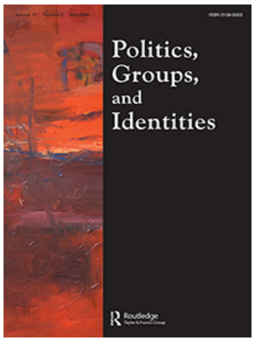

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Civically engaged research in political science: a methodological guide

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ABSTRACT
In political science, there are growing calls for scholarship to engage directly and equitably with communities and other research stakeholders. We build on, and advance, this emerging methodological literature by revisiting the conventional research process, and provide an adaptable guide scholars can use to develop and undertake a collaborative and civically engaged research project. We outline key considerations and decisions to be made at each step of the process when undertaking civically engaged research, provide a menu of options for how scholars can engage with research stakeholders at each step, and demonstrate these options with examples from real-world applications. In addition, we discuss the current and potential impacts of CER on the larger discipline of political science. This article aims to serve as a useful guide for scholars interested in developing a civically engaged project and as a resource for broadening the training students and scholars receive in research methods.

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In recent years, scholars have increasingly called for research that engages directly with stakeholders outside research communities, emphasizing the need for equitable collaborations that give communities agency over research and help scholars generate more rigorous and relevant work (Bullock and Hess 2021; Dobbs et al. 2021). Drawing on long, interdisciplinary traditions of community-oriented work (Viswanathan et al. 2004), scholars have defined collaborative and civically engaged methodologies (Dobbs et al. 2021; Firchow and Gellman 2021), discussed the opportunities they present in contemporary political science (Bracic 2018; Jackson, Shoup, and Williams 2021; Thachil and Vaishnav 2018), interrogated their constraints (Cyr 2021; Dorussen, Bakaki, and Kolbe 2021; Kaplan 2021), and highlighted the ethical challenges they raise (Reyna et al. 2021; Thomson 2021). As Findlay (2020) observes, much of this work has focused thus far on foundational conceptual and theoretical issues. And while scholars have also begun identifying key questions, considerations, and best practices for aspects of collaborative and engaged research (e.g., Asiamah, Awal, and MacLean 2021; Udani and Dobbs 2021; Wiebe 2020), overall there has been little written to document and explain how the lifecycle of a civically-engaged project differs from traditional research processes.

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A related strand of methodological work, focusing on field research or the practice of "leaving one's home institution in order to acquire data" (Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015, 1), provides more detailed guidance on various aspects of planning, strategizing, and implementation across the research lifecycle (Driscoll 2021; Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015, 2022; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2008). However, this line of inquiry centers largely on the "traditional" research process, where collaborative research with communities and other stakeholders is not a core objective. For these reasons, this literature also does not provide specific guidance on principles, considerations, choices, and practices involved in undertaking civically engaged projects.

In this article, we build on and advance both of these methodological literatures by revisiting the conventional research process, and put forward a guide scholars can use to develop and undertake civically engaged research (CER). Traditionally, to generate knowledge, political scientists are taught to identify a puzzle or decide upon a topic and subsequently develop a set of exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory questions. Second, scholars take inventory of existing knowledge, typically by reading canonical scholarship and recent literature and debates. Third, scholars develop an appropriate research design, taking into consideration the merits and biases of various methods of data collection and analysis. Fourth, scholars engage in systematic data collection. Fifth, scholars analyze data for inference and interpretation. Sixth, scholars communicate results and their implications.

CER is part of a larger set of methodologies that intervene in, and reshape, all points of this traditional research process. It entails the systematic and rigorous production of knowledge through reciprocal partnerships with people beyond the academy that contributes to the improved governance of social and political problems (Bullock and Hess 2021). This set of research traditions is often discipline-, population-, or problem-specific, including approaches like Indigenous research methodologies (IRM), community-based participatory research (CBPR), community-engaged research (CEnR), and participatory action research (PAR) (Bullock and Hess 2021; Kirkness and Barnhardt 1991; Ozer et al. 2020; Viswanathan et al. 2004). These methodologies aim to redistribute power such that the subjects of research can actively shape the process of inquiry and share in its benefits (cf. Arnstein 1969).

Accordingly, civically engaged research departs from conventional political science by redefining the purpose of scholarship, breaking from the status quo whereby academics monopolize expertise, treat communities as objects of study, and prioritize contribution to academic debates over strengthening the self-governance of others. While CER shares principles and has methodological overlaps with related research traditions, it is also distinct in its attempt to give communities and other stakeholders agency over research to directly improve policy and governance. Precisely because the goal of CER is to address issues of public concern, strengthen the self-governance of others, and promote the quality of the community (Rasmussen et al. 2021), civically engaged scholars must conduct research in partnership with a variety of stakeholders, such as social groups, organizations, and government bodies (Bullock and Hess 2021; Smith 2020; cf. Schram and Caterino 2006). These goals require methodological interventions to develop and formalize alternative processes of knowledge production.

Yet, while related methodological traditions have active debates and guidance attuned to the opportunities and challenges that arise from collaboration (Hale and Stephen 2013;

Nash and Buechler 2016), political science remains far behind in formalizing processes of joint knowledge production between researchers and stakeholders. As CER gains traction, it is thus necessary to both encourage new types of inquiry into politics and to undertake methodological scholarship that further advances CER. Indeed, civically engaged research raises new methodological, ethical, and logistical considerations pertinent across the research process, from concept formation to research design to the communication of findings. Among scholars that have developed and implemented such collaborations in political science, these practices and skills are typically learned through informal mentorship, experience, introspection, and trial and error (Findlay 2020). For these reasons, this article is intended to formalize guidance and assist researchers in navigating the process of conducting collaborative research to advance problems of governance.

We provide guidance on how to plan and implement a civically engaged project, addressing key considerations and decisions at each step of the research process, providing a menu of options for how scholars can engage with research stakeholders at each step, and demonstrating these options with examples from real-world applications. Ultimately, projects are contingent on the places and people involved, so our guide is intentionally adaptable. This guidance is particularly salient for political scientists seeking to engage with stakeholders in the research process to address public issues and remains useful for scholars working in related traditions such as IRM, CBPR, CEnR, and PAR as well. In addition, we discuss the current and potential impacts of CER on the larger discipline of political science and provide guidance on how to evaluate and promote CER projects and the scholars that undertake them.

We begin by overviewing the process of developing research partnerships in the "Developing Research Partnerships" section. The section on "Developing Research Questions" discusses crafting research questions. The section on "Research Design and Data Collection" addresses how CER can enhance data collection and research design, and the section "Data Analysis and Interpretation" addresses data analysis, interpretation, and synthesis in CER. The section on "Results, Significance, and Social Relevance" discusses the process of communicating results, significance, and social relevance to academic and non-academic communities. We conclude with a discussion of how to evaluate and further invest in CER projects.

Developing research partnerships

While there is no one model for conducting CER, there are methodological practices that stem from its epistemological commitments and goals. Scholars and research partners can choose to participate and collaborate across one or all aspects of the process (cf. Arnstein 1969), and we discuss these varying degrees of engagement below. To begin the process of shared and collective knowledge production, scholars must first develop relationships and partnerships with relevant research stakeholders. This involves three sets of considerations and tasks: taking stock of equity and capacity among potential collaborators, cultivating alignment between both parties, and establishing an institutional framework for collaboration. We recommend scholars think about these issues from the outset and throughout the research process for successful and sustainable engagement.

