Principles of Partnership: An Engagement Assessment Tool

This tool* is designed to guide stakeholders, investigators, and other contributors throughout a collaborative research process. These engagement steps, processes, and metrics can help develop partnerships and meet project objectives.

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<th>ELEMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT</th>
<th>KEY STEPS</th>
<th>PROCESS AND PRODUCTS</th>
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<td><strong>RESEARCH PLANNING, DESIGN, AND PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
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<td>Collaborative and Respectful Leadership</td>
<td>Establish shared values, vision, and decision-making processes from the beginning of the project</td>
<td>• Identify stakeholders who can serve in key personnel roles (e.g., Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigator, etc.)&lt;br&gt;• Work collaboratively to develop a policy for stakeholder involvement and decision-making authority&lt;br&gt;• Balance the research team’s identified goals with priorities and benefits identified by stakeholders&lt;br&gt;• Discuss potential barriers and research limitations with stakeholders and refine research question/aims, priorities, and plan accordingly&lt;br&gt;• Establish standard operating procedures (SOPs) for stakeholder involvement and processes for conflict resolution</td>
<td>• Policy for involving stakeholders (Y/N)&lt;br&gt;• Guidelines/SOPs for stakeholder involvement (Y/N)&lt;br&gt;• Stakeholders in key personnel roles (Y/N)&lt;br&gt;• Number and percent of stakeholders in network leadership positions who have decision-making authority, by stakeholder type&lt;br&gt;• Stakeholder-reported satisfaction with execution of SOPs and conflict resolution processes</td>
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<td>Actionable, Evidence-Driven Engagement</td>
<td>Clear understanding of stakeholders’ expertise, strengths, and roles, and fair compensation for their time</td>
<td>• Develop memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlining role, commitment, and expectations throughout the project&lt;br&gt;• Use fair compensation standards to decide on payment and outline all compensation processes and expectations throughout the project</td>
<td>• Number of signed MOUs&lt;br&gt;• Percent of overall project budget dedicated to stakeholder engagement and leadership&lt;br&gt;• Official, documented organizational payment policy for remunerating stakeholders (Y/N)&lt;br&gt;• Documentation of variation in remuneration by stakeholder type (e.g. community member, clinician, etc.) (Y/N)</td>
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| Transparency and Communication | Develop a common language among all stakeholders and study team | • Develop and use common definitions with all stakeholders
• Provide common language definition document (see PCORnet engagement definitions)
• Agree to a specific and standard level of literacy | • Collaboratively-developed definitions document (Y/N)
• Adherence to agreed upon literacy level on all materials and documents. Use plain language software to assess (e.g., readable.io or VisibleThread Readability) |
| Transparency and Communication | Include periodic opportunities for all stakeholders to provide feedback and revisit project priorities | • Develop a plan to collect and incorporate stakeholder feedback on research priorities at regular intervals (e.g. every 3 months, every 6 months, annually, etc.)
• Use a survey to collect feedback and assess stakeholder satisfaction with involvement across the project
• Implement processes to assess fidelity to plan; how well are these processes being implemented? Are the processes reviewed and revised throughout the study? | • Stakeholders report satisfaction in involvement in the research process and feel adequately informed about the project activities and results
• Stakeholders report that the research was valuable to them and that they have contributed to setting and revising project priorities |
| People-Centered, Iterative Processes | Recognize that availability and priorities change over time, and support process for new stakeholder onboarding | • Routinely check-in with participants
• Support graceful exits
• Develop a plan to assess need for new partners over time | • Number of check-ins with stakeholders (over project period)
• Stakeholders report satisfaction with participation over time
• Implementation of plan to assess for new partners (Y/N) |
| Transparency and Communication | Use digital platforms and tools that are relevant to study participants | • Determine with stakeholders which technologies are most relevant for the population of interest for this study
• Align data collection methods with preferred technologies | • Stakeholder input on use of technology for data collection (Y/N)
• Recruitment rate
• Retention rate |
| Actionable, Evidence-Driven Engagement | Stakeholders are involved in data analysis/interpretations and are informed of findings in a timely manner | • Incorporate opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback on data analysis and key outcomes of interest
• Create a lay version of the analysis plan to allow for meaningful stakeholder feedback
• Develop and implement a plan for feedback on data use
• Develop and implement a plan that involves and informs all study stakeholders and partners of results | • Lay version of data analysis plan for easy comprehension by all stakeholders
