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## **Deliverable - Policies for Working with Communities of Color**

This is what was found by the MEAS pod at NC State University on Policies for Working with Communities of Color, as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

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### **PART I: SUMMARY OF POD MEMBER PERSPECTIVES**

**If you are involved in research in communities of color, in the US or abroad, have you actively sought out local collaborators, liaisons, or guides? Why or why not?**

*8 responses*

Responses from pod members regarding research in communities of color ranged from those who (1) have never been involved, (2) have been involved in the past, but aren't currently, or (3) have been regularly involved. One pod member mentioned often working on indigenous land in Alaska, and their aim to form relationships and exchange knowledge with the landowners. The primary role for one pod member who noted being involved with these communities in the past, but not currently, was to seek out collaborations; however, this pod member was a student, and was therefore limited in what they could do on their own. Another pod member noted research with local tribes in the Arctic -- in particular the Aleut tribe on St. Paul Island -- to assess issues connected to algal toxins and shellfish poisoning, yet stated this part of the research was not done with proper preparation, and was more ad-hoc, guided by a postdoc at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. One pod member stated they had made connections with local community members for advice on water conditions, input on issues they were facing, and how they were dealing with larger issues, such as hurricane preparation. One pod member who is currently retired noted having done fieldwork in multiple states, and mentioned trespassing freely on private land earlier in their career, speaking with landowners only when necessary and/or convenient. As their career progressed, this pod member adopted a strategy of introducing themselves and the project at the beginning of the study to someone they deemed well-known and influential in the community, such as the sheriff or a long-time farmer. This same pod member noted that while some communities had been African American or Native American, they felt they had not treated those community members differently, but that URGE was helping them to see things differently. The few members who responded that they had not been involved in

research in communities of color were either a result of research in general being outside of the duties for their position, or that the question was otherwise not applicable to them.

**If yes, were they included in the early development and/or proposal of the project or research, or added at a later stage?**

*7 responses*

Roughly half of the responses from pod members were “no” or “not applicable”. Remaining responses ranged from that inclusion being more of an organic process, to a more formal one. For the response noting the more organic nature of including these communities, the pod member noted it was not a funded effort, but that it was followed by trying to build better connections. One pod member noted they frequently collaborate with an Alaska Native geochemist and try to include these communities as early as possible to help formulate research questions that would benefit the scientific community, as well as the community they were working in. Another pod member noted these communities were involved in the proposal writing from the beginning.

**Were any local collaborators included as authors on presentations and/or papers?**

*8 responses*

Half of the responses from pod members with either “no” or “not applicable”. One pod member responded with a “yes”, while another “yes” response indicated they always offer to include collaborators as authors, and if that offer is not accepted, they are sure to include them in the acknowledgments. Another response suggested that the research is finishing up, and that the local collaborator is a coauthor.

**If you are involved in research in communities of color, in the US or abroad, have you actively sought to include local students in your research? Why or why not?**

*7 responses*

Half of the responses from pod members were either “no” or “not applicable”. For one “no” response, the pod member indicated they were a student, and that their work didn’t lend itself to including local high school (or younger) students. Another “no” response mentioned they felt doing so might be inconvenient or impractical, but that they hadn’t seriously considered it. One “yes” response noted trying to do so, but with limited success; this pod member also mentioned that elders and community leaders were more likely to be involved, but that they were hoping to recruit students through ANSEP for future research. Another “yes” response mentioned hosting an undergraduate student from the UAF for the research project (who was funded through their undergraduate study), but noted that student was not a part of the tribal community they were primarily researching.

**Have you sought to build trust and form long-term connections and collaborations with local institutions in communities of color if your project is multi-year / ongoing? Why or why not?**

*7 responses*

Roughly half of the responses were either left blank, a “no”, or “not applicable”. For one “yes” response, the pod member also mentioned that to genuinely care about scientific research to answer and/or inform societal questions and issues, that it was pertinent to involve the community -- otherwise their fieldwork would be coming from a colonistic approach. Another “yes” response echoed that sentiment, stating that “it is extremely valuable to listen to concerns and questions to figure out where scientists and community members agree and disagree on perceived needs to create a better and more impactful science”. Another pod member noted they were currently discussing follow-up research, and were hoping to pursue a funding oppoq in collaboration with the Aleut community. One last “yes” response noted the NSF grant they’re working on is building a training program targeting locally elected groundwater managers in Nebraska; this pod member noted that while they not specifically seeking out communities of color, the localized nature of the elected officials may encompass communities of color.

**If yes, were previous negative interactions, whether from inside or outside of your organization, addressed in the plans for building these connections and trust?**

*7 responses*

Roughly half of the responses were either “unknown” or “not applicable”. One “yes” response mentioned starting a conversation with respect to scientist mistrust within the community, based on previous scientists either not involving the community, or a lack of follow-through. Another response from a pod member indicated they had reached out to other communities to set up the collection of preliminary data, but clearly missed the boat in not making the impression that they were just after the data. Another response mentioned many of the people in the community they’re working with have felt left out of management plans and felt disregarded by coastal managers. However, this pod member noted they have tried to show an eagerness to listen to their concerns and experiences, and value the local knowledge and input they have to share.

**Have you shared data and findings with the local/regional community in a way that is more accessible (for instance, translating into different languages)? Why or why not?**

*8 responses*

One pod member responded with a “no”, while two others answered with “not applicable”. One “yes” response noted they had done so through community forums. Another “yes” response noted they had done so via data and publications (in English), both of which were open access. This pod member also noted they had not translated, but that the universities they were working with were primarily English. Another “yes” response noted that preliminary data have been shared, and that they completed study will be as well. Another “yes” response noted their research would be shared with locally elected groundwater managers. One last pod member indicated they weren’t sure, but that they had shared radio stories and blog posts with a few local community members they often interact with.