Equity and capacity

First, scholars must make an honest assessment of capacities. The feasibility and success of CER is conditional on both parties' capacities to undertake such a project. Capacity constraints are not equally distributed among potential collaborators or between researchers and their collaborators, raising important equity concerns. Being direct about capacities and constraints can not only ensure a more feasible project, but can also aid a sustainable partnership whereby all parties are attuned to each others' opportunities and constraints.

To start, while CER plays an important role in generating stronger scholarship and public engagement, for scholars it also requires additional time, resources, and support and recognition from institutions and funders, and can complicate and prolong the trajectory of a research project (Mahoney 2022; Udani and Dobbs 2021). This is particularly salient for early career researchers and tenure-track faculty, who face pressures to build a brand as a productive and innovative scholar on short timelines (Larson et al. 2019). Furthermore, conflicts over diverging perceptions and expectations within these partnerships can jeopardize the relationship between researchers and partners, and potentially bring real harm to participants and communities. For these reasons, it is necessary for scholars to take an honest account of their professional and personal interests, incentives, resources, and constraints when evaluating whether CER is the right fit.

For researchers who do aim to pursue CER, projects often emerge organically from their past experiences and existing relationships with relevant stakeholders, including individuals and groups that are directly connected with or affected by the research, or who might implement resulting programs and policies. This ranges from community organizations or collectives to policymakers, non-governmental (NGOs) or intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and other groups (Arsneault et al. 2024, this issue). Researchers build on the work they have already done with, or in the orbit of, these stakeholders to develop the idea for another project and partnership. In other cases, scholars may need to pursue and build these relationships and partnerships from scratch. Establishing these relationships involves drawing on desk research, previous personal or professional experience, background meetings and interviews, direct observation, existing networks, and community-engaged mapping or other kinds of respondent-driven or chain referral methods to map out the key stakeholders and decision-makers in a community or policy area who could be potential research partners.

Collaborations require a range of resources from research partners, just as they do for scholars. Accordingly, researchers must consider the costs for potential collaborators, and how these, in turn, shape the partnerships that are and are not forged. As we describe further below, because CER is costly, some potential partners have a greater capacity to collaborate with researchers than others. Scholars can inadvertently reproduce inequalities if they are not attentive to which community partners are invited as research partners, and which community members or organizations ultimately do partner with scholars.

Specifically, community research partners may incur both *direct costs* (such as time, personnel, and other resources committed) and *opportunity costs*, since collaborating on a research project or even meeting to discuss a potential collaboration, can divert time and attention from other interests, priorities, or core responsibilities. These costs can become a source of inequity between the researchers and their partners, particularly when working in low-resourced countries or with small, marginalized communities and organizations, which have less capacity to absorb the costs of collaboration compared to researchers. These costs can also exacerbate inequities within communities because well-resourced and visible individuals or organizations (for example, well-funded NGOs or IGOs, government agencies, political insiders or economic elites in the community) are usually the most capable and accessible to researchers, having more financial, human, and logistical resources. As a consequence, lower-resourced organizations may have the most to gain from a collaboration with scholars, but may also have the least robust infrastructure and opportunities to do so. Moreover, in partnering with better-resourced and more accessible collaborators, scholars may inadvertently end up working primarily with powerful social brokers or gatekeepers. While this can facilitate access in some ways, it may also create a situation where people feel pressured to participate or conform to the preferences of these actors, potentially restricting the researchers' engagement with a wider range of perspectives and experiences.

For these reasons, rather than gravitating to the best-resourced or most visible individuals and organizations without due consideration, it is critical that civically engaged scholars remain attentive to the social and political environments of the community or policy area they are working in and consider the status of marginalized and less visible groups (Bullock and Hess 2021). Researchers cannot remake the social, political, and economic capital of a group or organization, but they can be attuned to how variations in organizational infrastructure exacerbate inequalities and, in some cases, they can help organizations ameliorate these resource constraints.

Scholars are better positioned to work with collaborators that have much to contribute to debates about politics, power, and governance and improve self-governance by building trust and extensive relationships with community members, organizations, and leaders and undertaking targeted outreach efforts. In order to be attentive to issues of equity and capacity throughout any partnership that might result, scholars should work collaboratively with their key informants, community mentors, and potential research partners to understand their aspirations and their resources, competency, and cost constraints on their own terms. It is crucial to discuss whether, how, and to what extent potential partners might wish to collaborate and outline how scholars will be flexible and adaptable to their needs, which we discuss throughout this article. It also involves discussing reciprocity with potential partners and being conscientious and clear about what researchers can offer them in return for their expertise and collaboration, which we also outline in subsequent sections. In addition, researchers should consider how such a project, in turn, can build capacity – through funding, materials, training, interventions, and more – such that CER multiplies the skills, resources, and structures of partners and communities. Discussing the costs and possibilities of a CER project are key, given the methodology's commitment to strengthening the self-governance of communities.

Alignment

Once the process of assessing the fit between researchers' and potential partners' goals, priorities, and capacities has begun, it is important to cultivate alignment between researchers and would-be collaborators regarding the principles, substance, ethics, and methods of the potential collaboration. It is critical here to build and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders, informants, or organizations that researchers might collaborate with by drawing on existing connections or building new ones. The process of approaching potential collaborators requires establishing not only professional credentials but an individual-level reputation with the target community partners. The work of identifying, contacting, and building relationships with prospective partners can vary from short-term efforts to extensive embeddedness where scholars have established relationships of reciprocity with community members over time. When approaching potential research partners, particularly less-resourced groups or organizations, it is important to indicate respect for community expertise, flexibility, and reciprocity from the start, beginning from the earliest efforts to establish relationships and undertake discussions about any potential collaboration. This can include being flexible to potential collaborators' schedules, compensating for a one-time consultation, setting up a social gathering to meet, sharing scholars' past record of research practices, demonstrating a deep understanding or experience with the community or policy area (e.g., through language skills, years working or living in the community, referrals or introductions from contacts and community mentors), mentioning previous work or contributions to the community, or outlining some ideas for future contributions. Ideally, long-term engagement facilitates strong working relationships within communities and allows community members or other stakeholders, especially those who have gone through adverse research experiences, to vet and "invite in" researchers. The trust and reciprocities built through long-term engagement can lead to a greater willingness to consider and participate in research collaborations, particularly among groups or communities facing significant direct and opportunity costs.

Researchers must then conduct preliminary discussions, align interests, and establish the terms of collaboration with those who express interest in the project. Alignment entails mutually agreed-upon goals for the project, and *mutual beneficence* so that research partners contribute to and derive value from the research in ways that are meaningful to them, just as researchers themselves do. It also includes shared norms and standards about conduct, including discussing and setting expectations for respect, trust and credibility, ethics, accountability, and transparency throughout the project. This can involve taking stock of the past disrespectful or adverse research experiences of the potential partners to mutually arrive at standards for a more positive working relationship. This process entails meetings where everyone can discuss their goals, aspirations, and constraints, the content, scope, phases, and deliverables of the project, and a feasible timeline. It is also important to determine which stages across the research process each individual or group will contribute to or have decision-making influence over (which we discuss further below), the resources and services the researcher will provide to the partner and vice versa, and other issues of ethics, transparency, and credit and compensation.

