecord video clips and embed other multimedia content directly into the organization's website. As such, relevant data for research could be conveniently and continuously shared with partners as well as the wider community, too. When discussing the details of implementing this idea, however, the representative spoke about the lack of in-house technological expertise and the initial cost of setup: "I know that universities have these online courses that students can access and use...we want videos like that online that could share information about us...it's difficult to do, I don't think we can do it right now." Clearly, the representative felt unable to leverage the skills and resources of universities to help mitigate the information overload with digital tools and platforms.

The ‘struggle’ to cope with perceived communication inefficiencies with researchers was also addressed in the interviews when representatives noted how the work cycle of academia and the ‘real-world’ are not aligned. Indeed, many interviewees emphasized how academic schedules typically don’t run parallel to community-based programs and projects. One representative, for example, noted how for the organization, the most suitable time for community-engaged research was during the summer months. Unfortunately, this was a time when many researchers left the City and went on holiday: “[researchers] are not interested at the right time.”

To address the difference in timetables, learning to be clear and careful about setting expectations and roles, which don’t overstrain CPOs, was identified as a critical component that assured a collaboration more sustainable and fair. Along this line, one interviewee spoke about the need to create an online and shareable calendar so that partners, both current and prospective researchers, could view the organization’s timelines and workflows year-round. In this way, an organization’s timetable could be easily accessed by the broader academic community and taken into account when representatives needed to manage and negotiate expectations for research early on.

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Furthermore, many representatives underlined how the differences of timetables implied a need to invest more of their own time and energy in making partnerships work. On this note, one representative explained how if research activities did not line up with regularly scheduled work events, it required more effort on the part of the CPO to make connections and network with communities of interest for the research. What’s important to highlight is that many participants connected a larger investment on their part with a digital gap. Simply put, the ‘community’ was perceived as less digitally literate or dependent as the majority of research partners. To elucidate this point, the above mentioned representative again spoke about the ease of gathering communities of relevance during the Summer: “during the warmer months you can just find who you are looking for...but it can be difficult to reach them [at other times of the year].”

Another point of concern readily expressed by CPO representatives was that ongoing, regular communication with partners after the termination of research was not common. In fact, six representatives explained how their partners tended to ‘disappear’, and for some, this disappearance occurred even as early as the data analysis stage of research. Representatives noted that it was a particularly troubling trend since it impeded efforts to maintain the interest of relevant communities after the life of a project. In this regard, some CPOs pointed to contextual barriers to maintaining communication including a dearth of online platforms that facilitated and encouraged dialogue between partners. One interviewee mentioned how the organization often had to ‘resort’ to facebook to maintain communication with researchers, albeit intermittently: “[the researcher and I] become Facebook friends... sometimes [former researchers] write me a

facebook message or I look up their name and check on their status.”

## SATISFACTION WITH RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES

The relevance of research data was put into question by nearly half of the CPO representatives. These representatives were not convinced that their partners’ research questions solely emerged from pressing community concerns. One CPO representative drew a fine line between the types of data that are beneficial for academics and that which is relevant to community work and advocacy needs. In regards to the former, contributing to or disproving theory was perceived to be a fundamental goal of a researcher’s endeavors. Yet, for the organization, such ‘theory-obsessed’ research did not translate into the practical and immediate application of research, such as through improved services or new professional practices.

In particular, five CPOs believed that their partners’ research questions were largely shaped by the interests of funders. External grants raised a particular concern with how research objectives were not necessarily responsive to the critical needs of the community. This finding suggests that CPO representatives were not always fundamental in steering research priorities. Especially in the early days of a project, the inability to identify a clear and relevant benefit for the community was reportedly, at times, a source of frustration for representatives. It’s interesting to note here that over a quarter of the interviewees were unaware of the function of IRBs. This was even the case for representatives who had years of experience partnering with universities in Boston. This finding suggests a detachment of the community from the institutional structures

that evaluated the ethical concerns of research. Simply put, more experience partnering with institutions did not translate into more involvement in IRB related activities that worked to ensure the needs of the community are served competently by research.