• Feedback from stakeholders integrated into analysis plan
• Preliminary and final results shared with stakeholders prior to publication |
| People-Centered, Iterative Processes | Conduct engagement quality improvement and evaluation | • Develop a comprehensive plan for quality improvement (QI) and evaluation of engagement activities
• Explore stakeholder perspectives on the engagement process itself
• Allocate budget to engagement QI and evaluation activities | • QI/evaluation plan and budget in place and executed (Y/N)
• Number and percent of stakeholders who report feeling satisfied with their participation and/or influential in study |
| Evidence-Driven Engagement | • Share engagement methods and learnings back with the community | decisions (e.g., regarding study question, protocol decisions, recruitment and dissemination strategies) • Number of abstracts and/or publications on methods used to engage stakeholders |
| DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS | |||
| Transparency and Communication People-Centered, Iterative Processes | Disseminate preliminary and final results through reports, manuscripts, and presentations to both scientific and community audiences | • Co-develop and implement a dissemination plan • Include stakeholders as authors on publications • Create opportunities for stakeholder-directed publications • Distribute results to interested communities and stakeholders using non-traditional channels and methods • Allow for stakeholder-determined methods and channels for dissemination (e.g. through a paid stakeholder-directed dissemination workgroup) • Involve stakeholders in decisions about future research opportunities | • Execution of co-developed dissemination plan • Participant/stakeholder-directed publication(s) (Y/N) • Percent of abstracts with at least one stakeholder co-author • Percent of publications, peer reviewed, non-peer reviewed (e.g., white paper or issue brief), with at least one stakeholder co-author • Stakeholder direction for future research resulting from the study (Y/N) |
| ALL PHASES | |||
| Collaborative and Respectful Leadership | Provide opportunities for all stakeholders to find value or benefit from involvement in the project (e.g., learning opportunities, increased leadership capacity, skill building, training, etc.) | • Work collaboratively to determine benefits of participation outside of compensation (e.g. training, networking, educational opportunities, etc.) • Support stakeholders in pursuing these opportunities | • Number and percent of stakeholders with participant-centered outcomes research training • Stakeholders report satisfaction with their participation |
| Collaborative and Respectful Leadership | Value differences of contributing stakeholders and diversity among team members and create ongoing opportunities for meaningful participation of diverse stakeholders in meetings and activities | • Create teams that reflect the partnering communities, the population to be studied, and diversity in research leadership • Develop a policy on diversity and hard-to-reach populations • Set participation expectations at the beginning of the project • Routinely assess: o Does design account for populations of interest? o Are relevant stakeholders providing input at every phase? • Accommodate stakeholders who are not available during standard work hours • Distribute meeting minutes- including action items and decisions made- to all team members | • Adherence to diversity policy (Y/N) • Stakeholder and study team demographics (gender, race, sexual orientation, and stakeholder type) • Percent of study team meetings involving stakeholders (# of meetings with stakeholder participation each month/total # of study team meetings each month) • Stakeholders report satisfaction with participation in meetings and activities |
| Transparency and Communication | Open communication and opportunities for listening among all stakeholders and study team | • Allow team members to share experiences (potentially with an anonymous sharing forum, if preferred)  
• Evaluate processes after the study to assess adherence to the principles  
• Distribute stakeholder surveys throughout | • Stakeholders report satisfaction with participation and group dynamics  
• Stakeholders report satisfaction with opportunities to share feedback |

| Transparency and Communication | Cultural humility present in all activities and interactions | • Address cultural humility in engagement plan  
• Offer cultural humility trainings for study team  
• Collect relevant community input on cultural considerations  
• Routinely ask the following questions:  
  o Who have we included?  
  o Who has experienced barriers to inclusion?  
  o Who has not been included but should be? | • Key personnel trained in cultural humility  
• Cultural humility consideration in engagement plan  
• Stakeholders report satisfaction with cultural humility and sensitivity |

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*This was originally adapted from a tool provided by the University of Kansas Medical Center for Frontiers: The Heartland Institute for Clinical and Translational Research # UL1TR000001 (formerly #UL1RR033179)*

The Engagement Committee developed the following resources to be used with this assessment tool:
1. PCORnet Engagement Definitions
2. Elements for Effective Engagement
3. Diversity and Inclusion in PCORnet: Need and Recommendations
4. Recommended PCORnet Engagement Metrics