



## About CERC

As a department of University Outreach and Engagement, the Community Evaluation and Research Center (CERC) acts as a hub for program evaluation activity across Michigan State University. CERC provides training in evaluation and community-based participatory research, and conducts formative (planning) and summative (outcome) evaluations.

## Services

### For Communities

Funders increasingly demand evidence of program outcomes. As a result, organizations need a way to sort out what parts of their programs work, why they are working, and how they can be improved. CERC can...

- Help you increase your organization's capacity by incorporating continuous learning mechanisms into your work flow
- Provide hands-on, experiential training in monitoring and evaluation techniques
- Facilitate program evaluation across the private, public, and nonprofit sectors
- Assist with grant writing to support community proposals

### For MSU Faculty and Staff

CERC can...

- Assist internal MSU units to develop their own capacity for evaluation and assessment
- Provide tools for examining the effectiveness of programs

## Approach

Through participatory community-based research and program evaluation, CERC addresses complex human, organizational, and social issues using a systems, development, and participatory approach.

### Systems

Systems theory is a way to understand the dynamic behavior of social and organizational systems. Most social issues are complex in nature, so when CERC researchers evaluate a program they look at the full range of factors (including history, geography, policy, environment, social context, and stakeholders) that may influence the program's intended outcomes for its clients.

### Development

Development presupposes a process of learning through experience—people learn by doing and improve with practice. For organizations that want to improve their programs, CERC promotes evidence-based practice—using data to improve future strategies—as a form of developmental learning. Toward this end, CERC provides practical, experiential training in monitoring and evaluation techniques.

### Participatory

Participatory approaches to community-based research have evolved as a result of the realization that the “expert knows best” approach to change is not very effective. A participatory approach assumes that all stakeholders have equal value in the partnership and equal decision-making control. If practiced genuinely, this process can be educational for both researchers and community partners. Emphasis is placed on participation, capacity building, and empowerment.



A CERC evaluation team typically includes a multidisciplinary group of faculty, members of community organizations, and CERC evaluators. CERC brings community groups and researchers together to work on mutually agreed upon social concerns.

## Partners

Across local, state, and national arenas, CERC partners with:

- Nonprofit organizations
- Educational institutions
- Government agencies
- Health organizations
- Foundations
- Other universities

# Examples of CERC Projects



## Character Education in Genesee County

The Genesee Intermediate School District has been funded to coordinate character education strategies and initiatives for the ten public districts, providing oversight and guidance for each district to design a local initiative. Local district projects are mandated to take into consideration the views of parents, students, students with disabilities, and other members of the community, including members of private and nonprofit organizations, in the design and implementation of the character education programs. To evaluate this initiative, we are implementing a time series, quasi-experimental design to:

- Track all project activities provided to each student
- Collect information on project implementation
- Collect information concerning student outcomes

### MSU partners

Community Evaluation and Research Center

### Community partners

Genesee Intermediate School District

### Funded by

U.S. Department of Education



## Michigan Evaluation of School-Based Health Centers (MESH)

More than 60 school-linked health centers provide a range of primary, preventative, and early intervention services to more than 100,000 children at all grade levels throughout Michigan. MESH is the first statewide evaluation to assess the impact of these centers on the children they serve. The project is studying the impact of school-based health centers on the health outcomes, healthcare costs, and school attendance of children in public schools throughout Michigan.

### MSU partners

Community Evaluation and Research Center; University-Community Partnerships

### Community partners

Michigan Department of Community Health; School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan; Henry Ford Health System; Oakwood Health Care System; University of Michigan Health System; Health Delivery, Inc.; Center for Family Health; county health departments in Ingham, Chippewa, and Van Buren/Cass counties; and 18 Michigan public schools from Sault Ste. Marie to Jackson

### Funded by

Michigan Department of Community Health



## Creating Entrepreneurial Communities

CERC is evaluating the Creating Entrepreneurial Communities initiative, a program that provides intensive training and coaching to help community teams develop entrepreneurship and improve economic vitality in their communities. Nine community teams from throughout Michigan participated in the Energizing Entrepreneurs training program conducted by the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) Center for Rural Entrepreneurship and are beginning to conduct community capacity assessments.

### MSU partners

Community Evaluation and Research Center; MSU Product Center; MSU Museum; MSU Extension; Center for Community and Economic Development; University Outreach and Engagement; Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education; Department of Psychology

### Community partners

Small Business Technology and Development Center; Edward Lowe Foundation; Michigan Economic Development Corporation; Michigan Department of History, Arts, and Libraries; Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, Rural Policy Research Institute; nine Michigan communities

### Funded by

MSU University Outreach and Engagement

To view a comprehensive list of our projects, please visit [outreach.msu.edu/cerc/projects.asp](http://outreach.msu.edu/cerc/projects.asp).

## Staff

CERC researchers have years of experience working in communities on community-identified social concerns. They have conducted research and program evaluations across the business, government, and nonprofit sectors. They are skilled at translating research data into practical recommendations that organizations can use to develop successful initiatives, build capacity to increase responsiveness to stakeholders, and improve sustainability and funding potential.

## Contact

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