Furthermore, many interviewees confessed how in particular, they were more confused about research-related concepts when engaged in short-lived partnerships. Often, there was simply ‘not enough time’ and ‘less effort’ on the part of the researcher to thoroughly explain the significance of research terms and methods. Three representatives also noted their general experiences of not receiving the outcomes of research from short-term projects, and in ways that were easily understandable, such as in summaries, short reports or graphics. What made matters worse was that many interviewees regarded short-term partnerships as time consuming because of limited staffing and size.

Nonetheless, CPO representatives were quick to underline the significance of both long *and* short-term partnerships. Most agreed that even short-lived projects could spur public interest in an organization’s mission. They could also better position an organization for acquiring partnerships longer in duration by demonstrating a capable management team and committed staff. Yet, perhaps the value of all partnerships became even more clear during discussions about how research institutions had access to more resources than community organizations. In this regard, some cited institutions as important vehicles for soliciting funding. Others pointed to the role that established, well-known institutions played in increasing the legitimacy and credibility of organizations. As such, ‘research partnerships’ and a ‘sense of validation’ were strongly linked as rationales for forging collaborations. Absent from much of their rhetoric on value was the actual outcomes of research.

## THE INSTRUMENTALIZATION AND LIFE CYCLE OF DATA

The meaning of data was not understood uniformly among all representatives. Some CPOs with whom we spoke described data as being merely technical and quantitative in nature, which could only be measured and analysed numerically. For example, one CPO representative informed us that the organization did not have any data when we inquired about what they were doing with information from a narrative-based research project. In this case, the qualitative nature of a narrative was not immediately and inherently tied to notions of data.

In addition, many CPOs felt that the creation, analysis, and interpretation of data was, in large part, the role and responsibility of researchers. Data, then, was not necessarily perceived as a co-constructed phenomenon developed from the knowledge and skills of all partners. Two interviewees, who were partnering with local universities, actually highlighted how data collection and analysis was typically

interpretation and representation of data.

The attitude reported above was linked to the belief that to some extent, raw and digital data was 'out of reach' for CPOs. Due to a lack of training, technical tools, and/or bandwidth, many representatives declared themselves unable to fully participate in the making of data. For instance, one representative spoke about not having access to programs in the Adobe Software Suite because they were too expensive for the organization to purchase. These programs, nevertheless, were central to many stages of the research, and unfortunately the cost was only subsidized for academic researchers. This phenomenon led to a broader discussion on equal participation in research. As echoed by other representatives, this interviewee expressed a desire for academics to invest more of their resources and time in training organizational staff: "[training] could help us, give us more capacity...we just don't have the resources to invest in this training ourselves."

It is important to underline here that not all representatives expressed an interest in being involved in each stage of the data collection or analysis process. On one hand, some research skills, which required degrees of specialization and tools, were perceived as valuable

**“In general, representatives were interested in having the power to choose between which knowledge, skills, and resources they could access and gain from their partners.”**

“what the researcher does,” alone. Another representative noted how when encouraging academic-community collaborations, the idea most emphasized was how universities were sources of new data and thinking. Largely overlooked in these discussions was the idea that all partners may be relevant in the creation,

and desirable. On the other hand, there were skill-sets and components of research which were reportedly not of interest. In general, representatives were interested in having the power to choose between which knowledge, skills, and resources they could access and gain from their partners.

Many representatives also stressed the challenges of data storage. Due to limited resources, many organizations faced difficulties in managing and storing vast amounts of digital information in such forms as Word documents, images, and videos. The fact that data generated or repurposed during collaborations often went beyond the digital storage capacity of representatives reflected the need to plan and specify the rules of data handling, processing, and storage with partners.

A couple of representatives asked their research partners to sign a data confidentiality agreement upon sharing the organization's database. When discussing these agreements, representatives confessed to not having a full grasp of the specific policies that would ensure appropriate access to and use of their data. For instance, one representative mentioned that the organization did not apply a clause related to data reuse or retention. This absence was not due to a lack of concern or interest in the issue, though. Rather, the representative explained that the organization did not have a thorough understanding nor the bandwidth to create a well-defined regulatory framework: "I'm sure we're missing many important things [in the data confidentiality agreement]."

