Natural Resources Research Institute

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH

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URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI), University of Minnesota

This is what was found by the NRRI URGE Pod at the University of Minnesota Duluth 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:**
  - Of the 16 responses to our survey, 4 researchers had zero projects, 2 researchers had one project, 2 researchers had two projects, 1 researcher had three projects, 2 researchers had seven projects, 3 researchers had majority/all projects, and 1 was unsure.
    - Our institution currently does not track which projects interact with BIPOC communities, so we do not have a concrete answer regarding which of our projects do interact with BIPOC communities

- **What worked well in these interactions?**
  - Previously established relationships
  - A general familiarity and comfort in working in local community customs
  - Reaching out to communities before research begins and allowing adequate time for communities to consider and respond to requests.

- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
  - For some folks, they didn't even consider working with BIPOC communities as part of their research program, so rather than not working well, it is simply absent.
  - Identifying or listing potential collaborators or collaborations early on. Some noted that they didn't have time to even consider establishing relationships or reaching out to local collaborators in communities because science is so deadline driven.
  - Not considering the amount of time it may take to establish relationships or providing an adequate amount of time for communities to process requests.

- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
  - Provide support (funding) for NRRI staff to present to local communities
  - Provide support (funding) for NRRI staff to decipher research results into formats that are digestible by local community
    - Aka, final product is not always a lengthy report or peer-reviewed published paper

- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color? The following can also be viewed as future (potential) action items for NRRI.**
  - List of communities in areas that are doing similar research in your area.
    - Land acknowledgement on website
      - https://www.d.umn.edu/about-umd/campus-history/land
    - Land acknowledgement in PowerPoint presentation template
    - Land acknowledgement in reports (set of language for folks to use)
    - Tribal liaison position
      - Partial position? Someone from the indigenous community?
    - Guidance document/checklist/considerations for submitting proposals with tribal communities
      - A document that lives with the Grants department, and could be integrated into the Intent to Submit form - yes/no checkbox "Does your project integrate tribal members, involve the tribal community, or takes place on tribal lands?"
        - If yes, then a follow-up "guideline" document is sent to researcher for consideration
          - Guidelines could include:
            - Local contacts
            - Customs for offering food/honorarium
            - Common Dos and Don'ts
            - Rubric for when to/to not include BIPOC folks as co-authors, etc. vs. acknowledgements vs. _____
    - Available funding to purchase foodstuffs or provide honorariums when working with tribal members
    - Funding for researchers to spend the time interacting and building relationships with BIPOC communities
    - List of recruitment resources to help post job positions more broadly to reach BIPOC communities, including students and early-career professionals
    - Provide internships or advertise potential research opportunities at NRRI to involve more BIPOC students, especially from local communities.
    - Yearly or biyearly training opportunities to learn how to better collaborate with different BIPOC communities. Ideas: workshop with Karen Diver (please correct spelling or Donna Cashein (spelling ?).

- **Resources**
  - https://cla.d.umn.edu/departments/american-indian-studies-0
    - https://cla.d.umn.edu/departments/american-indian-studies/tribal-state-relations-training
  - https://twin-cities.umn.edu/news-events/new-liaison-tribal-nations
  - https://native-land.ca/maps/
  - https://www.d.umn.edu/about-umd/campus-history/land

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Summary of Survey Questions

- **How many research projects have you led or been involved with that took place in countries or regions with communities of color?**
  - Of the 16 responses, 4 had zero projects, 2 had one project, 2 had two projects, 1 had three projects, 2 had seven projects, 3 had majority/all projects, and 1 was unsure.
  - I got a sense individuals were confused by this question. For those who responded the majority, or all, of their projects took place in countries/regions with communities of color explained they were in communities with people of color, but not necessarily interacting with them.

- **Please list current or previous projects working with or for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities.**
  - Of the 16 responses, 7 had zero projects, 2 had one project, 2 had two projects, 3 had some/several projects, 1 had five projects, and 1 response saying they did not want to answer.
  - There was a comment saying they submitted a proposal that included BIPOC individuals, but the project was not funded. Working as the research administrator, I know our institute has submitted several projects that have included BIPOC communities but have not been selected for funding.
  - One response mentioned they have hired BIPOC students. They had also reached out to tribal organizations to discuss data sharing and other topics, but they felt they were unprepared in those discussions because they did not know the cultural customs, data accessibility issues, and incorporating tribal ecological knowledge with tribal communities.

