


# Research Considerations:

## Guidance for Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Communities

Developed in collaboration with the Center for New North Carolinians (CNNC) Fellows

<b>Version:</b>	November 27, 2023
<b>Collaborating Authors:</b>	Diya Abdo, Christelle Barakat, Mia Baxley, Cathryn Bennett, Sara Colm, Krista Craven, Dominique L'Divers, Cristina Santamaria Graff, Audrey Mangili, Christian Matheis, Sharon Morrison, Naglaa Rashwan, Leilani Roughton, Sonalini Sagra, Elizabeth Saylor, S. Sudha, Jennifer Yourkavich, Kelsey White
<b>Version Editors:</b>	Christian Matheis - <a href="mailto:matheiscg@guilford.edu">matheiscg@guilford.edu</a> Sonalini Sagra - <a href="mailto:saprask@guilford.edu">saprask@guilford.edu</a>
<b>Recommended Citation:</b>	Multiple Authors (2023). "Research Considerations: Guidance for Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Communities." [Open Access Manuscript].
<b>Creative Commons License:</b> 	<b>CC BY NC SA:</b> This license allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator. If you remix, adapt, or build upon the material, you must license the modified material under identical terms.  For additional information please visit: <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/</a>

**Instructions:** If you are interested in conducting research and/or engagement projects which directly and/or indirectly solicit the input of immigrant and refugee communities, please review the Context and Considerations statements below, and consult the guidance in this document on an ongoing basis

**Context:** As with many systemically marginalized communities, refugees and immigrants are accustomed to “extractive” research and engagement, often exemplified by a drive-by volunteer or researcher who appears among them for a short time to fulfill a course requirement, conduct a study or to fulfill some other professional obligation only to then abruptly depart without attention to reciprocity. Repetitions of this dynamic erode trust with those affiliated, working, or researching with these communities. It is incumbent on practitioners and researchers to clearly articulate their investment capacity, intentions, and responsibilities to the community. At minimum, this entails ethically communicating mutual expectations and timelines, including entry and exit strategies, to avoid perpetuating the harm of extractive approaches.

Resettlement agencies and non-profit organization staff are not gatekeepers of these communities, but rather service providers who work with, alongside, and for immigrant and refugee communities. Service provider relationships create a power dynamic that is not to be exploited. An introduction facilitated by agency/organization staff between communities of interest and researchers or practitioners is not an unconditional endorsement of a project. Community members ultimately have the autonomy to choose if, when, and under what circumstances they engage in research/engagement.

**Considerations:**

- Incomplete answers in any section do not necessarily preclude approval or participation. Project requests will be evaluated on a case-by-basis by the referring agency/organization and the concerned communities, which will make suggestions about how to incorporate all relevant components.
- This rubric does not aim to duplicate the efforts of institutional IRBs or Community Advisory Councils with regard to research practices. The aim here is to suggest and encourage best practices for reciprocity and power-sharing between researchers and communities. These questions are not meant solely for vetting, but to encourage reflection about best practices for ethical engagement with immigrant and refugee communities.
- As a living document, this rubric is a starting point that may evolve in conversation with communities.

**Terminology and Jargon:** The language and phrasing used in this document may require additional interpretation and explanation for effective use with different communities and individuals. Please do your best to interpret and explain the prompts below within the overall spirit of collaboration, mutual / shared decision-making, and the dignity of marginalized refugees as a guiding priority.

## **Purpose and Application**

1. This resource is intended to guide ethical praxis rooted in liberation of refugees and immigrants in terms of both a positive ethic of dignity and hospitality (Hallie 1982) and a negative ethic of preventing objectification and/or commodification of refugees.
2. This guidance is a publicly available document for practitioners and researchers considering or proposing research or other engagement projects with immigrant and refugee communities.
3. Entities involved may come from different perspectives and experience levels including consultants, trainers, workshop participants, students, faculty, service learning, and funders/grantors who are doing surveys/research for foundational goals (e.g. research, community engagement, evaluation, and other activities).
4. When agency/organization staff are consulted about engaging with research / engagement projects, this rubric will be used to evaluate proposals to determine whether or not the agency/organization will participate in any capacity, ensuring that projects are conducted in an ethical manner that responds to and advances community-identified goals.
5. This will be an artefact for practice, and it can be included in diverse contexts, such as syllabi, workshops, volunteer trainings, research projects, etc.
6. Agency/organization staff will review completed rubrics and make recommendations while any decision-making regarding engagement and participation remains solely with refugees and refugee communities.

