

# UNIVERSITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

## Tips for Equitable Partnerships

### WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

University faculty and staff may engage in community-engaged work for a variety of reasons, including to address critical societal issues and contribute to the public good, enrich scholarship, create a more interactive learning experience for students and prepare them to be engaged citizens, to name a few.

If you are interested in pursuing community-engaged activities with community partners, please keep the following tips in mind.

- **Build trust and nurture relationships:** Community partnerships require time to develop. Researchers should learn about the community's history, assets, and needs before approaching them with a proposal. Many community partners want to know that researchers are committed to advancing the community's goals and interests before agreeing to a working relationship.
- **Exercise cultural humility:** Before moving forward, it is important to engage in self-reflection and learn about cultural differences with the intention of honoring the community's beliefs, values, and customs. Some communities have experienced a great deal of discrimination and hardship and are particularly distrustful of researchers. In these situations, it is best to first consult with leaders or trusted individuals rather than approach community members directly.
- **Follow the community's lead:** Historically, some researchers have conducted research in communities based on their own agendas. Instead, research questions should be based on community-identified priorities. This ensures that the findings are relevant to communities.

### WHAT ARE COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ACTIVITIES?

Community-engaged activities span all disciplines, are done in collaboration with community partners, and encompass a wide range of scholarly activities including research, creative activity, teaching and learning, and service and practice, for the purpose of creating positive societal change and enriching scholarship.

- **Build reciprocal partnerships:** Both university and community partners come into the relationship with expertise. Researchers should come to the partnership willing to learn from community members and collaborate to create opportunities for community participation in the research process and ensure shared decision-making.
- **Work toward mutual benefit:** Community-engaged work should benefit both university and community partners.
- **Share and discuss research findings:** University-community partnerships are formed to create knowledge through collaborative research, which can be used to help solve community-identified issues.
- **Seek funding:** Funding is important for the success of research or other scholarly activities and may be needed to support both the academic researchers and community members. It is important to compensate community partners for their time and to account for this in your budget.



University Outreach  
and Engagement  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Kellogg Center, Room 93  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1022  
Phone: (517) 353-8977  
E-mail: [engage@msu.edu](mailto:engage@msu.edu)

[engage.msu.edu](https://engage.msu.edu)