URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for University/Organization - Example Deliverable

This is what was found by [Insert Pod Name] at [University/Organization] on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

Pods may have members from a range of career stages and involvement in the development and execution of research projects, and pod members may have different experiences or different perspectives when responding to these questions. Consider this in the summary document and focus on capturing responses that are representative of the range in your pod.

- Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:
  - E.g. How many research projects were undertaken in countries or regions with communities of color, how many of those included meaningful interactions with those communities of color? Briefly describe one or more example projects to provide context for the following questions.

  Michael: I have not had any research projects working communities of color directly. But working in agricultural and dairy research I’m glad to have some interaction with community members and workers of color as largely agricultural workers and regions are carried by people of color. I want to quickly acknowledge that modern agricultural land in CA resides on traditional indegineous land and this research does not work with indigenous peoples or knowledge.

  Heather: Although I am not involved in any programs designed to exclusively interact with communities of color right now, I am involved in a program that works to introduce community college students in Southern California to geoscience and paleontology through the ACCESS Paleo program. Community college students are often overlooked in discussions about recruitment and diversity and inclusion even though community colleges historically serve underrepresented and under-supported student groups, including low income students and students of color. By targeting recruitment and retention efforts to include CC students, ACCESS paleo is working to create a more inclusive field for geoscience that lifts up a broader student group than those that start at 4 year institutions.

  Miranda: I do not have past experience working with communities of color, however some of my future water quality work may involve community outreach in rural, agricultural communities in California’s Central Valley, many of which are communities of color. This work will involve dispersing information on local water sources at risk of naturally occurring metal contamination and we are currently working on building a research directive with the communities prior to completing this work.

  Ben: I currently do not have any projects going that work directly with communities of color. I have however been a part of a non-profit organization called Guatemala Village Health (GVH) that does community health and medical based work in rural Guatemalan villages outside of Guatemala City for the past 10 years. They work directly with indiginous mayan populations and I will reflect on this as I feel the organization has done some of this very well and it is where I have the most experience on this topic. The organization works
directly with village leaders and healthcare workers in determining what issues and services that the individual communities prioritize and what they hope that the organization can do for them. This occurs via a meeting between GVH leaders and village leaders/council at the end of each visit (bi-annual recurring visits and clinics in about 10 - 12 different villages) to assess priorities/goals and establish a running dialogue between GVH and village leaders.

Adriana: I do not have any projects that interact with communities of color directly. However, I analyze samples that have been acquired by others from lands occupied by communities of color. For example, I am analyzing rocks that were gathered by Soviet researchers on the lands of Sakha and Yukaghir indigenous peoples of Siberia. For this project my mentor interacts with researchers from Russia who have access to samples, but I have no way of contacting anyone who was affected by the sample collection. I may also be starting a project on some rocks from Ghana, and my mentor is in touch with a Ghanian researcher who collected the samples.

● What worked well in these interactions?
  ○ E.g. Using local names for landmarks or features, adhering to restrictions and customs such as not scheduling outreach meetings/events during hunting season

Michael: Particularly I think the field workers really enjoy when they can communicate with the researchers and spanish and helps create a comforting environment. Also what always works well is knowing beforehand which areas of a field or farm are off limits and to respect boundaries as people are sometime skeptical of scientists. Also asking where are good sampling spots is small interaction but helps to use their knowledge of their region. Also respecting privacy like not referring to a specific farm name in publications or usign pictures.

Ben: I have never been a first hand witness to these meetings (usually I am still working in the clinic when they occur), but from my understanding what has worked well is to establish an open and respectful dialogue over years of interaction, where village leaders can voice their goals. The organization will then work with the village to try and meet those goals. I think that it also works well that they have identified village leaders who act as liasons between the village and the organizations Guatemala city headquarters, and that these meetings are biannual and recurring.

Miranda: None of this work has been completed yet, however we have recently used the Community Engagement Studio with UCR's Center for Health Disparities to help consult us on aspects of community outreach and involvement. Some of the aspects that they have expressed worked well in the past and which we will try to incorporate into our work are the following: bringing in community members toward the beginning of building a research question in order to keep it relevant, using existing organizations or people that the community is familiar with to build a dialogue, building presentations or materials that is easily translated into another language, and fairly compensating those that we work with.

Heather: This program has been successful in meeting the needs of CC students and recruiting eager future geoscientists. ACCESS paleo serves as an initial introduction to geoscience but also as a jumping off point for recruitment efforts into programs with
higher geoscience retention like A-STEP programs School of Rock and STEM Seas. These longer, more intensive programs are extremely effective at promoting interest in geoscience. For example, School of Rock is the reason that I am in geoscience today!