The majority of representatives also noted that they did not know where to learn about best practices for data protection and privacy. One representative described the challenge of searching online for examples of data security procedures that other organizations around the country employ in collaborations. Conducting such online searches, though, was described as a time-consuming process that entailed pulling 'the best pieces' from different sources together. As a whole, interviewees wanted help in engineering suitable data security practices and arrangements across different research design phases and technologies.

# CONCLUSION

This study represents an initial exploration into how CPOs are experiencing community-academic research partnerships in digital contexts. Selected CPO representatives in Greater Boston shared their expectations, challenges, and perceptions of collaborations. Even though the results of this study are not generalizable to all cities, recognizing the

between the academic community and the communities with whom they partner. This finding should be of interest to research that explores the potential of technology-oriented academic-community partnerships in helping CPOs better serve their communities (Armstrong et. al., 2007).

**“Developing partnerships that improve the technological know-how and infrastructure of CPOs may go a long way toward bridging the digital divide between the academic community and the communities with whom they partner.”**

aspects that facilitate or challenge partnership activities represents a first step toward appreciating the needs and perspectives of CPOs in partnerships that go beyond the scope of public health and medicine.

The processes by which resources were allocated and exchanged between partners were found to be uneven. Representatives identified a need for expertise in and access to technologies, digital tools, and software programs that tend to have high subscription fees. Out-of-reach resources strained efforts to participate in research activities. For that reason, it was generally still the case that organizations lacking capacity deferred to academic partners for matters involving data gathering and analysis, for instance. Developing partnerships that improve the technological know-how and infrastructure of CPOs may go a long way toward bridging the digital divide

We found consensus among our interviewees that it was important to maintain ongoing dialogue with partners, even after the life of a project. Open communication helped to manage and negotiate roles and responsibilities, and expand the outcomes of research. Most interviewees also emphasized their preference for multi-semester partnerships. Researchers affiliated with long-term collaborations were generally perceived as being more accountable and trustworthy. There is a wealth of academic-community engagement literature that suggests the importance of interpersonal exchanges sustained by long-term contact (i.e. Maurrasse, 2001; Sandmann and Simon, 1999).

Community-academic partnerships offer CPOs a number of benefits that go well beyond the outcomes of research. Representatives spoke about opportunities for accessing resources, obtaining funding, and gaining an increased



sense of legitimacy. It is also important to point out that not all interviewees were interested in participating in one or more stages of a research project. As argued by Allman (2015), some pursuits in the social sciences require degrees of specialization and interest that not all communities may want.

Many representatives were concerned about issues of data management and security. Since the nature of data may be highly unique to a research project and the involved partners, best practices for using and sharing data need to be developed to facilitate related conversations and agreements. This is especially true as CPOs move through digital transformation processes. That is, as community organizations turn to social media and digital-based technologies to conduct their everyday work, they are prospectively producing even more data for researchers to track and measure.

Efforts to address the needs of CPOs, by changing academic procedures or creating community-based IRBs, present challenges in terms of time, money, and other resources (Albert Einstein College of Medicine, 2012). As an alternative, we have developed a template Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which can be used by CPOs to inspire more democratic practices in research. The basic terms and concepts used in the template are based on interests, needs, and concerns identified from the interviews. Topics include data management and shared interests.

We believe that the MOU will be especially valuable for the participants involved in this research, but it could also help other CPO representatives better understand the value, limitations and potential impact of collaborations. The MOU template is not intended to be comprehensive or directive. CPOs and researchers are encouraged to use, change, and add information so that it meets their own goals, perspectives, and background. The template is divided into three major overlapping themes, and we inserted blank spaces, italicized statements and questions to encourage critical thinking on ways to acknowledge and overcome socio-economic and technical obstacles.

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## APPENDIX A:

# MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

## Introduction

Community partners need to understand the purpose of research and agree to the definitions of terms and methods used.

