Putting Equity into PRACTICE: Researcher Checklist

This document aims to discuss some of the common pitfalls and challenges in doing research with community partners. Each area represents different activities and values to reflect on and review in order to increase your success in doing this research. The list is a work in progress, as many of these regulations or requirements change over time. Bringing clear communication, a commitment to advocacy, a learning mindset and being proactive in mitigating barriers can help you to keep **CALM** and carry on doing equity in research **PRACTICE!**

Keep CALM…

Communicate - share transparently with your community partner so you can set realistic expectations.
Advocate - share the barriers and solutions with leadership.
Learn - find your departmental resources and investigate how these factors will influence your project.
Mitigate - identify and reduce all barriers you can ahead of time.

And carry on doing equity in research PRACTICE!

Process Transparency & Timelines - The practice of demystifying institutional workflows by establishing clear, realistic expectations for administrative milestones and potential delays.
Relational & Reciprocal - Prioritizing both genuine relationships with community partners and ensuring timely, fair compensation for their expertise.
Accountability & Adaptability - Using pre-planning to identify knowledge gaps while remaining creative and flexible when problems arise.
Capacity Building - Ensuring the research project leaves the community partner with increased skills, resources, or infrastructure.
Tenacious **I**mpact - Maintaining a focus on getting the work done—and doing it well—for everyone involved.
Convenient & Equitable access - Proactively removing technical and administrative barriers that prevent non-university members from participating fully and without undue burden.
Empowered AdvocacyUsing your role to impact and change institutional policies and practices that hinder community partners.

Process Transparency & Timelines

The practice of demystifying institutional workflows by establishing clear, realistic expectations for administrative milestones and potential delays.

☐ Have you clarified how long a specific process will take at the University so you can relay an accurate timeline to your partner?

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

IRB approval often takes longer than anticipated depending on study complexity and the various reviews required.

Average Timeline by Study Classification

Exempt	19 days
Expedited	30 days
Full Committee	74 days

- **Ancillary Reviews:** Certain reviews must take place **prior** to the IRB review, which can add additional time to your overall approval timeline.
- *Examples:* Cancer-related projects require **CPRC review**; studies involving EPIC, Fairview patients, or Fairview clinics require **Fairview review**.

To help streamline your process and get ahead of potential delays, check in with an IRB analyst during their scheduled office hours.

- **IRB Office Hours:** Analysts provide weekly Zoom consultations to address questions regarding current protocols or general procedural inquiries. Since analyst availability and meeting links are subject to change, please consult the HRPP Staff Directory to verify the current schedule.

Financial Matters

Talk to your administrative support staff early and often! Getting them involved at the start of a project prevents delays down the road.

Standard Processing Times

Action	Est. Timeline	Prerequisites & Details
New vendor set-up	2-4 Weeks	Begins after submitting the vendor's W-9 along with the New Vendor Forms.
Invoice Turnaround	30 days	Checks are issued for delivery 30 days from the invoice date or check request date.
Check mailing schedule	M, W, F	Checks are mailed on a rolling basis every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to meet the 30-day schedule.

Exceptions & Potential Delays: Contract Approvals Take Time

- If your project requires a contract and you are not using standard UMN terms, legal review and authorized signatures can take multiple months.
  - **Important**: These contract reviews must be fully complete *before* any of the regular finance timelines (like vendor setup or payment processing) can even start.
- **Sponsored Grant Funds**
  - Using sponsored grant funds adds an extra **1–2 business days** to standard timelines for most transactions. This is because sponsored funds require additional clearance from certified finance approvers to ensure compliance.

Hiring and Human Resources

Whether bringing someone on as a consultant or a full employee, this process takes time. Talk with your HR team early to plan for your staffing needs.

Expectation Management: Have you communicated realistically with your community partner about potential hiring delays?

- **Payment/Invoices:** Establish clear timelines and protocols for how invoices will be submitted, processed, and paid to ensure community partners are compensated on time.
- **Contracts & MOUs:** Ensure all contracts, Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), and grants—including complex subcontracts, if applicable—are drafted and approved.
- **Onboarding Frameworks:** Set up necessary consultant agreements, formal hiring workflows, and Business Associate Agreements (BAAs) if protected health information is involved.

Relational & Reciprocal

Prioritizing both genuine relationships with community partners and ensuring timely, fair compensation for their expertise.

- [ ] Are you investing in the relationship itself, rather than just the transactional outputs of the research?
- [ ] Have you established a plan for timely compensation that respects the partner's time and institutional constraints?
- [ ] Have you considered compensating the community partner for brainstorming/planning for the project/grant even before the funds come through?
- [ ] Have you discussed the collection of Social Security Numbers for payments exceeding $2000 to address potential privacy and safety concerns within vulnerable communities?
- [ ] Are you using a standardized participant compensation framework to ensure stipends reflect the actual time burden?
- [ ] Are you compensating community partners for the time spent on mandatory training to avoid placing an unfair financial burden on them?
- [ ] Are you sharing your experiences with department leadership that can help advocate for the unique needs of community-engaged research? (i.e. IRB, HIPCO, HR, finance, HST)

Accountability & Adaptability

Using pre-planning to identify knowledge gaps while remaining creative and flexible when problems arise.

- ☐ Have you identified potential regulatory hurdles (like IRB or HIPCO) before they stall the project?
- ☐ What are your plans for data sharing and/or device or software access for community partners?
- ☐ Do you have contingency plans if conflicts arise with your original timeline?

Capacity Building

Ensuring the research project leaves the community partner with increased skills, resources, or infrastructure.

- ☐ Does the project include training or resource sharing that strengthens the partner's ability to engage in future research independently?
- ☐ Are there any resources that can be provided to community partners post-projects?
- ☐ Offer to do mandatory training together, talking through the curriculum and learning together.
- ☐ Offer to complete timesheets together.
- ☐ Provide invoice examples and templates.

Tenacious Impact

Maintaining a focus on getting the work done—and doing it well—for everyone involved.

- [ ] Have you addressed requirements, such as CITI training or the need for a UMN account to access Data, which community partners can experience as inaccessible?

- [ ] Have you considered disseminating research via non-traditional routes like community-facing infographics? Have you referenced the PHDR's Dissemination Toolkit?

- [ ] Are you providing necessary tools, such as HST-compliant devices, to partners who are not university employees?

- [ ] Are you documenting "successful solutions and workarounds" for challenges like HIPAA to help future researchers succeed?

Convenient & Equitable access

Proactively removing technical and administrative barriers that prevent non-university members from participating fully and without undue burden.

- [ ] Have you secured "HST compliant devices" for community partners who are not university employees but need to handle sensitive data?

- [ ] Have you addressed the power imbalance of "data ownership" by creating a way for partners to access data describing their own neighborhoods without requiring an x500 account?

- [ ] Have you explored creating a "POI" (Person of Interest) account to provide partners access to the University's secure infrastructure?

- [ ] Have you thought about how to best communicate with your partners? Research Partnership Checklist

Empowered Advocacy

Using your role to impact and change institutional policies and practices that hinder community partners.

- ☐ Are you documenting specific hurdles to advocate for shifting internal UMN policies?
- ☐ How are you using your "equity lens" to support not just your own work, but the work of other colleagues facing similar barriers?
- ☐ Have you advocated for access to data or study systems for partners who do not have a standard UMN account?
- ☐ Are you pushing for the IRB to include a "community-engaged research" flag in ETHOS so that these protocols are reviewed by analysts with specific community-engaged research expertise?

Additional Resources

https://sites.google.com/umn.edu/dfmchresearch/home/community-engaged-research?authuser=1