## **Decision-Making Process:**

1. Reviewers are agency/organization representatives who will read submitted rubrics and proceed with the following general process...
  - a. Reviewers will provide feedback on the submitted rubric with suggested changes.
  - b. Thereafter we will facilitate an introduction to staff whose program works with the particular community.
  - c. If the agency/organization staff member wants to move forward and seek community vetting they may facilitate introductions and/or recommend initial contact strategies.
  - d. Agency/organization do not play a gatekeeping role, but serve to suggest best practices.
2. The community has the ultimate decision about participation, engagement, and conditions of engagement (compensation, capacity building, etc.) as well as the duration, continuation, cycle of the project (ongoing consent vs. one-time consent).
  - a. Check-in process/changes to project once the project is underway.
  - b. Plan for check-ins should be between the community partner and the researcher. The agency/organization can support if asked.

## Research Considerations Rubric

Considerations	Notes - to be filled out by person submitting proposal / request	N/A
<b><i>Pre-Planning</i></b>		
Have you made sure the research/knowledge you seek has not already been gathered?		
How will you prioritize not just any data, and not just positivistic and quantitative data, but also do your best to focus on deep relational knowledge, testimonials, and experience that typically arises out of collaborative, qualitative research?		
How will you make sure you are reaching a depth of diverse participants within the community versus those who are more easily accessible and ready to participate?  What is your plan for engaging the heterogeneity and diversity <i>within</i> the community as they understand themselves?		
What are the ways that the research team will share their social positionality and identities with community participants?		



Considerations	Notes - to be filled out by person submitting proposal / request	N/A
<b><i>I. Project Preparation and Planning</i></b>		
What inspired or prompted you to focus on this specific community / population? Was it externally driven academic or program interest , or a request from within the community?		
What is the purpose of the research? What do you hope to accomplish or contribute, big picture?		
Have you engaged in discussions / relationship building with any members/leaders of the community? Please mention briefly.  If not, what steps will you take to learn about the community/ prepare yourself for working with the community? Please mention briefly.		

Have you had discussions with other researchers and CNNC Fellows who have experience with the community? Please mention briefly.		
Do you have a plan to work with community members as community co-researchers? Why/why not?		
Whom have you consulted who has prior experience with the community / population? Before engaging with the community/population consider learning from another researcher or practitioner or CNNC Fellow who has experience.		
Have you discussed and mutually decided upon research questions, methods, data collection strategies, protection and security of sources/ informants / participants (as needed), advocacy recommendations, dissemination plans, capacity building plans, entry and exit plans etc. with the community?		
<b>II. Project Implementation</b>		
Are you from the community? Do you have team members from the community? If not, have you completed any training or study in cultural humility/cultural safety as related to community engagement and research? Do you have a plan in place to incorporate these elements?  If you have a plan, please include/attach a copy with your responses to this rubric and enter "see attached" in the relevant notes in the next column.		
Many who teach/work with these topics have not had "formal" instruction in cultural humility yet are deeply involved in praxis/ongoing learning around this topic. Please describe the cultural humility training you and members of the research team will have completed before the beginning of the project.		
Where are you in the application process with an Institutional Review Board and/or Community Advisory Board?  Are you willing to apply for review by a Community Advisory Board (if available) within the community you wish to engage with, in addition to a University IRB?		
Do you have plans for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will the protocol specify the date / time/ occasion during which researchers first enter and ultimately leave the community?</li> <li>- Will there be an announced timeline (beginning, middle, end)?</li> <li>- Will you include check-in meetings with community members?</li> <li>- Will there be exit plans, and if so, will they include</li> </ul>		