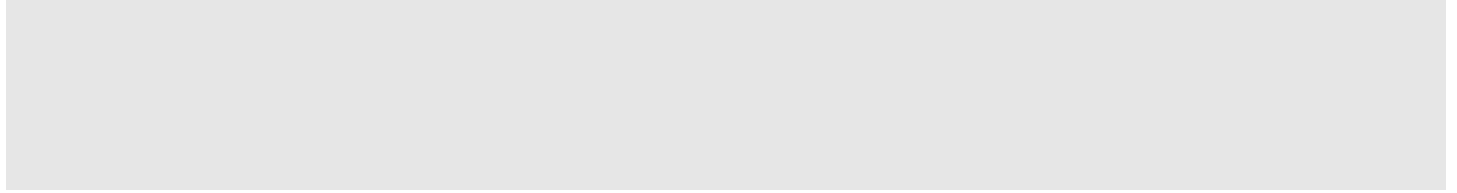
- This MOU is a voluntary agreement between the community partner organization (CPO) \_\_\_\_\_, and the academic partner \_\_\_\_\_.
- The MOU outlines the working relationship of the above parties including their roles and responsibilities as a part of their involvement in \_\_\_\_\_ **NAME OF RESEARCH PROJECT/PROGRAM**, funded by **IF APPLICABLE** \_\_\_\_\_.
- The purpose of this research partnership is to \_\_\_\_\_ **I.E. EXAMINE AN ISSUE/PROTOTYPE AND DESIGN DIGITAL TOOLS.**
- The academic partner wishes to enhance its \_\_\_\_\_ **I.E. COURSE OFFERINGS**, in order to achieve \_\_\_\_\_ **GOAL** through this partnership.
- The CPO wishes to enhance its \_\_\_\_\_ **I.E. ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH**, in order to achieve \_\_\_\_\_ **GOAL** through this partnership.
- The outcome of the research will be to \_\_\_\_\_ **\_ I.E. INFORM POLICY/EVALUATE A PLAN OF ACTION ETC.**, which addresses the above issue within the community.
- The community is understood here as \_\_\_\_\_ **IDENTIFY HOW COMMUNITY IS DEFINED.**

## Mutual Interests

To ensure a level playing field, project planning, research, and design processes should be relevant to the community served. The focus of the project should meet the needs and interests of the CPO, and the goals and outcomes of the partnership should do the same.

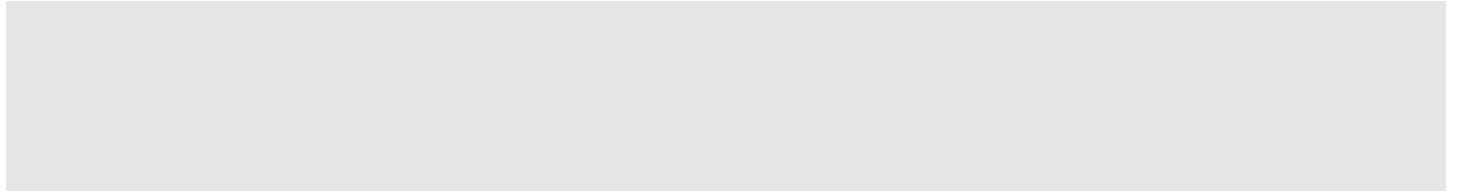
- We share a common interest in addressing the high priority issue(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ in the community.

What is the project trying to accomplish?

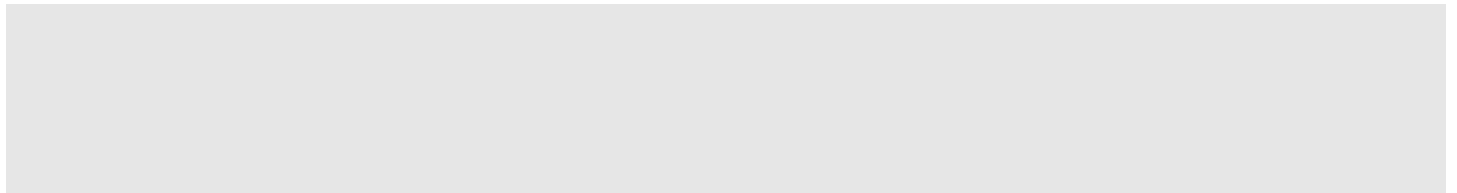


Describe the benefits of the partnership for the academic partner.