**Have you educated yourself and your group/team about local politics, culture, customs, and knowledge, including the history of colonialism / settler colonialism in the region?**

**Why or why not?**

*8 responses*

Two responses indicated this question was “not applicable” to them based on their position. One pod member responded “yes” regarding local politics, culture, and knowledge, but “no” regarding the history of colonialism in the region, with said pod member indicating they weren’t aware of this history. Another pod member mentioned they had tried, but could do more, noting they had learned a lot from local students, given the community went through a lot of change while they were working with them (e.g. taking down statues of colonizers on campus). One pod member responded with a “yes”, mentioning that it was important to understand the history in order to understand the community; this pod member noted they try to stay informed, but that there is always more that can be learned. Another pod member mentioned being a part of the North Pacific Research Board research framework, and how they had begun to learn about the local issues in regard to climate change, the food web, subsidence, and harmful algal bloom impacts in the region.

**Was sufficient time allocated to the process of working within the community's governance, customs, and priorities?**

*7 responses*

Four of the pod members responded with “not applicable” to this question. Another pod member responded that they had not addressed this aspect sufficiently, and that more could be done. Two pod members responded with a “no”, with one of them indicating that the way in which the community connection was established did not support visiting and properly building upon that connection. However, this pod member noted over the past two years that they had learned more regarding community-driven resources and opportunities to connect, and planned to handle that process properly as they built upon some of their preliminary data.

**Is respecting culture and customs included as part of your code of conduct?**

*8 responses*

2 of the responses said “no”, 2 responses indicated the question was “not applicable” to them, and 4 indicated that they didn’t know if this was part of their code of conduct.

**Have you acknowledged local communities / Indigenous tribes in your research results?**

*8 responses*

One pod member responded with “not applicable”. One respondent simply indicated a “yes”, two other expanded upon that to note the specifics of who they had acknowledged, or indicated they would be acknowledging those communities. One pod member indicated their research results were not yet published. Three pod members responded with a “no” -- one of these pod

members expanded upon their answer to state this was primarily because they didn't know much about native history of the areas in which they worked, while another indicated the nature of their work was global, and that they have therefore not acknowledged any specific groups of people.

**Have you included local communities in your broader impacts in a meaningful way that builds the community's identified needs and concerns?**

*7 responses*

Two responses indicated "yes", but with one of those pod members indicating the communities were predominately white ranchers. Another response indicated there was an attempt to do so by their advisor, but that they were unaware of how well that worked out. One pod member indicated they weren't involved directly in research given their role is primarily in application development, but that they had participated in stakeholder engagement sessions with experts before, during, and after development of an application. Another pod member indicated they planned to for future funded efforts, while the remaining responses were a "no".

**Did these efforts leverage community members, and if so was that work compensated appropriately?**

*7 responses*

Most responses indicated that efforts were not funded / voluntary, with one pod member noting their aim to include healthy compensation in all grants moving forward.

**Have you considered and prioritized research questions and research locations based on needs of local communities, in addition to how impactful they are seen within academia?**

*7 responses*

One pod member indicated the question was "not applicable" to them, as they have no control over which research questions they are assigned to. One pod member responded with a "yes". Another responded that while their particular position did not involve research, the unit they work for were moving toward including members of local communities in upcoming research projects. Another pod member responded with a "no", but mentioned they were retroactively considering this as they integrate and share the implications of their research. All remaining responses were left blank.

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## **PART II: PLANS FOR AN IMPROVED PROCESS**

- We ultimately need to transition from working "in" communities (transient, outsider presence) to working "with" communities (investment in community, collaboration)

- Need to keep this framework in mind for coming into any community as an outsider (familiarize yourself with socio-economic, political, racial, etc. issues beforehand)
- Acknowledge that different communities have different experiences and perspectives
- Can help to have a liaison in the community to help with translating science (and language) into common language for community members
- Establish code of conduct/best practices for future work/proposals
- Building trust and mutually beneficial relationships within communities is essential before involving in research process
  - Do your homework and be aware of what communities want/need rather than proposing “capacity building” or teaching that assumes they have no capacity
  - Avoid scientific hubris (both with respect to with local communities, as well as social sciences) and establish relationships that respect different ways of knowing; offer opportunities even if it feels like you giving something up
  - Take an ethnographic approach to interacting with communities
  - Think about how your interactions with communities will affect their relationship with scientists in the future (especially important if you are very transient and short-term in community)
  - Show your vulnerabilities and that you are not an expert, can make mistakes to minimize colonialist involvement in community
  - Use a combination of informal and formal communication of science
- How do we compensate people in the community for their time and expertise? At NC State, how do we write this into a grant and get HR approval?
  - What roles can/should STUDENTS play? (incl. power dynamic / hierarchy issues)
  - Help with additional funding/support *early* in the planning process seems important
  - Outline questions that students can ask when joining a project that will answer questions of community engagement (e.g. “What is the PI’s plan to engage?” “Will the findings be shared with people who live where we work?”)
  - Dedicate x% of grant budget for this, include as a contract or one-time fee rather than a salary
- Land acknowledgement
  - NC State has multiple:
    - Who the land that University is on belongs to
    - Whose land was sold to fund construction of University
  - <https://native-land.ca/> useful website for land acknowledgement (caveat - this does not necessarily follow how peoples may describe or identify themselves, nor does it necessarily cite changes in indigenous land use through time)
  - Recognize that we may have to give up some access that we had assumed we had
  - Put together an explicit code of conduct, which could help with some “look the other way” situations
- Environmental Justice

- Leaving out communities of color that are impacted by environmental degradation or natural disasters permeates through media portrayal and funding for recovery efforts (at state and federal level) → how can this change?