Additionally, alignment includes recognizing the distinct contexts in which both parties are embedded and their social positions (Soedirgo and Glas 2020). Scholars and partners must delve into how norms, expectations, and policies may diverge between researchers and the site or community with whom the research will be conducted due to social, professional, and institutional differences. For instance, procedural and institutional guidelines fall short of addressing many ethical challenges, and researcher ethics can conflict with community and participant ethics (Fujii 2012; Lassiter 2005; Smith 2008). Civically engaged collaborators must examine such differing positionalities and possible divergences that may result, and begin discussing strategies for contextually-relevant development and management of the research project. This is critical because collaborative relationships involve individuals operating across varying institutional contexts, with disparate access to resources and different professional and personal goals and positionalities. As one example, a scholar may ideally want to offer financial compensation, but not have access to enough funding through research startup accounts or external grants, or it may not be methodologically or socially appropriate to offer funding. It would be prudent to share this information early on and discuss alternative forms of recognition that are appropriate for both scholars and community partners. Alignment helps ensure that all parties feel that their respective goals, perspectives, expertise, and investments in the project are valued as they begin working toward shared objectives. Importantly, alignment also ensures that partners discuss what cannot be accomplished, either because of divergence in priorities or positionality or, simply, resource constraints.

Institutional framework

These discussions should generate plans for communication and conflict resolution, including establishing an institutional framework (such as regular meetings, workshops, workgroups, or steering or advisory committees), frequency and mode of communication, and identifying key persons of contact between teams. A clear institutional framework for shared leadership, communication, transparency, management of funding, and conflict resolution provides structures for regular interactions between researchers and research partners. These mechanisms are important for maintaining alignment and mutual understanding as the project progresses and evolves, and for promptly addressing any conflicts and resource constraints that arise. Moreover, they help institutionalize the process of having all stakeholders involved and heard in decision-making and implementation processes. This matters for inclusivity and equity in civically-engaged partnerships, especially when working with less-resourced communities or organizations where the scholar generally holds more resources and represents more powerful institutions or funders.

Perhaps the most pressing concern at this stage is to develop a formalized agreement. We recommend developing an official statement of cooperation or memorandum of understanding (MoU) between collaborators, which includes project details and implies that the signatories will strive to reach, to the best of their ability, the stated objectives. Parallel movements are taking place across disciplines, in which scholars are attempting to correct for informal or handshake agreements that have been ripe for extractive relationships, which we describe in a later section. Written statements are valuable because they formalize a shared understanding of the ground rules for a project and provide a structure for the partnership, which helps protect the goals and interests of both the research partner and the researcher, particularly providing community partners with protections, recognition, and compensation for their expertise. These agreements are non-binding and can be written with as much or as little obligation and flexibility as all parties agree to. Parties can also include information about how updates to the agreement will be made.

The structure of collaboration should become part of scholars' applications to ethics review boards (and modifications and renewals thereof). Research institutions may also have additional legal review processes for such agreements, which scholars should be attentive to as they develop and draft them. We provide templates for developing MoUs in the appendix. It is important to note here that there are contexts where written agreements may be inappropriate (for example, due to limited literacy, or cultural or linguistic differences – e.g., Flicker et al. 2015) or even risky (such as in authoritarian states). In these cases, trust and a clear, contextually-appropriate institutional framework for shared leadership, periodic communication, and conflict resolution are doubly important for a successful collaboration.

Developing research questions

The first step in the traditional research process is to settle on a research topic and develop a set of exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory questions that will guide the project. While conventionally "the production of knowledge is preceded by what we think we know" based on academic literatures and disciplinary discussions (Thomson 2021, 2), the motivating premise of CER is that communities and stakeholders have direct understandings of relevant issues, and are therefore important partners in the research process. This is critical as research disconnected from communities, often conducted by scholars in a position of power compared to participants, can produce unproductive or counterproductive policy impacts (see Mitra, McNew-Birren, and Nickels, 2024). An integral goal of CER is to redress and remedy such uneven distributions of power in research and policy processes. Civically engaged scholars must therefore consider how intersections of knowledge and priorities of both communities and scholars can shape research questions.

Many scholars already draw on the experience and expertise of communities in informal or less formal ways to advance discovery, iteration, and innovation in their research. For example, drawing on their work in South Asia, Thachil and Vaishnav (2018, 547) problematize the divergence between areas of analytic and methodological focus in academia and topics of interest in communities. One of their interlocutors explains: "all US academics seem to want to study about India are reservations (affirmative-action quotas) because they are randomized! But we Indians want to learn about other parts of our political system!" This illustrates how deep engagement with communities can give rise to novel thinking, questioning, and theorizing, generating insights that could not be found any other way. Civically engaged research contributes to mainstreaming and institutionalizing these practices of "working with research stakeholders rather than on research subjects" (Gabel and Goodman 2021; Shdaimah, Stahl, and Schram 2009; Thomson 2021, 1), giving communities credit for the critical role they play in shaping and refining research topics and questions, and in the long run, applying research findings to advance problems of governance. As such, to start, scholars undertaking CER can involve communities or groups relevant to the research in the process of identifying problems and formulating topics and questions.

To accomplish this, first, researchers must communicate and collaborate with community members and other stakeholders to identify, explain, and contextualize the relevance of a research project, its analytic focus, and questions for the community or policy area. This involves expanding and extending dominant modes of taking inventory of existing knowledge, which have historically involved more top-down or expert information and information-gathering activities (Mitra, McNew-Birren, and Nickels, 2024). CER recognizes the limitations of this approach and puts knowledge in scholarly communities in dialogue with what is known and experienced in communities and among stakeholders.

Scholars can facilitate this learning by drawing on existing relationships and experiences, or developing new ones, in the community and collaboratively thinking about questions like: *What do researchers on one hand and community partners on the other hand have an interest in, or knowledge about, that the other can gain from?* For example, based on their work in Lebanon, Ghosn and Parkinson (2019) critique the "imperialism of categories" (Rudolph 2005), arguing that many scholars designing surveys and field experiments, structuring interviews, and coding datasets uncritically use categories of analysis like "sect" in research on ethnic politics, clientelism, and migration. However, communities' own understanding of Lebanese history and politics transcends narratives about sects and sectarianism, and "generating long-term, trust-based relationships was essential to getting past many interlocutors' 'stock responses' to researchers and journalists, particularly those who they believed had not bothered to learn history" (Ghosn and Parkinson 2019, 495). This demonstrates the value of working closely with stakeholders to take stock of knowledge in both research and in communities for developing new directions in scholarship. Other questions to consider include: What goals do researchers and community partners share? How are researchers' goals aligned with critical issues in the community? What resources do researchers and community partners have access to that each can benefit from? Thinking about these questions can help scholars delineate their own goals and actions, and clarify the relationship between researchers, the research, and stakeholders.