- What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?
  - E.g., We did not include priorities of local communities of color when developing our proposal, and to address this in the future we will include community member(s) in the early stages of proposal planning and writing as collaborators.
  - Michael: I think generally science questions are thought out before involving communities of color. This makes things less flexible for including other as collaborators. I think there is a lack of foresight in how environmental research impacts communities of color until the proposals are written or data is already being collected. In my research projects I always write about the intros and discussion how climate change will particularly affect communities of color but its never in the scope to do anything about it.
  - Ben: For the following three questions I reached out to Jennifer Hoock (co-founder of GVH) to guide the answers to these questions. Initially, meetings were held with the villages through the church and with religious leaders. Eventually, it was figured out that they needed to include the local government leaders from each of the villages otherwise followthrough was negatively impacted. Another big issue that they ran into was the language barrier between Spanish and Keq’chi. Where initially people had claimed to speak Spanish, over time GVH found that once the organization identified and began to work with Keq’chi translators the meetings became much more productive.
  - Heather: Right now, our labs are all online for the COVID 19 pandemic. Soon, they will be in-person, allowing for better communication and connection. We hope to lead field trips around Southern California so students can get hands-on geology experience as well once the pandemic has ended.
  - Miranda: Since none of this work has been done, I am not sure what has worked well or not yet. Future reflection will be needed as this work is completed.

- Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?
  - E.g., Work with and compensate community members to translate research results and outreach materials into local language, include acknowledgements in forthcoming publications and presentations
  - Heather: Making sure that students know how to apply to a 4-year, know what the requirements are for a geology or earth science major, and fostering more connections between CC students and graduate students/faculty would make this program even more effective at promoting interest and involvement in the geosciences.
  - Michael: Better outreach to the local community where my field sites are located into why we are doing research there, that we are scientists not state regulators, and that agricultural field research is important for climate change. In one of my projects I think a newly adopted management practice (land applying diary anaerobic digestion effluent) may increase ammonia emissions which may increase air pollution in an ag region that is mostly people of color and I think more can be done to highlight this. Also as a Carbon Neutrality fellow for UCR I think I can better incorporate how climate change and waste
management are important for communities of color. Send full manuscripts to land owners before publication and have them as co-authors rather than just acknowledgments.

Ben: One way in which GVH was able to improve on the projects already undertaken was to alter the format of presenting project goals. They transitioned to presenting a series of options that were doable, and let the village leaders choose which project they were most interested in/felt their community would benefit most from. They also learned that it was unwise to talk about plans that were in the works, and currently didn’t have a timeline for implementation. As a reflection, these relationships were primarily about building trust. Since GVH has continued to come back over the last 10 years, they have built trust and can plan for further out into the future than they were able to earlier in the relationship.

● Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?

   E.g., Additional support/funding for early planning process of projects to include forming productive and mutually beneficial connections with communities, establish a point of contact for interfacing with communities so as not to overwhelm with

   Michael: Funding in science proposals for outreach and creating outreach materials. Having a point of contact person. Funding in proposal for research for how the collected data impacts regions with communities of color. More people of color collecting data.

   Miranda: Panel or group of community organizations that can offer feedback to scientists directly; more incentives in the framework of academia (e.g. more funding for community outreach or the understanding that community engagement often requires more time); center at the university to offer support to teams that want to do community outreach which will make it more accessible; building environmental justice and indigenous knowledge into introductory curriculum

   Heather: Having more geo grad students who were previously CC students involved in this program would be helpful. Right now all of the grad students involved attended 4-year institutions, so it could help form stronger bonds and make more impactful impressions if some of the graduate students had been where the CC students are themselves.

   Ben: It would have been helpful to have access to translators who were local ambassadors, who were already trusted in the community, who could explain what the organization was doing and assisting in determining goals. One thing that was learned was that it was very helpful for the organization to be influenceable. As they talked to the communities they found that their goals needed to be shuffled and changed around based on the wants of the specific village, as well as realities and limitations. Also learned that communication needed to be adjusted to cultural norms and appropriate the level of education of the people that they were communicating with and presenting to. Otherwise this can be insulting. Lastly, they learned to be careful who collects the data, because the individual's level of education and standing within the village influenced the quality of data collected. They determined that the best quality information was able to be collected by the most highly educated people from the place where the work was being conducted.