Summary of MSU Stakeholder Listening Sessions for Restarting Community Engaged Research

In August 2020, the Community Engaged Research Workgroup of the Outreach and Engagement Subcommittee of the MSU COVID-19 Reopening Campus Task Force held four stakeholder listening sessions to gather input and recommendations from community partners and community liaisons about how researchers could safely, ethically, and equitably resume on-site research with communities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The information gathered during these sessions informed MSU's plans for resuming on-site research activities. The following individuals, either representing or in regular contact with a wide range of external MSU stakeholder groups and communities, participated in the listening sessions:

- **Christine Histed**, Tri-County Office on Aging, Lansing, Michigan
- **Monica Villarreal, MSW**, Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Flint, Michigan; Community organizer for environmental justice; MSU faculty of social work
- **Ron Bates, PhD**, Director, MSU Extension Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute; MSU professor of animal science
- **Renee V. Wallace**, Executive Director, Food Plus Detroit; Chief Doer, Doers Consulting Alliance, Detroit, Michigan
- **Laura Vander Molen, DO**, Medical Director, Exalta Health, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- **Madiha Tariq, MPH**, Deputy Director, ACCESS Community Health and Research Center, Dearborn, Michigan
- **Evelyn Esparza**, Interim Executive Director, Hispanic Center of West Michigan, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- **Renee Canady, PhD**, Chief Executive Officer, Michigan Public Health Institute, Okemos, Michigan
- **Lisa Martin, MPH**, (Ojibwe), Tribal Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program Director, Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc., Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan
- **Reverend Phiwa Langeni**, Founder, Salus Center, Lansing, Michigan

The online listening sessions were organized much like focus groups, with the added rule that participants could only speak again after all other participants had an opportunity to speak. Participants were asked to respond to four questions. A summary of the participants' responses to those questions is provided below, organized by question and stakeholder group/community.

Q1. What specific challenges are your communities experiencing [during the COVID 19 pandemic] that MSU researchers should be sensitive to?	
COMMUNITY	**CONSIDERATIONS**
Seniors in Michigan	• Online environments are challenging for seniors; they often do not have computers or internet access • Seniors are at very high-risk for COVID-19 • The pandemic has increased social isolation • Barriers to research participation include lack of mobility, hearing loss, and visual impairment
Residents of Flint, Michigan	• Impacts of racism on health and community violence have been highlighted by the pandemic • Basic needs are not being met, including access to affordable and safe water • Residents are wary of the COVID vaccine due to a history of medical abuse
Rural farming communities in Michigan	• It is important to understand where farmers and migrant workers are in the planting-harvesting cycle when trying to engage them in research • Farmers are experiencing significant loss of income due to market disruptions • Understanding of and concerns about pandemic vary considerably from county to county depending on infection rates
Detroit, Benton Harbor, Flint residents	• There is difficulty with physical distancing due to multigenerational households • Social isolation is increasing • There are increasing stress levels from spending lots of time with family members • Access to food is mixed; some places have so much free food flooding in that there is a challenge with getting it to people before it spoils
Latinx communities in the Grand Rapids area	• Language and culture are barriers to making sure people get accurate information about COVID • Multigenerational homes and renters in spare rooms creates fear about reporting COVID symptoms (may violate lease terms) • Patients do not have job security and do not get paid if they have to take time off work due to testing positive for COVID; this makes people not want to get tested • It is difficult to find childcare • There are challenges with food access • Requests for assistance to meet basic needs have gone up quite a bit • In terms of research engagement, MSU should consider: (a) Language and culture first; (b) Create the right space for our community to participate—our community frequently experiences lack of access to technology; and (c) Forms of communication—who you are targeting and how
Arab Americans in the Detroit metropolitan area	• Contact tracing is hard with the younger population because our community does not trust the government • Any type of emergency or catastrophe is re-traumatizing to people who have experienced catastrophe in their homelands • Language and literacy are big issues, especially related to getting accurate information about COVID • Safety guidelines are not being clearly communicated and the sources are not trusted; we need to educate communities, not police them
Various communities through Michigan	• Nonprofits are struggling with being able to pay the bills and be present to provide services • Small businesses of color did not get supplemental funds when other businesses did

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COMMUNITY	**CONSIDERATIONS**
Tribal communities in Michigan	• There has been a major loss of jobs; important sources of tribal income (e.g., casinos) have closed • Negative impact on mental health, well-being and behavioral health are being experienced; this is on top of communities already suffering from the legacy of historical trauma • Michigan tribal communities are impacted by COVID but are also quite resilient; tribes have been proactive with COVID testing and contact tracing
LGBTQ people in the Lansing Metropolitan area	• Ongoing issue of access to safe and respectful healthcare for LGBTQ has been worsened by COVID; transphobia is rampant in the healthcare system; we should not have to educate medical providers about health issues related to being transgender—they should know • Being transgender and having another marginalized status (e.g., transgender and Black) only compounds the disparity; every step away from the "norm" (i.e., white, heterosexual, cisgender) makes things harder • Job insecurity is an issue—you can still be fired for being LGBTQ • Housing insecurity is an issue—access to gender-specified shelters is difficult for transgender people • Anti-trans violence is an issue—the average life span of a transgender woman of color is 30 years