Second, scholars engaged in CER have to decide how and to what extent communities and stakeholders will shape research questions. This entails establishing the scope of their engagement with the community and the extent to which their research questions will align with, or be guided by, stakeholders' needs, interests, and goals. This includes considerations like: *Will the research questions be pre-specified? Will they emerge from, or change, as a result of engagement with communities and stakeholders? To what extent will they be guided by community needs or aspirations?* Decision-making on these issues is tied both to scholars' own priorities and constraints, and to those of research partners. For example, though we encourage scholars to involve stakeholders from early on, researchers often engage with communities more on research design and data collection, rather than in developing questions, often due to professional norms or resource constraints. Potential research partners themselves may have limited interest or bandwidth for helping develop research questions if scholars have not adequately built trust and established their *bona fides* in the community, or if research is not core to their own priorities, organizational mission, or competencies. That is why it is critical, when pursuing and developing partnerships, to build strong relationships and communicate and collaborate over what kind of costs and risks potential partners face, the extent to which they prefer to be involved, and what kinds of flexibility and reciprocity would make it possible for them to be involved at this stage (and every stage) of the process.

Third, when communities and stakeholders are involved in the process of shaping and refining questions, it is important to collaboratively examine questions such as: *What problems do stakeholders consider important and why? What knowledge do they already have about the topic? What remains unknown?* This process requires scholars to be both attuned to community research agendas, and, simultaneously, how these fit into or even unsettle academic lines of inquiry. Research collaborators should be able to share and substantively integrate their knowledge and analyses throughout the research process (Hale and Stephen 2013), which largely depends on the relevance of the initial research question. This also involves considering and outlining what the process of consultation or co-creation will look like institutionally. It often entails structured settings such as meetings, workshops, and other events with community members, partners, or stakeholders to discuss the set of guiding questions outlined above and establish expectations about the goals, timeline, and terms of community engagement for establishing research problems and questions. Overall, while the level of engagement can vary by context, researcher, and research partner, civically engaged projects will specify how and to what extent community input informs what problems or questions are considered important and researched.

Guiding Questions for Civically Engaged Research

Research Stage	Questions to Guide CER Projects
Research Partnerships	1. Is a civically engaged project the right fit? 2. Who are the potential research partners? 3. How will relationships with potential partners be developed? 4. What are the terms of engagement between the researcher and research partners? 5. How will collaboration be formalized?
Research Questions	1. What problems do stakeholders consider important and why? 2. What goals do researchers and community partners share? How are researchers' goals aligned with critical issues in the community? 3. How will community partners and other stakeholders shape research questions? 4. What will the process of consultation or co-creation look like? 5. What research agendas emerge from community priorities and how do these fit into, motivate, or unsettle existing academic inquiry?
Research Design and Data Collection	1. Will community partners and other stakeholders be engaged in research design and/or data collection? 2. How will community partners participate in decisions about, and help implement, different dimensions of design and/or data collection? 3. To what extent will aspects of research design and data collection be a result of, or change due to, this engagement? 4. What will the mechanisms for consultation, collaboration, and accountability in research design and/or implementation be?
Data Analysis and Interpretation	1. Will community partners and other stakeholders participate in data analysis, synthesis, and interpretation? 2. How will they participate in data analysis and interpretation? 3. How will data and findings be returned to communities so they can have direct access to outputs and benefits of the study?
Communicating Results and Significance	1. How will community perspectives be taken into account in sharing data and findings? 2. How will research products be made accessible and useful for communities? 3. Will the researcher engage with community partners and other stakeholders to communicate results? 4. How will community partners and other stakeholders participate in creating and/or disseminating research outputs? 5. In what other ways can the benefits of research be localized?

Research design and data collection

After establishing guiding research questions, scholars develop an appropriate research design and collect data, taking into consideration the merits and biases of various methods or modes of data collection and analysis. In the conventional research life-cycle, scholars often design research and come into the data collection process with the project pre-specified, or even pre-registered, though this varies by epistemological and methodological commitments. They solicit help from survey firms, research assistants, enumerators, and translators to facilitate the "extraction of data" (Asiamah, Awal, and MacLean 2021; Corduneanu-Huci, Dorsch, and Maarek 2022). As Firchow and Gellman (2021, 525) note, this form of design and data collection "often is conducted at the expense of rather than to benefit the people whose lives are being documented and analyzed." That is why CER calls for greater involvement of communities in research design and data collection. This can strengthen study design and implementation, while addressing some of the power asymmetries and inequities inherent to research (Firchow and Gellman 2021; Herman et al. 2022). Here, a civically engaged approach entails three sets of considerations and decisions beyond the traditional research process.

First, scholars must establish the nature of engagement. This involves deciding whether research design and/or data collection will be undertaken solely by researchers or not. It then involves deciding the model of engagement on these aspects of a project. This is a continuum ranging from informing community partners about the project to consulting with them on research design or data collection strategies and piloting, involving them in developing and seeking feedback on specific aspects of research design and data collection, collaborating with them on each aspect of design and data collection (including decision-making and implementation), to strong partnership structures, with community representatives on research teams at all levels (including as co-investigators) and jointly conducted research.

These decisions are contingent on the goals and resources of researchers and their potential research partners. For instance, when scholars work with well-resourced stakeholders or adopt models for strong and equitable compensation, there may be greater capacity and resources in the partnership for significant collaboration in all aspects of design and implementation. At the same time, it is important not to simply assume that less intensive collaborative models are best when there is lesser access to resources and compensation. Less-resourced stakeholders often prioritize or have an interest in intensive collaboration as well. They possess resources and competencies beyond funding that are deeply valuable, and they may want to engage in capacity-building through research collaboration. The stakes of having a data collection and analysis plan are perhaps the greatest when working with vulnerable populations or populations that have been extracted from, exploited, or surveilled, including Indigenous peoples, incarcerated persons, vulnerable migrants and refugees, and more. Scholars cannot assume that communities with whom the research is conducted are devoid of data principles, nor are they devoid of data analysis skillsets, as we discuss in the next section. It is therefore imperative to build trust, reciprocity, and open communication to make suitable decisions about research design and implementation. Though the nature of engagement ultimately varies, strong civically engaged projects will seek substantive consultation and collaboration with stakeholders on some or all aspects of design and data collection.

Second, scholars have to decide, in collaboration with research partners, the specific dimensions of design and data collection that communities will be involved in and take steps to implement these plans. These include decisions about whether and how community partners will participate in decisions about and help implement: methods used; projected timelines; selection of research sites, participants or respondents, and questions or items; plans for data collection, including piloting, recruitment, administration of interviews or questionnaires, and training and staffing of research teams; plans for data documentation and storage; and ethical principles and redlines, which include and go beyond issues covered by ethics review boards. These decisions are imbricated with methodological guidelines, best practices, and professional norms in research institutions and disciplines, but researchers have much to gain by combining community expertise with their traditional methodological expertise. For example, in a study about Latino civic infrastructure, Bautista-Chavez changed her data collection plan after co-hosting an ethics workshop with a community partner, in which the community partner drew on decades of organizing under repressive political environments to explain their concerns that a geo-coded dataset of organizational events could facilitate targeting, surveillance, or violence against community leaders (see Bautista-Chavez, Juarez, and Whiting, 2024). Ultimately, scholars should strive to be transparent about, and communicate their position on, whether and to what extent various aspects of research design and data collection will realistically be a result of, or change due to, engagement with community members and stakeholders.