plans for and indicators of community capacity building?		
How will you incorporate and observe Covid-19 safety procedures? Please also see Section IV on Equity and Accessibility		
<b>III. Incentives and Benefits to Stakeholders</b>		
Who is funding the research? What stake do they have? What are their interests, expectations about how it will be used?  Is there anything about funding sources that should be publicly disclosed (for the protection of those involved in the study/project/activity)?		
What are the financial conditions and interests of funders?		
How will you help community members understand the stipulations and requirements placed on the project by funding sources, such as expectations and requirements for dissemination and/or claims/entitlements to data?		
What will be the incentives and benefits that come back to the community of focus for this project? These should be substantial. Consider time, effort, and personal disclosure that may be asked of participants.  Have you discussed substantial, desired incentives and benefits with the community?  In your view, what constitutes substantial incentives commensurate with the time and labor contributed by the participating community?  <u>Examples of incentives:</u> gift cards or other financial compensation for participants.  <u>Examples of benefits:</u> technical reports for community dissemination, graphics-based info for lower literacy communities, social media presentations, funding for community efforts, supplies for community schools, student training, community awareness, co-authorship of reports and papers, mentoring community organizations to seek funding, providing training in research, report writing, and advocacy to community members; facilitating introductions between the community organization and other entities such as local, county, or state officials, etc.; opening opportunities for community stakeholders to become decision-makers in policies or practices that impact them		

<p>Will agency/organizational staff or program sites play a substantial role in the project? If so, what will be the incentives and benefits that come back to agency/organization?</p> <p><u>Examples of incentives:</u> funding for staff time, events for the community, supplies for centers and program participants, childcare or parent/family respite, etc.</p> <p><u>Examples of benefits:</u> copy of finished research summary, presentation, products or deliverables, framework for future programming, training and assistance with follow-up advocacy, accessibility, rituals, traditions, and broader forms of collective knowledge-building, if any, etc.</p>		
<p>How will your project build and/or enhance partnerships among communities, organizations, government entities, businesses, etc.?</p>		
<b>IV. Equity and Accessibility</b>		
<p>It is important to interpret language and terminology within a given cultural context and framework, emphasizing cultural contextual awareness at all stages of the process.</p> <p>How do you plan to accommodate language access / linguistic differences. What is your plan for effective translation, interpretation, if needed?</p> <p>Is this project English centric or are cultural concepts accurately conveyed through quality adapted materials and the way interactions are conducted (setting, body language, attire, context-appropriate greetings and interactions etc.)</p>		
<p>What sort of examples, visuals, descriptions, and other references will you use to compensate for and complement linguistic differences?</p>		
<p>Which kinds of screening tools will you use to decide who can and cannot individually participate? How will screening tools they be tailored for accessibility to the community / population (including people who do not read or write in any language and people with disabilities)?</p> <p>How might you develop screening tools and research instruments in partnership with the community?</p>		
<p>Which types of additional labor will your project require from informants / sources / participants and their family members and other individuals, including employees and volunteers of different organizations?</p> <p>Have you developed a timeline containing an overview of estimated time and labor commitments that itemizes hours, interactions, tasks, etc.?</p>		

<p>How do you plan to discuss and act on the following with the community involved in this project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community perception of research</li> <li>- Ideas of privacy and consent</li> <li>- Plan for seeking/obtaining consent</li> <li>- Anonymity vs. confidentiality</li> </ul> <p>To what extent do participating communities have ultimate decision-making authority regarding the duration, continuation, cycle of the project (ongoing consent vs. one-time consent)?</p> <p>You are expected to seek consent during various stages of your project.</p>		
<p>How will you know whether participants feel safe and confident criticizing you and/or the project? Are you using conventional concepts of consent or more robust concepts of deep consent (e.g. using processes to ensure participants can feasibly say “no” and refuse to participate at any point in the process)?</p>		
<p>Does your research plan involve partnering with any trusted intermediaries who are available to help referee concerns between community members and the research team -- an arbiter, go-between, emissary, etc.?</p>		
<p>How will you center participants’/beneficiaries’ voices and feedback in evaluating the project? How will you find out about their subjective experiences during the project?</p>		
<p>How will you deal with a situation where the participants felt ambivalent about results but the research process benefited them in some observable or concrete way?</p>		
<p>Disagreements can sometimes arise. Do you have a plan/process to address/manage such situations in a way that is equitable for all?</p>		
<p>What does the conclusion of the project involve, and what is your 'exit plan' at the conclusion of the project?</p>		
<p>Will you plan to maintain continuous contact with the community? Why/why not?</p>		
<p><b>V. Dissemination</b></p>		
<p>Do you plan a wide/r range of research products from your project, over and above academic presentations, journal articles, or books?</p> <p>Do you have plans to consult with members of the community for best ways to translate this information.</p> <p>What is your plan for translating products and community information materials, sharing relevant findings in languages that community members can understand in</p>		