Q2. What are ways in which MSU researchers could be most helpful to your communities at this time?	
COMMUNITY	**CONSIDERATIONS**
Seniors	• Seniors are fearful to leave their homes or have visitors; it may not be possible to engage seniors in face-to-face research at this time
Flint Residents	• Research must be transparent and have direct, tangible, short-term benefits for communities • It is important to residents to be heard and be able to tell their stories • Research focusing on the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 is a priority • There is a preference for researchers who have an established connection to the community • There are good opportunities for research in Flint right now
Rural farming communities	• "Traditional" agriculture research that involves access to farm animals or fields and involves very little human contact is helpful • Research related to agricultural product market disruptions and farmer income loss is helpful • Research related to farmer stress is helpful • Research that has a direct, immediate benefit is helpful • Research that contributes to advocacy or public policy is helpful
Detroit, Benton Harbor, Flint residents	• Research needs to be highly participatory and engaging • There is potential to connect the immediate needs with long-term goals • This is an opportunity to build trust and relationships by doing things together • Research must be closer to the ground, more intimate, closer to the lived experiences of people • Researchers need to lead with their humanity • If we do not act now, we will miss a big window of opportunity

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COMMUNITY	**CONSIDERATIONS**
Latinx	• Research should be directly related to the pandemic or meet immediate needs of communities • This could be a time to get our populations connected in research at MSU, to build the trust and connections for long-term.
Arab Americans	• Arab American community rates for COVID-19 are extremely underreported because Arab Americans are categorized as White; MSU has the experience and capacity to collect and disaggregate the data
Various	• How do researchers get totally selfless with this? • Address things that MSU research could do to question, challenge, push back and get information out regarding the vaccine
Tribal communities	• Reciprocity is important; the value of the research to the community has to be equal to or greater than the value to the researcher • Research at this time needs to have fairly immediate benefits to the community • Research should be developed with communities
LGBTQ	• The way researchers interact with the LGBTQ community is infuriating; it feels zoo-like • Participants need to be adequately compensated; a $20 gift card does not adequately compensate someone for telling their stories of trauma and being re-traumatized in the process • Researchers come, collect their data, and nothing ever changes • Researchers come back, year after year, asking us the same questions; learn the questions to stop repeating! • They ask about the problems, but never about why they exist; they need to dig deeper and get to the specifics of why • The research needs to humanize, not categorize—to make things measurable, researchers put people in categories; use open-ended questions: What is your gender identity? • Researchers need to do their homework before they show up (e.g., pronouns 101); show your investment by showing you've done your homework; we shouldn't have to educate you; don't ask us questions you could easily find the answers to • Don't keep asking about our oppression; help us see what has changed

Q3. What conditions would need to be met for members of your community to feel safe collaborating with researchers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?	
COMMUNITY	**CONSIDERATIONS**
Seniors	• Many seniors will not be comfortable interacting with researchers, even if everyone is wearing masks and maintaining six feet of distance • Only one-on-one contact is acceptable • Settings that resemble a doctor's office are perceived as safer • There needs to be clear communication ahead of time about what to expect

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COMMUNITY	**CONSIDERATIONS**
Flint Residents	• Use a drive-through format; since the water crisis, residents have become comfortable with receiving goods and information in this manner • Work with faith-based organizations • Be transparent in the purpose and process of the research • Make sure the research is about something that matters to residents • Work with Flint's community-based ethics board (CBOP) • Work with trusted individuals in Flint
Rural farming communities	• Be cognizant of age demographics; farm communities tend to be older • Follow safety guidelines in the MSU Community Compact (e.g., face coverings, social distancing) • Social distancing may be difficult because older farmers have suffered hearing loss due to a lifetime of working with large machinery; consider using portable microphones and meeting outside • Following guidelines for size of gatherings—MSUE: <11
Detroit, Benton Harbor, Flint residents	• Be mindful of your travels prior to the meeting; where have you been? • Help communities prepare physical spaces • Make technology available to partners • Financially incentivize everyone in an equitable way that helps people participate
Latinx	• Limit the number of people involved in each activity • Allow for virtual participation • Do not exclude communities with higher rates of infection • Bring PPE supplies to communities • Help organizations with technology to support doing research virtually
Arab Americans	• Recognize the burden and toll that this pandemic has had on our community • Research incentives should be higher; people are giving precious time and risking their lives to meet with researchers • Can the university provide PPE to the organizations and individual participants? • This is the time when universities can take action and take community off the menu and include them at the table; there should be a prerequisite to have community partners and community members in research; this will build trust and strengthen the research
Various	• Follow CDC guidance: social distancing, washing hands, wearing masks, meeting outside, monitoring our symptoms • Making sure the questions you want to ask are the questions the community wants to ask—it's power sharing
Tribal communities	• Follow general safety protocols (e.g., CDC guidelines) • Different communities will have different requirements; one tribe stopped using Zoom for research because of security concerns • Do not completely exclude communities at high risk; develop alternative online approaches

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COMMUNITY	**CONSIDERATIONS**
LGBTQ	• Hold events in our communities • MSU students started Queering Medicine; hosted healthcare meet and greets with healthcare providers and potential patients; consider doing a researcher-community partner meet and greet • Acknowledge the harms that researchers have done to LGBTQ communities and own that • Ask: How can we do better? And **listen**

Q4. If community partners and MSU researchers were to jointly create an agreement on the conditions under which on-site research could occur, what would be the key elements of that agreement from your perspective?	
COMMUNITY	**CONSIDERATIONS**
Seniors	• It should be an agreement with senior facilities, not seniors • It should be a tool to come to a mutual understanding (i.e., an MOU)
Flint Residents	• Flint residents would be more nervous about coming onto the MSU campus than staying in Flint • Need to consider community context: rural vs. urban communities have different levels of risk • Clarify what people's expectations are for interactions • Consider the extent to which testing is available; in situations where testing is unavailable or the wait times for results are long, risk increases
Rural farming communities	• State expectations for the encounter ahead of time (PPE, sanitation, symptom check, etc.)
Tribal communities	• This is an opportunity to develop creative research that benefits communities; we always have to be innovative in our approaches to research with tribal communities; standard approaches do not work