One of the benefits of CER is the opportunity to develop and apply non-traditional and innovative research strategies, such as recruiting members of the community as researchers, offering them training on research techniques, and accompanying them in the collection of their own data. Such engagement can provide researchers with context and guidance – given a community's needs, language and culture, and history (including history with research) – to make informed decisions about what data is needed to answer their question, where to conduct research to get at certain information, who to recruit/sample and how, what questions can and cannot be asked, how teams should be staffed, trained, and managed to accomplish research goals, and ethical boundaries that might otherwise be difficult for scholars to discern.

For example, in research in the Pacific Lowlands of Colombia, collaborative training empowered research partners to become peer interviewers. Participants in the training collectively assessed the research goals, scrutinized, refined, and approved research questions and tools, and engaged in mock interviews before going into their own communities to conduct interviews (Velasco 2023). Another example is Firchow's (2018) research on peace and peacebuilding in Colombia and Uganda, which brought communities directly into measurement, monitoring, and data collection for locally meaningful indicators of post-conflict peace. These efforts to center Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK) have grown into the Everyday Peace Indicators (Firchow and Ginty 2017), in which measures of peace are sourced from focus group discussions, indicator verification meetings with community members, and other collaborative methods. These indicators have advanced research, and are being applied practically by international organizations such as the U.S. Institute of Peace and the U.S. Agency for International

Development (Levy and Firchow 2021). Flores (2021) writes that the ITK methodology can be further extended to uncover understandings of democracy and democratic governance at the community level through Everyday Democracy Indicators. This can improve the study of democracy, which is currently largely dominated by standardized definitions and measures developed by Western researchers.

Third, scholars should institutionalize these processes of engagement. This involves mechanisms for consultation, collaboration, and accountability, with the scope, frequency, and goals of collaboration and communication on research design or data collection clearly delineated. This varies depending on the model of engagement between researchers and community members. It can include leadership partnerships, where community members are co-principal investigators or co-authors. This is unusual in political science, but a more common practice in public health. It can involve community advisory boards, steering committees, workgroups, or regular meetings, workshops, and debriefing sessions. It may also include process measures through which partnership dynamics are evaluated and documented. Asiamah, Awal, and MacLean (2021), for instance, describe a study on public goods provision and environmental politics in Ghana which included "concentric rings of stakeholders" in project leadership and management, encompassing local scholars and affiliates, study participants, and community members. They helped select sites and participants, identify the appropriate way of compensating participants, and conceptualize and measure key concepts and variables in contextually-sensitive ways. Through institutionalized community collaboration, they found that local understandings of key concepts like "political participation" and "climate change" diverged from how they are conventionally defined in academic literature, which informed how interview and focus group instruments were subsequently designed and fielded.

Data analysis and interpretation

Next, scholars analyze data. Data analysis and interpretation is an individual-level skill set honed by years of substantive and methodological training, which contributes to scholars' power in the research process. That is why analysis is usually one of the last areas opened up to civic engagement and community participation (Cashman et al. 2008; Jackson 2008). However, building collaboration into data analysis and interpretation can play an important role in generating more rigorous research, more nuanced, accurate, and complete accounts of the phenomena being studied, and new insights and agenda-setting (Binet et al. 2019; Cashman et al. 2008; Dodson, Piatelli, and Schmalzbauer 2007; Han and Stenhouse 2014; Lassiter 2005; Spears Johnson, Kraemer Diaz, and Arcury 2016). Involving communities and stakeholders in this aspect of research includes two important sets of decisions.

First, scholars must decide, in collaboration with communities, how research partners can participate in data analysis, synthesis, and interpretation. The highest level of participation draws on expertise in the community to examine the data collected. This can entail leveraging community members' existing skill sets (e.g., language skills) to prepare and analyze the data. It can also involve overviewing the key data analysis tasks associated with the project, providing training in some of these tasks, and bringing community members into decision-making and action on processes like data cleaning, coding, transcribing, developing codebooks or data dictionaries, and other related tasks. It is important to note that this is a resource-intensive approach, and may not be feasible depending on the interests, resources, and competencies of community members and the technical expertise required to analyze the data. There may also be concerns about identifiability and privacy if community partners are working directly with raw data.

At the same time, stakeholders may be eager to collaborate using their existing knowledge or to work with researchers to enhance specific skills or competencies through capacity-building. A related approach can thus be to engage with stakeholders to identify, describe, and explain key themes or patterns after preliminary data cleaning and analysis. With their experience and knowledge of the research setting, communities play a critical role in analyzing and contextualizing results. This can be done through meetings, focus groups, small group discussions, or workshops where raw data or basic descriptive results summarized in memos, briefs, worksheets, visualizations, or verbal descriptions are made available to community members. They work with the research team to read, discuss, reflect on, and make sense of the trends or patterns in the data, guided by questions like: *What do you think these results mean? What is your interpretation? Are there findings you did not expect? How do you make sense of them?* When necessary, researchers can provide information on how to read certain types of data, such as statistical tables (Cashman et al. 2008).

This allows scholars to identify patterns in the data and develop their interpretation of them in conjunction with stakeholders. This can proceed as an iterative and ongoing process of engagement, as scholars shift between design, data collection, and analysis throughout the research lifecycle (Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2022). For example, studying relations between non-Roma and marginalized Roma communities in Eastern Europe through trust game experiments, Bracic (2018) writes about scholars who want to compare discriminatory behaviors among Roma and non-Roma participants. However, conversations with Roma interlocutors highlighted that interpreting data on Roma behavior with the non-Roma as the baseline would be inappropriate because the circumstances under which the Roma are making decisions in trust games with financial stakes is radically different from that of non-Romas. This generates behavioral differences between groups that are directly linked to structural, historical inequality, but would be missed if data were interpreted as simply the product of individual behavior in the experimental setting.

In another example, Dodson, Piatelli, and Schmalzbauer (2007, 831–832) describe a research project with Central American migrants in the United States, during which interlocutors recounted fears of deportation, discrimination, exploitation, and violence, and at the same time, said that "there are no obstacles [in America]. There's only opportunity." When analyzing interview data collaboratively, community members suggested that these contradictory claims were a product of the fears immigrants were experiencing of "looking anti-American" in the aftermath of 9/11: "people are being deported around here … It's scary to speak critically of America to an American." The authors note that this gave meaning to patterns in their data and dramatically shifted their analysis.

A second, important element of data analysis in CER projects is thinking about how scholars will give data and findings back to the communities in collaboration with whom it is generated or collected. A group of Colombian researchers known as La Rosca de Investigación y Acción Social, credited with originating Participatory Action Research, conceptualize this as systematic devolution, involving "the creation of educational vehicles geared to their audience's capabilities and needs" (Rappaport 2020, 133). An important part of power-sharing in the research process is acknowledging how the input, expertise, and experiences of community members and other stakeholders shaped the research. To start, this involves including them in discussions of what research outputs will look like and collaborate on developing these outputs. Several ways to communicate results while ensuring data and benefits from research are accessible and beneficial to local communities are discussed below.