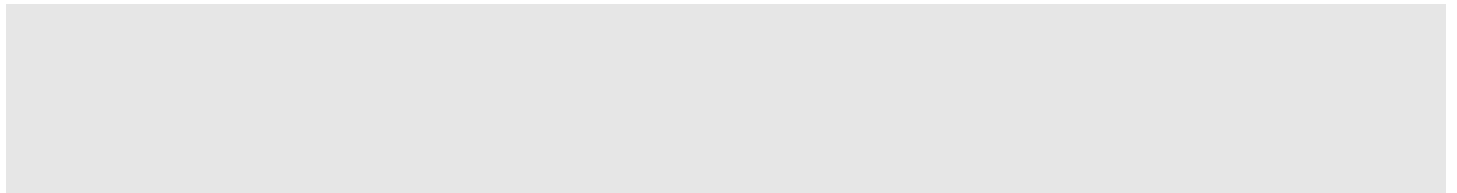
**I.E. LEARN ABOUT COMMUNITY NEEDS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF PUBLIC POLICY**



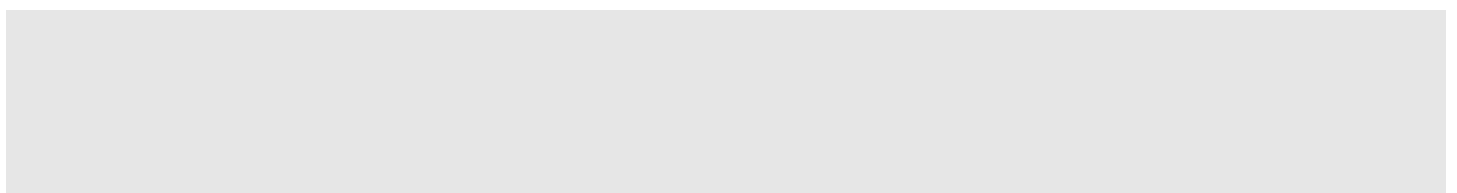
The collaboration is not in conflict with the CPO's initiatives and priorities, and it is beneficial and relevant to the work of the CPO. Describe how the partnership will address the CPO's immediate needs and interests:



The timeline of the project is in line with the CPO's timeline. Describe the process for ensuring that expectations for fulfilling obligations are met: **I.E. REPORT DEADLINES**



The project should not interfere with the CPO's ability to carry out its day-to-day work.



Explain how the aims and objectives of the project are realistic and achievable for the CPO. **I.E. IN TERMS OF STAFF TIME/ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES.**

Identify the perceived risks of project participation for the CPO and/or third party stakeholders, and describe how risks will be addressed, minimized and/or eliminated:

Describe the long-term benefits of participation for the CPO:  
Describe how the project will function to enhance the capacity of the community:

**I.E. WILL IT OFFER TECHNICAL TRAININGS, JOBS, OPPORTUNITIES TO SUSTAIN PROJECTS LONG-TERM?**

How will the project's beneficial outcomes for the community be sustained and developed after the duration of the partnership?

## **Shared Decision Making**

Decision-making affecting the dynamics of the partnership and project must be mutually agreed upon. Information-sharing at all levels should be a constant undertaking, and partners need to recognize each other's expertise and skills - or means to build and access them - in order to collaboratively work toward achieving project goals in ways that leave the community better off after the project than before.

List all stages of the research.

I.E. IDENTIFYING/DEFINING THE PROBLEM; CREATING A DATA COLLECTION PLAN; DATA COLLECTION; INTERPRETING DATA; EVALUATING PLANS OF ACTION; DESIGNING DIGITAL INSTRUMENTS ETC.

List and explain how CPOs will be involved in the above identified stages. Describe what plans and strategies will be used to ensure CPO participation in these stages, as appropriate:

List the resources and expertise necessary for this project.

Identify the relevant strengths, sets of skills and resources that CPOs possess.

Describe how different resources and expertise will be shared to influence and achieve the goals of the collaboration.