- **Have you ever considered and prioritized your research questions based on the needs of BIPOC communities?**
  - Of the 16 responses, 5 Yes, 8 No, 3 N/A
  - For the N/A responses, it was mentioned that the responders are not in PI roles where they are writing the proposals.
  - Of the no responses, some individuals indicated they would like to have research prioritizing the BIPOC communities, but the funding sources they go after do not address those issues

- **Have you ever meaningfully included BIPOC communities in any way in your research work? If so, was that effort appropriately compensated?**
  - Of the 13 responses, 8 Yes, 4 No, 1 N/A
  - Those that responded yes, two had projects that compensated the BIPOC communities.

- One comment was made saying a barrier for involving tribal communities in research projects is the lack of funding to be able to present research ideas to these communities
- There were several responses where it was mentioned that BIPOC communities were included in the proposal, but the projects were not funded.

- **Have you actively sought to include BIPOC collaborators on your projects? Why or why not?**
  - Of the 18 responses, 8 Yes, 8 No, 2 N/A
  - Those that responded no to seeking out BIPOC collaborators was because the lack of knowledge of BIPOC individuals in their specific field of research, because they were unable to find the opportunity, or because they were focused on working with individuals they already had a strong working relationship with. Some went on to say they have not had the opportunity to have BIPOC collaborators, but they would like to in the future.
  - The two NA responses were because they are not in a PI role where they are writing the proposals.

- **If you have collaborated with BIPOC individuals/communities, did you allow sufficient time to appropriately work within the community's governance, customs and priorities?**
  - Of the 15 responses, 8 Yes, 4 No, 2 NA, 1 unsure.
  - Most responded yes, but the nature of noted collaboration varied from full collaboration and consultation on a project, to speaking to a Tribal council, to simply getting permission to sample on tribal lands. Groups described being patient regarding project deadlines, inviting community members to meet prior to or join in sampling, and adjusting timing of sampling to not interfere with customs of community.
  - Those that responded no said it either did not come up or that they didn't feel they had time to reach out before the task deadline and noted that opportunities to collaborate have likely been missed due to the deadline driven nature of science.

- **If you have collaborated with BIPOC individuals/communities, at what stage of research or proposal development were they brought on?**
  - 13 total responses. 7 projects listed starting at the pre-proposal or proposal stage or are currently pursuing funding with a BIPOC community, 2 projects listed noted collaboration or contact occurred after the project was funded, 5 listed NA because they were not part of the proposal development process.
  - In summary, if the BIPOC community was not included in the proposal development most noted contacting the community near the start of the project or before real research began.

- **If you have collaborated with BIPOC individuals/communities, were they included as authors in presentations or papers?**
  - 11 responses. 3 Yes, 1 noted acknowledgement in final report, 2 NO because the projects did not involve direct collaboration, 1 Not Yet, 4 NA (not a part of reporting process etc.).
  - Answers from this question also highlighted that some interactions with BIPOC communities were not actually collaborative (i.e., group was contracted to provide data or service for BIPOC community). For larger multi-institution projects, one response noted the idea of developing a rubric for evaluating if contributions were significant enough to warrant co-authorship.

- **Have you actively sought to include BIPOC students on your projects?**
  - 20 responses. 10 No, 4 Yes, 6 NA (never hired students or not involved in hiring process)
  - No responses noted that the hiring or recruitment process used was blind to BIPOC representation or that they just hired the most qualified applicants that applied, and they were not sure if their job posts were reaching BIPOC communities. People noted that it is something they are currently working on and that they would like to include more BIPOC students on projects, but they need help from NRRI to find/recruit and create opportunities for students, because it can be difficult to get graduate students at NRRI. One idea was for NRRI to offer/highlight the different types of opportunities/projects available across NRRI that BIPOC science students could be involved in, including short-term training to graduate level research assistantship opportunities.
  - Yes responses noted that they actively recruited BIPOC students because the project addressed an issue that was prevalent in the BIPOC community or that it was a central theme of their proposals. Others noted that in previous positions that involved hiring many students they made attempts and did hire students from BIPOC communities. They noted the different perspectives and backgrounds brought by these students really added to the lab culture and research projects.

- **Have you sought to build any long-term relationships with BIPOC individuals, communities, institutions or universities, either through specific projects or in general over your career? Why or why not?**
  - 19 responses. 8 No, 10 Yes, 1 NA.
  - Yes responses noted that long-term relationships were established through projects and friendships. Some relationships were forged because they were doing similar research. Most noted that their relationships were positive and successful working relationships. A few noted that although they work with BIPOC communities they do not work collaboratively and they would like to start developing research on topics of mutual interest with BIPOC communities. Some highlighted the importance of cultural diversity within NRRI and the university and that these relationships bring

them joy. One noted the importance of maintaining positive relationships because of the work it provides and needing access to areas on tribal lands.
  - No responses noted that they were not in a position to forge these relationships, but they were interested in trying to make these connections. Others said they hadn't considered trying to make these connections because the opportunities to make these connections seemed more limited in this area. One person highlighted that they did not seek out these relationships, but that they just happened. Finally, one person highlighted that they would like to establish relationships with local tribal colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, but that institute culture may need to change for these types of relationships to be effective.