Results, significance, and social relevance

The final step of the research process is communicating results, their implications, and social relevance. The product is usually a manuscript or set of manuscripts, in article or book form. Increasingly, scholars are also publishing through a range of media outlets. Civically engaged research involves additional considerations related to the outcomes and benefits of research. This is important because communities that are the subject of research frequently report frustration with researchers who do not share data and results with them (Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman 2010). Academic research whose outputs do not reach, or directly contribute to, communities can be experienced as extractive and burdensome (Omata 2021). In her work with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, as one example, Parkinson (2022, 436) highlights encounters where "if the project wasn't able to offer anything to immediately improve people's situations, they weren't willing to help."

As standards of scientific knowledge production move toward open-access data (Elman, Kapiszewski, and Lupia 2018), these issues are additionally embedded in ongoing discussions about the rights of communities to control and access their data (see Carroll et al. 2019). In Indigenous communities, there is a growing infrastructure, largely outside of the social sciences, to support the rights of people to own their data. These include the Ethics Guide on Research and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge from the Assembly of First Nations (2011), the Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Australia (AIATSIS 2020), and a growing network of centers, institutes, and research collectives like Arizona State University's Labriola National American Indian Data Center. These efforts are concerned with the rights of nations to govern the collection, ownership, and application of their own data, derived from tribes' inherent right to govern their peoples, lands, and resources (Hird et al. 2023). While embedded in the particular histories of Indigenous groups (Hird et al. 2023), these data governance principles also have wider applicability, raising ethical and institutional issues regarding access to the products and benefits of research across the varied communities in which researchers work.

For these reasons, it is first important that scholars conducting CER consult and collaborate with community members and other stakeholders to determine matters of data ownership and establish what the outputs of research will be. The kinds of research products most beneficial and accessible to stakeholders will depend on their capacity and needs. Moreover, it is not always possible or desirable to attach material or immediate policy benefits to a research endeavor, and that is why scholars should discuss collaboratively and transparently what research outputs meet the goals and constraints of both community partners and researchers. This includes taking research partners' perspectives on the nature and timeline of data dissemination into account (Gellman 2021). It also involves sharing data and research outputs with partners in an accessible manner (for instance, in the appropriate language or in an open access format) as documentation of their contributions and support. Scholars can further aim to disseminate findings more widely through community outreach (presentations to community organizations or policymakers, talks, events, or discussions in community spaces or meetings). Manuscripts can be complemented by other kinds of research products, like reports, briefs, newspaper articles, newsletters, flyers, videos, podcasts, websites, training and discussion guides, and media campaigns, which reach relevant stakeholders more quickly and in modes that they can easily share with other community members, civic organizations, or governments.

Related to these is the task of establishing whether and how community partners or members will participate in creating and developing these outputs. Depending on the capacity and goals of the partners, this can vary from no involvement to discussion, consultation, and review of the general structure, framing, venues, timelines, or drafts of research outputs, to direct collaboration on presentations or writing. Gellman (2021), for instance, recounts a collaboration with Native American communities in Northern California to study youth identity and civic and political participation. This entailed sharing preliminary drafts of research outputs for review by the institutions of the Yurok Tribe. Notably, timelines for such cooperation are shaped by the capabilities and institutional infrastructure available to the collaborators, and it is important for scholars to be mindful of these differences in the distribution of priorities and resources when undertaking such collaboration (Gellman 2021). Stakeholders can also co-create research outputs through presentations where community partners themselves present and amplify the research and their involvement in the process in community forums or groups. It can include formats like data walks, where community partners, members, and other stakeholders jointly review data and findings in small groups, interpret what they mean, and work using their respective expertise to understand how it aligns with their personal experiences and collective problems in the community (Murray, Falkenburger, and Saxena 2015).

Finally, scholars should consider other, broader ways in which the benefits of research can be made directly applicable and accessible to local communities, particularly when consultation or direct collaboration over research outputs is not possible or useful to communities. This can happen when community partners do not have an interest or the time and resources to consult or collaborate on research products, when it is difficult or dangerous for them to be linked publicly to certain research products, and other situations. However, it is still crucial for scholars to evaluate how they can meaningfully localize benefits arising from the research process and researcher-participant interactions to communities. This encompasses various types of linkage and exchange that need to be discussed when developing partnerships and subsequently throughout the collaboration. They are contingent on what researchers can do, what communities need, and how community members assess the value researchers bring, including sharing knowledge, expertise, networks, and other kinds of resources with community partners and stakeholders.

For example, Bautista-Chavez has leveraged a new database of Latino organizations working across the United States to partner with two research centers in two large public universities to, in turn, invest in the capacities of these organizations (see Bautista-Chavez, Juarez, and Whiting, in this issue). Scholars working with refugees often write asylum letters or testify at asylum hearings. Researchers might mobilize their skills or staff to conduct program-relevant or organization-relevant work for community partners and organizations. Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman (2010) provided training and program support to women's organizations in eight countries while collecting data in refugee communities. In conducting research with non-profits serving sex workers in the United States, Majic (2017) writes about volunteering, writing grants, and completing additional work like archiving projects for these organizations. Price (2020) matches students with gender justice-focused community organizations to work on projects based on organizational needs. Based on her research on Native American youth and education, Gellman (2021) facilitated workshops with faculty and district administrators to discuss recommendations. Mitra has facilitated refugee interlocutors' access to legal aid and other kinds of services in difficult political environments and undertakes *pro bono* research work for immigrant-serving organizations. In their research on political socialization and engagement in minority communities in the United States, Weaver, Prowse, and Piston (2019) worked with local organizers and artists to reach community members. Their "portals" also became hubs of community activity, hosting town hall discussions, art, and performances. CER projects, then, can invigorate new academic debates while at the same time, mobilize the insights and resources of scholars to facilitate the goals and meet the needs of communities.

Conclusion

CER is part of a larger set of methodologies that name and attempt to correct for longstanding and normalized extraction of knowledge and expertise from communities. As we and others recount, political science has lagged behind in developing professional norms and institutional practices that center, compensate, and credit this expertise. However, recent initiatives like the American Political Science Association's (APSA) Institute for Civically Engaged Research (ICER) demonstrate that there is growing momentum to invest in and recognize the contributions of civically engaged scholarship.

Civically engaged research must be understood as a methodology (how we do research) guided by an epistemology (how we know what we know) that intervenes into dominant modes of academic knowledge production by centering communities and other stakeholders outside academia and leveraging research for the improved self-governance of communities. To realize the principles of CER, however, requires revisiting, interrogating, and remapping the research lifecycle. To build on the growing momentum to conduct civically engaged scholarship, we offer this article as a guide for scholars interested in developing a CER project and a resource that can supplement methodological training and planning, both in the classroom and in the field. By unpacking the dilemmas, decisions, and possibilities involved in civically engaged research, this guide helps researchers and collaborators as they negotiate complex social and political landscapes and positionalities, and choose paths that contribute to stronger research practices. Our guide is not prescriptive, but rather makes visible the decisions scholars may face across the research process, provides an adaptable menu of options that can be used as a starting point to shape projects, and offers a scaffold scholars can use to both guide decisions and document their choices.