venues that they can access?		
What are the funder's stipulations about dissemination of data and findings, if any? To your knowledge, will you or anyone else use the results of this research to apply for funding in the future? If so, how will you consult community participants about the possibility of future funding that is based on this project and their contributions?		
Do you plan to include key community members as co-researchers and/or co-authors on your research products? What will be the roles and expectations of authors?		
How do you plan to make the research products more accessible both in language and in ability to publicly retrieve?  The use of free, open access approaches to dissemination are strongly encouraged (e.g. publication in open access forums and the use of Creative Commons practices and licenses)		
Will you share findings, recommendations, reports, papers with appropriate community members prior to publication, to discuss whether it meets community guidelines and community safety?  Do you have a plan for dissemination that includes places and sources where community members usually go for information? How will you disseminate the research findings in those places?		
Do you have guidelines in place for how to navigate a community's right and decision to reorient / refocus a research agenda in the event of unforeseen disruptions or emergencies (e.g. pandemic)?  The COVID-19 pandemic has left us with many lessons about community agency and rights to reorient focus areas and partnerships to address emergency issues. This has meant, unfortunately, disruptions to ongoing projects that were once agreed upon by community-academic research partnerships.  Do you have a plan to reorient your research agenda in case of unforeseen disruptions?		

## References and Resources

- Abdo, Diya. (2022). *American Refugee: True stories of the refugee experience*. Hanover: Steerforth Press/Truth to Power Books.
- Cahill, Caitlin. (2007). "Repositioning Ethical Commitments: Participatory Action Research as a Relational Praxis of Social Change." *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographers* 6(3), 260-3737. Retrieved from <https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/784>
- Hallie, Philip. (1981). "From Cruelty to Goodness." *The Hastings Center Report* 11(3), 23-28.
- LaReau, Annette. (2021). *Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.
- Matheis, C. and Jamison, E. "Avoiding Policy Failure and Finding Common Ground for Refugee Reception, Resettlement, and Integration: A Prototype Rubric." 2018.
- Matheis, Christian.(2016). "Refuge and Refusal: Credibility Assessment, Status Determination and Making It Feasible for Refugees to Say 'No'." In *Migration Policy and Practice: Interventions and Solutions*, edited by Harald Bauder and Christian Matheis. New York: Palgrave.
- McConnell, Allan. (2015). "What is policy failure? A primer to help navigate the maze." *Public Policy and Administration* 30 (3-4):221-242.
- Onyx, J. (2008). University-Community Engagement: What does it mean?. *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, 1, 90-106.
- Paynter, S. (2014). Tackling wicked problems through engaged scholarship. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 7(1), 48-59.
- Santiago-Ortiz, A. (2020). [Mapping Collaboration as Resistance to Neoliberalism: A Case Study of Participatory Action Research in Puerto Rico](#). *Tracce Urbane: Rivista Italiana Transdisciplinare di Studi Urbani*, 8(4), 270-289. DOI: 10.13133/2532-6562\_4.8.17220.
- Santiago-Ortiz, A. (2019). [From Critical to Decolonizing Service-Learning: Limits and Possibilities to Social Justice-Based Approaches to Community Service Learning](#). *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 25(1), 43-54.
- Various authors. (2019). "Public Health Rubric." American Academy of Pediatrics, Section on Epidemiology Public Health and Evidence (SOPHE), accessed July 20: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/Sections/Section-on-Epidemiology-Public-Health-and-Evidence/Pages/SOEPHE.aspx>
- Various authors. "International Refugee Research: Evidence for Smart Policy." Virginia tech School of Public and International Affairs. 2018. [https://spia.vt.edu/content/dam/spia\\_vt\\_edu/research/refugee/Refugee-Research-Issue-No-1-1.pdf](https://spia.vt.edu/content/dam/spia_vt_edu/research/refugee/Refugee-Research-Issue-No-1-1.pdf)
- Weiner, John. (2005). Health Policy Analysis Checklist. [http://ocw.jhsph.edu/courses/introhealthpolicy/PDFs/Bardach\\_Outline\\_IHP\\_7b.pdf](http://ocw.jhsph.edu/courses/introhealthpolicy/PDFs/Bardach_Outline_IHP_7b.pdf): Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.