Partnerships within Research

The importance of partnerships within social science research is becoming ever more evident as "researchers and funding agencies are increasingly showing interest in the application of research findings and focusing attention on engagement of knowledge-users in the research process" [1]. Early engagement of knowledge-users, such as decision makers, policy makers and community members increases the usability of the research findings. Establishing a strong relationship with partners can also help to gain trust throughout the duration of the study. Strong relationships help those working on-the-ground to get involved with research and to engage in issues important to them. Perhaps even more importantly, partners will have greater knowledge of community needs and may have delivery modes in place to gather community input and feedback.

There are many different levels of partnerships. In stronger partnerships, like those found in Community Based Research, the community is heavily involved in the decision making process about the study. However, sometimes this level of involvement is not feasible. There are also more time limited partnerships, where the research team is the driving force behind research related decisions and partners take a more supporting role (e.g. providing consultation, providing updated contact information as needed, etc.). The table below describes some partnership opportunities that can be used alone or in combination throughout the duration of your study.

Defining the Problem and Formulating Research Questions	Partnership Building	Development and Testing of Data Collection Tool	Development of Study Materials, Staff Training, and Protocols
- Facilitation of informal partnership discussions about research topic - Partnership consultation with: Community-based Organizations, Non-governmental Organizations, and government agencies and institutions - Assist in brainstorming for the development of a focal question(s) for Concept Mapping - Focus Group(s) to uncover topics of interest within the community - Preparedness to facilitate population specific research	- Coordination of Steering and/or Advisory Committee - Facilitate dialogue between the community, external partners and investigators - Assistance with research agreements and contracts with partners (e.g. funding contribution and deliverables, data sharing, privacy, etc.) - Provide the community with information about Ethics Boards and its processes - Introduce Ad Hoc community member to sit on Hospital Research Ethics Board (REB)	- Prioritize needs during survey development (e.g. concept mapping) - Identify survey questions to meet the needs of the community - Pilot survey instrument within the community - Perform cognitive interviewing with community members to ensure survey suitability - Revision of survey instrument in collaboration with the community	- Development of a community resource contact sheet - Language translation of written study materials - Readability of recruitment materials to suit the community - Share final versions of study materials - Interviewer training to prepare for specific needs of the community

[1] Sibbald et al.: Research funder required research partnerships: a qualitative inquiry. Implementation Science 2014 9:176.

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Participant Recruitment	Data Collection	Analysis	Dissemination of Findings
- Collaborate with community agencies for recruitment, retention and referral processes - Recruitment activities involving members of the community (e.g. contact tracers, community guides) - Participant driven sampling techniques (e.g. snowball sampling, Respondent Driven Sampling) - Community consultation for best recruitment strategies - Off-site (physical location) recruitment - Provide updated participant contact information for a primary data collection project	- Method and mode of data collection based on community needs - Data collected by peer research interviewers - Participant driven sampling techniques (e.g. snowball sampling, Respondent Driven Sampling) - Utilization of methods using group communications (e.g. focus groups, Delphi, concept mapping) - Language interpretation during data collection - Able to secure safe, and accessible locations within community to collect data	- Community request for specific analyses - Community participation in coding qualitative data or confirming interpretations - Community interpretation of study results - Community facilitation and interpretation of concept maps - Community validation of results	- Planning for dissemination - Provide the community with preliminary findings - Development of dissemination materials with assistance from the community (e.g. posters, reports) - Dissemination of findings within the community (e.g. forums, meetings etc.) - Reporting to audiences outside the community (e.g. reports, manuscripts) - Advocacy activities based on study results

With any level of partnership it is extremely important to be transparent with your research team and partners about the magnitude of involvement individuals or groups can expect to have throughout the duration of the project. Risks, benefits, roles and responsibilities should be made clear as well as project and involvement objectives. Partnerships lacking communication or that fail to outline roles and ownership of findings early in the process have an increased likelihood to have a negative experience. This may even run the risk of partaking in a 'token' partnership whereby there is a perception of an imbalance of power and contribution to the research. Explicit partnerships build more respectful and effective collaborations. Make use of partnerships when feasible and appropriate.

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CRICH Survey Research Unit – Providing high quality and efficient research and evaluation services to the health and social sciences community

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