We conclude here by discussing the current and potential impacts of CER on the larger discipline of political science. First, we discuss potential interventions into ongoing and burgeoning debates about politics, power, and governance. Second, we speak to three distinct audiences – reviewers, academic departments, grant agencies – with the purpose of explaining how they too can draw on this guide to better evaluate, support, and invest in CER projects and partnerships.

How political science benefits from CER

Across political science, research agendas are flourishing around the topics of democracy and democratic backsliding, the efficacy and legitimacy of political institutions, new modes of mobilization and political participation, and compounding environmental, political, social, and economic crises. CER, we posit, is a methodology that can bring great benefits to these lines of inquiry. By working directly with communities, CER provides political scientists with the opportunity to theorize and empirically examine such complex political phenomena with the full force of both on-the-ground and academic expertise. Research that is produced through these partnerships has the potential to motivate or unsettle existing academic inquiry, forging new pathways for both academic and policy debates. Furthermore, while the timescales of CER projects can be more lengthy due to ethical, procedural, bureaucratic, and contractual processes, these projects can also be at the forefront of scholarship that is in-tune with recent and unfolding political events or political processes. Recent examples include Martinez-Medina's collaboration with the community-driven Oregon COVID-19 Farmworker Study (2022), and the work of a team of Central American and Mexican asylum seekers and academics (Unidos et al. 2023).

CER projects can enhance theoretical, methodological, and empirical rigor because they include, by design, additional points of scrutiny from communities and other stakeholders, which allows them to strengthen the research design and research process, while holding scholars and scholarly products accountable to standards of accuracy and completeness set not only by other scholars, but by the sensitive, nuanced, relevant, timely, and socially and politically informed standards of non-academic research partners. As we discussed above, community partners can be involved in one, all, or various stages of the research process. We underscore that when community partners are involved, the rigor of scholarship is enhanced. In fact, these processes are akin to traditional academic peer review processes, whereby subject-matter experts within the academy are tasked with scrutinizing scholarship for accuracy, completeness, and innovation. By bringing community into the evaluation, CER projects have the potential to build out a community peer review process.

In addition to rigor, scholars increasingly seek and are rewarded for research impact. While the number of citations still forms the basis of how impact is measured and rewarded in academia, scholars conducting CER are poised to make an impact across multiple audiences. Because these projects are more likely to be directly meaningful to stakeholders, have buy-in from the community, and circulate in the networks where key actors and opportunities for change operate, civically engaged approaches can amplify the direct impact of research on public issues. For example, in one case, the Wet'suwet'en First Nation succeeded in halting the construction of an oil pipeline as engaged researchers accompanied them in establishing their own protocols for gaining consent and access to the community (Temper 2019). Additional dimensions of impact include amplifying findings to relevant stakeholders and addressing a range of political and social dynamics that have undermined trust in traditional institutions of research and higher education (Driscoll and Schuster 2017; Ghosn and Parkinson 2019; Kovach 2021; Omata 2021).

Fostering institutional support for CER

Even as CER is poised to invigorate scholarly debates and motivate real-world change, multiple factors can institutionally disincentivize such projects. As this methodological guide has made clear, civically engaged projects are resource-intensive. Across institutions, ranks, and positions, scholars face myriad costs when undertaking these projects. Junior scholars or scholars in precarious positions who do not have robust research funds or course releases, in particular, must carefully weigh these factors in their decisions to take on such a project. Accordingly, we underscore the need for institutionalized support from reviewers, academic departments, grant agencies for scholars, communities, and their CER projects.

First, reviewers may be hesitant to review civically engaged projects because of their lack of familiarity with such projects and the nascent formalization of CER in political science. In conducting a peer review of such projects, scholars must evaluate the rigor, ethics, merits, and contributions of the study. We hope that our guide not only helps scholars develop and document their collaborative research process step-by-step, but also that potential reviewers can use this to evaluate the ethical, conceptual, and evaluative choices made to produce rigorous research.

Second, academic department chairs and university deans may be new to evaluating a scholarly record that includes CER projects. As our methodological guide demonstrates, CER projects can generate scholarship of the highest quality while also producing a set of benefits beyond academia. It is crucial for department chairs, deans, and provosts to note that civically engaged research is not service (Dobbs et al. 2021). Mis-categorizing CER as "service," which is often perceived as secondary in academic careers, is detrimental not only to individual researchers but to CER's collective mission to intervene in scholarly standards and generate high-quality research.

Documents or resources created for the use of research partners (e.g., guides, maps, videos, the memory of the research project, and so on) can count toward publications when under review for promotion. Furthermore, scholars can also be encouraged to implement and complete CER projects if they are granted the requisite institutional support, which includes time, financial or grant staff support, and strategic planning with department chairs or senior faculty to ensure CER projects can be designed to maximize benefits to both community and the scholar. In short, scholars should not be relegated to designing and implementing these projects in an isolated environment. Just as researchers workshop plans for field research, CER projects, too, can be workshopped, inviting broader academic communities to engage in the development and design of the project, although, as we discuss, the ultimate decisions lie between scholars and research partners. CER projects in political science are, in many ways, still in their infancy. Therefore, existing working groups and research collectives can do more to motivate or support scholars within their communities that are already engaged in CER or would like to take their first steps toward it.

Third, grant agencies, funders, and donors can also play a role in supporting CER projects. While there are increasing opportunities for funding civically engaged work from organizations such as the National Science Foundation, nonprofit and grant-making organizations, and professional associations like APSA, funders can further promote and facilitate CER projects by recognizing civic engagement as an important dimension of innovation in grant-making, and by building in review criteria that require scholars to communicate how a project benefits the communities they are working in. Ultimately, civically engaged research is a resource-intensive process requiring a range of considerations and skills both among scholars and research partners. However, those who undertake such work not only emerge with novel insights, an innovative research agenda, and an expanded set of skills, but also actively contribute to the improved governance of social and political problems.

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Appendix

Template A

Memorandum of Understanding
This Memorandum of Understanding made on and effective from
the __________ day of ___________________, ____
is created between
[research partner]
and
[researcher or research institution]

I. Background

- Describe the parties, including who is part of them (who this MOU covers)
- Points of Contact for each organization and their contact information and/or full list of participants with contact people specified (specified contact people ease communication efforts during project work)
- Describe the project

II. Shared Goals and Objectives

The Parties have entered into a collaborative project to work toward the following goals and objectives:

- Goals for the researcher
- Goals for the research partner

- [Outline how the project will be made relevant and beneficial to the research partners and community.] The research objectives, questions, and/or methods must not only reflect academic interests but strive to ensure that the research is also relevant, beneficial, and valuable to local communities.
- [scope and mode of collaboration between researchers and research partners on project design, implementation, and analysis] Interested members of the community and community agencies will be provided opportunities to participate meaningfully in the research process, where the scope and mode of participation is proposed and accepted by both groups.
- Data ownership and other aspects of dissemination

III. Process

Roles, duties, and responsibilities of each party:

Institutional Framework for Collaboration

- Outline institutional framework for collaboration, such as committees, regular meetings, or workgroups.
- Parties will meet a minimum of [number of times per time period].
- [The PI or project coordinator or rotating member drawn from either party] will provide each member of the research team with notes of meetings, including decisions made, within [a reasonable time frame].
- Specify how decisions will be made [whether the collaboration uses a consensus model, majority vote, or another system to reach decisions].