Information and discussion points are out on the table. Identify and describe the channels of clear and open communication between partners that enable a regular exchange of information: **I.E. FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS; EMAIL OR PHONE CALLS; COMMUNITY MAILINGS; SOCIAL MEDIA ETC.**

Academic partners will be made aware of and respect culturally sensitive issues and the rights of the community under investigation. Describe how:

Differences in culture, perspectives, and language may affect approaches to communicating, sharing information and making decisions. What steps are in place to ensure that conflicts of interest are addressed and resolved in the future:

**I.E. PARTNERS MAY REQUEST TO HOLD A MEETING AT ANY POINT TO DISCUSS CONCERNS AND STATE THEIR POSITION; MEETINGS ARE WELL-DOCUMENTED; RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESOLUTIONS ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE TERMS OUTLINED IN THIS MOU ETC.**

List who the appropriate contacts are for specific matters related to this project and their contact information. Contact details will be kept up-to-date.

How will the relationship between the CPO and the academic partner be maintained after the life of the project?

- The partnership will last approximately \_\_\_\_\_ months and require about \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week from the community and \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week from the academic partner.

## Data Ownership

There is a shared ownership of data in both digital and analogue forms. The CPO can easily understand and access project-related data at any point during the partnership, and there is a plan for using and taking advantage of it at the end of the collaboration.

Describe what new data will be generated and/or collected from the partnership, and what existing data will be shared and re-used?

How will data be stored and maintained if needed? What are associated data maintenance costs?

Describe how born-digital (materials that originate in a digital form) as well as digitalized materials are appropriate for CPOs in terms of their accessibility and usability.

CPOs may require technical and/or financial support to participate more fully in data collection, generation and analysis. Identify and describe how gaps will be filled to suit their needs, interests and ability to equally participate?

Participants will agree on who has access to project-related data and under what conditions. List the current stakeholders and owners of the data as well as potential stakeholders in the future:

- Data will be physically located \_\_\_\_\_ . For how long?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Methods of managing and protecting data during the course of the project include: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List the technical and procedural methods for protecting confidential information?

Who will analyze, review and interpret data used for the project?

How will data be securely stored, archived, and/or disposed in the long-term?

CPOs may need the technical infrastructure or tools to ensure long-term usability of digital files and materials. Describe how digital data can be transitioned over to CPOs in a useable and appropriate manner at the end of the partnership.



Who has access to and the rights to use digital products after the termination of the partnership?

Academic partners will produce, interpret and share findings with CPOs in an accessible and practical way. Identify the format of information sharing that ensures equal access and takes into account linguistic, cultural, and technological preferences for communication.

Besides the involved CPO, identify who will receive project-related data and through what means. **I.E. COMMUNITY MEMBERS, PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS, FUNDERS ETC.**

The findings and outcomes of the partnership will be shared with the community in ways that are geared toward education, advocacy, and social change. Describe what data will be shared and a timeframe for data sharing.

What types of current and future uses of the data are permissible?

- CPOs may use the collected data and new knowledge discovered through this partnership \_\_\_\_\_ **WITH/WITHOUT** mutual consent.

- Consent \_\_\_\_\_ **MUST/MAY NOT** be obtained from partners before using data in any purpose other than the purpose of this project.

The term, metadata, describes information that is based on data collected from the research (data that describes the data). Describe what metadata will be generated from the collaboration.

The CPO may request data at any time. How are access requests handled?

Digital and analogue products resulting from the project will acknowledge the contribution and knowledge of CPOs. Describe how CPOs will be consulted prior to the submission of materials for publication and be invited to collaborate in project-related design, material and production processes.

- Do CPOs wish to publically share all data generated and/or collected during the partnership?
- What are the risks of using and sharing the data? How will these risks be addressed and minimized?

## **APPENDIX B:**

# **ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES INTERVIEWED**

## **ADDRESSING DISPARITIES IN ASIAN POPULATIONS THROUGH TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH (ADAPT)**

<http://www.tuftsctsi.org/research-services/stakeholder-community-engagement/adapt/>

A project of the Tufts University Clinical and Translational Science Institute. It aims to build an academic community research partnership between Tufts and Boston's Chinatown community to promote, enhance, and evaluate Asian American health.

## **LIVEABLESTREETS ALLIANCE**

<http://www.livablestreets.info/>

A non-profit organization that promotes safe, convenient, and affordable transportation for communities in urban Boston. The Alliance also encourages people to demand a transportation system that balances transit, walking, and biking with automobiles.

