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

This is what was found by Stony Brook URGE Pod at Stony Brook University on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

Outline
A. Audit of previous interactions with communities of color (CoC) at our organization.
B. What worked well in these interactions?
C. What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?
D. Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?
E. Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?
F. Are there any other policies we can implement or actions we can take to better work with communities of color?

A. Audit of previous interactions with communities of color (CoC) at our organization:

Fig. 1 Distribution of participant career stages (n = 15).
Fig. 2 Proportion of participants that have worked with CoC domestically and internationally (n = 15).

Fig. 3 The project stages that participants have worked with CoC (n = 7).

Fig. 4 Proportion of times that the local collaborators are acknowledged as authors for their work (n = 7).
Fig. 5 Proportion of times that students from the community are incorporated into the project \( (n = 7) \).

Fig. 6 Proportion of times that researchers educated themselves about the local politics, culture, social norms and/or colonial history in preparation of the project \( (n = 7) \).

Fig. 7 Proportion of times people felt they had adequate time to work with the community’s governance, custom and priorities \( (n = 7) \).
Fig. 8 Proportion of times findings were shared with the local community (n = 7).

Fig. 9 Proportion of times local communities were acknowledged in research results (n = 8).

Fig. 10 Proportion of times the community needs and concerns were incorporated into the project (n = 7).
**Fig. 11** Degree to which local communities were leveraged and compensated appropriately (n = 5).

**Fig. 12** Degree to which research questions and locations considered and prioritized community needs (n = 7).
**B. What worked well in these interactions?**

a. Taking the time to develop strong relationships and trust with the community at the beginning stages of the work and reevaluating this relationship throughout the work.

b. Being aware of the local context in which you work. Taking the time to learn about history, laws, social customs, culture and politics of the communities and region. Also, being aware of the historical working relationship between the communities and scientists, as well as their impressions of the scientific enterprise.

c. Thinking about how you can design your work to directly serve and benefit communities of color instead of thinking about how local communities fit into your work.

d. Coming from a place of humility and respect when working with communities of color.
e. Valuing and respecting the local/indigenous knowledge by taking the time necessary to learn, develop relations and interact with the local community outside of research activities.

f. Contacting local universities/educational institutions before engaging in research to learn about the area and communities we wish to work in and with.

g. Obtaining permissions and consent to work with the community. Respecting the time, boundaries, and bandwidth of contacts from communities of color. If they do not wish to be involved for any reason, respect that.

h. Training and on-boarding programs for students and researchers preparing to work with communities of color.

i. Hiring and working with people from the local community. Providing adequate credit and compensation for their labor.

j. Incorporating communities of color into all aspects of the research, including traditionally non-scientific aspects (e.g., videography, journalism).

C. What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?

a. Ignoring local communities of color in the places we work. To address this, we should acknowledge and build relationships with the local communities of color at all stages of a research project.

b. Many of our members have no experience working with communities of color, in part because their research is on locations not currently inhabited by communities of color or humans at all (e.g., National Parks, National Forests, the ocean, outer space). In such cases, researchers could include land acknowledgements in presentations and publications; involve communities of color in the research, especially those that once occupied the land or rely on its resources; and report the research findings to communities of interest.

c. Discounting the local knowledge (e.g., religious, oral histories, cosmology) because it was not derived the same way knowledge is produced in the scientific enterprise. We should instead be open and respect indigenous knowledge, challenge our own ways of understanding and work towards integrating diverse forms of knowledge.

d. Conducting resource extraction research that only considers the interests of the researchers and ignores its environmental impact on communities. Instead, researchers should consider the needs communicated by the community and structure projects that last beyond the involvement of the outside researchers. In other words, form sustainable partnerships that will have lasting benefits to the community’s self-identified needs (e.g., jobs, natural resources, education).

e. Exploiting the local communities for our research by not considering their needs and not compensating them for their knowledge and time. To address this, we should
leverage research resources to appropriately compensate community members monetarily or through other means at their request, such as helping meet the community’s educational goals. We recognize that local interest in or support for research may not be directly aligned with stated project goals.

f. Waiting until the end of the project development or completion to involve partners from communities of color does not work well because it is a sign of tokenization and doesn’t allow them to be true partners with a say in each step of the scientific process. Future work should involve community members from the conception of the project to play equitable roles in research questions, proposal writing, budgeting, data collection, analyses, interpretation, and application of the work. This involves time, communication, and consistency to build trust. As Dr. Patricia Cochran said, researchers should be prepared to share or relinquish their role as PI.

D. Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?
   a. Strengthen recruitment efforts at many levels. At the ‘entry’ level, target recruitment of BIPOC individuals to consider research and academics as a career. Before (if possible) and during the active research phase recruit BIPOC participants at any level to work directly on the project. And finally, engage local community members to collaborate and inform the project during all stages of the project. One strategy for achieving this would be to develop relationships with minority serving institutions.
   b. If you are working on short-term projects, work with collaborators that have established relationships with the local community.
   c. Self examine your positionality and check your bias before working with communities of color. Connect and communicate with allied projects and those that came beforehand to learn what did work, what did not work, and what needs to be improved.
   d. Establish and revise codes of conduct or course syllabi (these should not be rigid documents) to reflect best practices for working with communities of color.
   e. Researchers should make every possible effort to pay community members of color for their time and knowledge in collaborating, contributing, or consulting on a project. This could be through budgeted grant money, supplemental funding, or other awards and funds available within or outside the university.

E. Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?
   a. Clearer criteria or guidelines on what scale of involvement constitutes as working with communities of color.
   b. Guidelines for blending/consolidating local indigenous and western knowledge.
c. Education campaigns towards scientists to spread awareness about the importance of working with communities of color.

d. Clearer authorship and acknowledgement guidelines for when to recognize the labor provided by local communities.

e. A collection of books, articles, and other resources on the history, knowledge systems, and cultures of local Indigenous communities, to use in curricula or in preparation for research collaborations.

f. Trainings on best practices and pitfalls we should avoid when conducting research with communities of color.

F. Are there any other policies we can implement or actions we can take to better work with communities of color?

a. Petition scientific funding agencies (e.g., NSF, NASA) to 1) prevent discrimination against applications that allocate funding towards outreach and 2) create a section on grant applications that allows/requires researchers to describe how they plan on incorporating communities of color in grants applications and to appropriately budget for these goals. One way scientific funding agencies might be able to provide these funds is to develop partnerships with other funding agencies that support outreach work (e.g., USAID) and include this as a supplemental application.

b. Work with our university’s Community Relations Office to establish and facilitate relationships with the Shinnecock Indian Nation and other local communities of color.

c. Update graduate course requirements to allow or require graduate students to receive credit on policy-based courses that cover environmental justice matters so that the next generation of scientists are more aware of how they can better work with communities of color.

d. Provide funds that defray the costs of research facilities for researchers from minority-serving institutions or underrepresented researchers who have financial need.

e. SBU and its departments should implement ways to increase recruitment and retention of Indigenous scientists and scientists of color. As Dr. Sarah Aarons suggested, schools should support Indigenous scientists with startup, lab space, and salaries equal to those provided to non-indigenous faculty. Additionally, building meaningful relationships and projects with local communities takes time, and department tenure guidelines should consider the quality of relationships built with communities of color when examining publication quantity.

f. Institute support structures for communities of color within academia, including mentor networks, cultural resources and mental health resources.