Project Design

- Outline roles of each party and/or roles of individuals or groups within those parties, including commitments of labor, time, deliverables, and plans for project close-out.
- Outline processes or frameworks used to safeguard ethics, privacy, and confidentiality, and elicit informed consent.
- Outline collaboration over research products, how expertise of research partners will be acknowledged, and how the results of research will be returned to the community.
- Outline how partnership dynamics will be assessed, such as opportunities for feedback or discussion.

Data

Informed Consent.

- The (purpose of) research project will be explained to all stakeholders (participants and other research stakeholders) in a language that is appropriate to the community.
- It is requested that each participating research partner have at least one participating member complete a certification of training for human subjects research through the academic partner's institution, whether it is an Internal Review Board (IRB), journalism ethics, etc. This is not to give academic ethics priority, but to ensure that all parties are familiar with the terms and processes academics are minimally accountable for.
- The research team will explain potential risks and benefits in a manner that is appropriate to the research partner. This includes not only risks of the research to individual participants but also to the wider community and third parties.

- Since researchers cannot always anticipate risks of research to the wider community, particularly if they are not familiar with the community, at least one member of the research subject population must be involved to speak to the risks of particular types of research done in that area.
  - The informed consent of individual community members must be secured in a way appropriate to the project before they participate in research, including any restrictions the individual community members might wish to attach to the use of this information. Written informed consent is evidenced by the signature of the individual community member on the Participant Consent Form. In cases where written forms of consent are not appropriate, another method of acknowledging consent with clear indications of when it has been obtained will be decided on by both parties.

Confidentiality.

- Unless the respondent waives confidentiality for specified uses, all researchers, both academic and research partners, shall hold as privileged and confidential all information that might identify a respondent with his or her responses. We shall also not disclose or use the names of respondents for non-research purposes unless the respondent grants us permission to do so.
- All data will be used in a form that will make it impossible to determine the identity of the individual responses. That is, responses will not be integrated, analyzed, or reported in any way in which the confidentiality of the responses is not absolutely guaranteed.

Data Ownership.

- Parties should discuss what counts as data in this partnership (field notes, surveys, interviews, photographs, etc.) and what it means to own, hold, or steward data and the responsibilities this entails.
- Originals of all audio/visual recordings (in digital and/or analog formats) and copies of all notes, transcripts, photographs, and other records of the research will be kept by [List parties].
- [List parties] will retain a copy of the full data file and store it [specify mode of storage], de-identified appropriately.
- Any site owning data, or participating in collecting data for the project, must review its participation and role through their internal IRB and/or other indication of ethical protocols decided by group members.
- All participating sites/partners will receive a summary of the data even if their involvement is minimal and they are not entitled to the full data.
- Parties will outline rules for gaining or granting access to the data by third parties not listed in this MOU.

Community and Academic Validity

- Researchers and partners will collaborate on research products [specify scope and mode of collaboration].
- During the life of the project, submitted research papers and abstracts for presentations will be circulated to all parties via lead participants at least [timeframe] and preferably [timeframe] prior to their submission for review and comment.
- Products for community release and presentation will be circulated for comments to community and academic partners, providing a [time frame] turn around time. These comments can be held in a public forum such as a community meeting, and/or in writing.

Dissemination

- Communication strategies to present aggregate data to research partners and the community at large shall be described with in-progress updates where appropriate.
- Dissemination of the research results will be the responsibility of all project participants, and academic and research partners will have opportunities for presentations and publications.
- Research projects will produce, interpret, and disseminate the products of research, including publications, conference papers, and other educational and scholarly materials, to research partners in an accessible manner (including open access).
- In addition to academic papers, accessible formats of research findings will be produced and distributed, including [specify research products].

Publication

These guidelines can be used for traditional academic publications as well as other formats for disseminating research findings:

- Due to the fundamentally collaborative nature of this partnership, (1) *All* participants who made this research possible through conception, design, analysis, collection, provision or interpretation of data will be listed as an author, even when these contributions do not include writing; and (2) authors must approve the final draft and be able to defend the published work.
- -or- Criteria outlined by Huth (1986) will be used as guidelines for determining authorship of publication (both academic and non-academic) based on the findings of the research.
    - The criteria recommend that: (1) all authors must make a substantial contribution to the conception, design, analysis, or interpretation of data, where "substantial" is defined by parties ahead of time and updated as needed; (2) authors must be involved in writing and revising the manuscript for intellectual content; and (3) authors must approve the final draft and be able to defend the published work. Those who have made other contributions to the work (e.g. data collection without interpretation, etc.) or only parts of the above criteria should be credited in the acknowledgements, but not receive authorship.
- -and/or- the publication contains a section outlining what each author contributed, acknowledging that "authorship" can include the collection and interpretation of information as well as actual writing up of results.
- The explicit permission of an individual or organization must be sought prior to acknowledging their contribution in a paper or presentation.
- Parties should agree on publication venues together.

IV. Communication

- Include any standard or shared terminology, including consistent ways that partners are identified in written and verbal communication.
- Consider and decide on processes for reaching out to – or receiving requests from – third parties, such as the press, other groups and institutions, interested members of the public, etc.
- Consider and decide on general communications policies (social media policies, communications calendar, branding, graphic standards, etc. as applicable)
- Include any information flow practices that will help guide how data, ideas, and needs are shared between groups.

V. Compensation

- Include budget, if appropriate. Note that when money exchanges hands, a contract, rather than an MoU, is likely more appropriate.
- Both parties shall contribute in-kind, including the following: [list]
  - [List partner] will handle all financial transactions on behalf of the collaboration. The following [reports, procedures, or financial controls] are required of [the partner]
  - Expenses inclusive of [list types] will be handled by [outline procedure & responsibilities]

VI. Risk

- The MOU should address key areas of risk for the collaboration.
- Since researchers cannot always anticipate risks of research to the wider community, particularly if they are not familiar with the community, at least one member of the research subject population must be involved to speak to the risks of particular types of research done in that area.

VII. Terms of Agreement

- This agreement may be amended at any time by signature approval of the parties' signatories or their respective designees.
- The term of this Memorandum of Understanding is from ____________________ to ____________________ and may be renewed. The Parties will review this agreement [annually/timeframe].

VIII. Termination

- In case of a dispute arising from the implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding, the Parties shall exhaust alternative dispute resolution models, such as negotiation and mediation, before employing other forms of dispute resolution, such as arbitration or adjudication. Parties shall act in good faith to resolve the dispute.
- Any Party may withdraw at any time from this MOU by transmitting a signed statement to that effect to the other Parties. This MOU and the partnership created thereby will be considered terminated 30 days from the date the non-withdrawing Party receives the notice of withdrawal from the withdrawing Party.

IX.#Execution and Approval

- The persons executing this MOU on behalf of their respective entities hereby represent and warrant that they have the right, power, legal capacity, and appropriate authority to enter into this MOU on behalf of the entity for which they sign.

Signatures __________________
Date __________________
(Adapted from the Superstorm Research Lab)