## **THE DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE (DSNI)**

<http://www.dsni.org/>

Its mission is to empower residents of the socio-economically disadvantaged Dudley neighborhood to organize, plan for, create and control a vibrant, diverse and high quality neighborhood in collaboration with community partners.

## **PROJECT BREAD**

<http://www.projectbread.org/>

Organization that offers programs and activities, including an annual Walk for Hunger, to assist those in need of food

## **THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

<http://noahcdc.org/>

An East Boston-based community development corporation structured to collaborate with and support residents and communities in their pursuit of affordable housing strategies, environmental justice, community planning, leadership development, and economic development opportunities.

## **GREENOVATE**

<http://greenovateboston.org/>

Boston's community-wide initiative to engage all residents in helping the City meet its climate and sustainability goals, while continuing to make it a thriving, healthy, and innovative city.

## **COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER, CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAMS**

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP/programsforadults/communitylearningcenter>

Helps adults improve their lives and increase their community participation through free educational programs and services. Services include English language classes, classes in basic reading, writing, and math, and preparation for the U.S. citizenship test.

## **SHAPE UP SOMERVILLE**

<http://www.somervillema.gov/departments/health/sus>

A program designed to build and sustain a healthier, more equitable community for everyone that lives in, works in, and visits the city.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, SOMERVILLE CITY HALL**

<http://www.somervillema.gov/>

The community engagement specialist team conducts community outreach, serves as the community liaison, conducts translation and interpretation, coordinates public meetings, and coordinates all forms of communication including emergency messaging needed to serve the City's Haitian and Hispanic community.

## **DEPARTMENT OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY, CITY OF BOSTON**

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/DoIT/>

The Department engages, empowers, and improves life for citizens and partners through technology.

## **HOMELESS SERVICES, CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAMS**

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP>

Housing search and casework services to homeless and at-risk individuals and families.

## **INTERACTIVE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

<http://interactioninstitute.org/>

Offers consulting services to help organizations, communities, networks, and others to build their capacity for more effective, equitable, and inclusive social change.

## **THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (MBTA)**

<http://www.mbta.com/>

The public operator of most bus, subway, commuter rail, and ferry routes in the greater Boston.

## **MEL KING INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING**

*<https://melkinginstitute.org/about-us>*

The Institute aims to advance the skills, knowledge and leadership ability of professional practitioners and volunteer leaders in Community Development Corporations and other non-profit organizations. Programs leverage collaborative educational partnerships that increase access, encourage innovation, and promote and institutionalize systemic success.

## **RESEARCH ACTION DESIGN**

*<http://rad.cat/>*

Worker-owned collective that uses community-led research, transformative media organizing, technology development, and collaborative design to build the power of grassroots in social movements.

## **THE BOSTON HARBOR ASSOCIATION (TBHA)**

*<http://www.tbha.org/>*

TBHA works with waterfront businesses, residents, public agencies and other non-profits to enhance the economic, recreational and scenic value of Boston's waterfront while protecting the city from extreme weather events.

## **THE TRUSTEES OF RESERVATIONS**

*<http://www.thetrustees.org/?referrer=https://www.google.com/>*

Preserves, for public use and enjoyment, properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value in Massachusetts.

## APPENDIX C:

# INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- What kind of work does your organization do?
- Who do you consider to be your primary constituents?
- In what situations do you partner with academics or academic institutions?
- What do you gain from partnering with academics? What are the challenges in these partnerships? If so/not, why/why not?
- How do you assure that your organization or your constituents benefit from these partnerships?
- How do you collect and store your data?
- How is confidentiality protected when you share data?
- Have your institutional collaborations changed the way you think about the value of your data? Why or why not?
- What standards, in your opinion, would assure an 'equitable' and 'fair' academic-community partnership?
- How do you maintain your relationships with academic partners over time?
- What is the value that a researcher can bring to your organization and community?
- Have there been times when you changed the way you work or partner with institutions to better suit your own needs and goals? If so/not, why/why not?
- How well do you understand the overall design and processes that your partners undertake in research?
- Have there been times when you have disagreed with their research design and processes? If so, why?
- Who are the people in Boston that should weigh in on this process?