- **Have previous (or current) negative interactions, either from within NRRI or from outside organization/collaborations, impacted your ability to collaborate with BIPOC individuals/communities? Please elaborate as necessary. If so, were any plans made to address this?**
  - Of the 12 responses to this question, 10 individuals indicated no, with two individuals indicating yes. One person did indicate their no is "apart from systemic inequalities", noting the larger societal issues at hand. Another individual made reference to a colleague, and supporting that individual through challenging interactions. One person actually noted the opposite, and indicated their experience with a particular community was "very positive". One person noted the challenges of short timeframes with RFPs, indicating it is not worth investing a lot of time at that stage as the change of success is limited, but acknowledged it is important to work through the specifics if the project moves forward. Another individual noted the hurdle with respect to resources (time and money), and noted it was critical to have a contact within these local communities from which to work with. Furthermore, this individual noted it would be useful to have someone from within the local community act as a liaison, an individual which would help provide knowledge on customs and appropriate ways of interaction, and who best to work with within these communities. One person indicated it is looked at as "extra work" to interact with local tribes and bands, as their government is very fractured, communications are frequently lost, and with limited time and budgets, it feels as though there often is not enough resources to take on this extra work. This person also noted local members will ride along with their field crews to see what they are doing and "for their own safety", and also expressed tribe members have been upset by the presence of their field crew on tribal lands, even though they have received permissions.

- **Have you ever made the results of your research more accessible to BIPOC communities (i.e. translating into different languages)? Why or why not?**
  - Of the 17 responses to this question, a majority indicated no - 13 said no, and two indicated not applicable (as they are not responsible for publication or do not have a supervisory role). For the two folks who did indicate yes, they explained they presented results directly back to community members. Two folks indicated they are

not sure how they would go about doing this, and one indicated they had not previously considered this. Another individual noted time and resources as a limiting factor, while another indicating their research is confidential in nature. One person did note they have made efforts to put their research into easier-to-understand formats, but they were not necessarily targeted towards BIPOC folks.

- **Have you taken efforts to educate yourself or your research team about the local customs, knowledge, and culture of BIPOC communities? Have you looked into the local history of colonialism? Why or why not?**
    - Of the 19 responses to this question, 4 individuals indicated no, and the remaining 15 indicated yes or somewhat, either in a professional or personal (or both) setting. Of the 4 who indicated no, two did not elaborate, and two indicated they had not previously considered this. For those who said yes, or noted they have done some degree of research, the responses are varied. It appears three individuals are deeply ingrained in indigenous communities personally, yet do not openly identify as indigenous. Another individual noted "I consider myself more educated than most regarding Native American Bands" without any further elaboration. Most others noted they are continuing to educate themselves, either professionally, or with regards to regional history. Interestingly, two individuals noted time constraints as limiting their ability to further educate themselves, with one person indicating a lack of knowledge on good sources complicating where to start the education journey.

- **Have you ever acknowledged local indigenous tribes in your research efforts or results? Why or why not?**
    - Of the 19 responses to this question, 7 individuals said no, 5 indicated N/A - either because they are not in a supervisory role, or because they do not have results in which to acknowledge local communities - and 7 said yes or sometimes. Interestingly, one individual did indicate they acknowledge tribal partners when research was conducted on tribal land, whereas another individual indicated tribal partners are not acknowledged if research is conducted on tribal land, and only once a tribal member becomes more involved in project assistance are they acknowledged (and only if a presentation of that project includes reference to the sites in which the tribe member assisted with). One individual noted they recently became aware they should do such a thing, and noted NRRI should have a land acknowledgement on the website, and included in reports and publications. It is interesting to note those who many not feel as though they have the "power" to bring to their supervisor the notion of acknowledging local indigenous tribes in research efforts, as they are a technician or have a non-supervisory role; it would be interesting to note if these folks do present (i.e. a poster session at a conference), if they do/would include such acknowledgement. In total, 4 of the 6 individuals who indicated no to this question also noted they have never considered this before, and one of these four indicated they are not sure how they would go about doing such an acknowledgement.