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Community-Based Research Proposal Development Toolkit

Tailored guidance for understanding and responding effectively to community-based research funding opportunities

CONTENT

FOREWORD

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide general information regarding writing proposals for Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR). Whether you have never read a Request for Proposal (RFP) or have prepared many proposals, you will find information and tips for putting together a proposal for a research project that is feasible for your organization and benefits the communities you serve.

Please note that this toolkit is not intended to be a template or serve as a substitute for your organization's research proposals, applications or capabilities. Although the toolkit provides suggestions to focus your research project, it is not intended as an instruction manual and does not guarantee funding of your proposal for any given RFP.

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is for community-based organizations (CBOs) and partnerships seeking research funding opportunities. It is aimed at CBOs looking to carry out research to improve services in their communities. You may already be doing this in your practice as you reflect on what is working well and what needs to be changed to better meet the needs of the people you serve. As mission-driven organizations, you might be just beginning to explore reading RFPs from funders and conducting research. You are uniquely positioned to conduct CBPR due to your involvement in the community and understanding of the values, norms and nuances of the populations they serve, and the potential to drive positive change.

01 Module

READING AND UNDERSTANDING THE RFP

About This Module

This module's purpose is to provide guidance on what to look for when you read an RFP. Carefully examining the RFP before you decide whether to write a proposal will help you:

01. make an informed decision about whether to pursue the opportunity; and

02. write a proposal in response to that request.

What Is An RFP?

An RFP is a document issued by a company, organization or government agency that seeks applications, or proposals, from vendors, contractors or service providers for a specific project. It may describe the scope of work, requirements, objectives and scoring criteria for the project, any contractual terms and conditions, and the instructions for submitting proposals. It may also include information about the organization issuing the RFP, such as its background, mission and goals. In the context of research funding, RFPs are issued by a funding agency or institution seeking proposals from researchers or organizations to conduct research on a particular topic or address specific research questions. Researchers and organizations interested in securing funding for their projects typically respond to RFPs by submitting detailed proposals outlining their research plans, methodologies, timelines, budgets and expected outcomes.

Reading Process

As you read through the RFP, note the specific information requested in each section of the proposal. The checklist tool in Appendix 1-1 can help you record and track each component requested in the proposal as well as the submission instructions. This tool can help you communicate the details of the proposal with your project team, leadership and external partners throughout the decision, writing and review process without searching through the RFP. Once you have a draft of the proposal, you can use this checklist to make sure you have included each of the requirements in the RFP.

Tip: *Try to use similar language to that used in the proposal when you are making your notes. Research proposals often include all elements requested in the RFP using the language and terminology included in the funding request so that they can be easily identified by the reviewers. Look for terms describing specific activities and project components, particularly those that are repeated more than once in the RFP. If you include one of the requirements using very different language to describe it, the reviewer may not view it as equivalent.*

Tip: *Organize the proposal so that it is easy for the reviewers to understand your research project and how you plan to execute it.*

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Purpose Of The Funding

The first thing to identify in the RFP is what the funding is intended to support. It will begin with a description of a health problem or need. Below are questions to consider as you read through this section:

QUESTIONS

What is the public health problem the funding is intended to address?

What is currently known about this issue?

What are gaps in the field that this funding is intended to address?

Scope Of Work

The scope of work will also be described in the first few paragraphs of the funding announcement. It will indicate the kind of projects that the funder is interested in. For example, it may be a funding opportunity to conduct academic research, or it may be a research opportunity only for community-based programs. The scope of work may be fairly broad or the funder may include specific research questions and specific populations that must be included.

Requirements

Next, look for the components that must be included in the proposal. Examples of required components might include:

- Research hypothesis and/ or research questions
- Goals and objectives; end points
- Target populations
- Timeline and budget
- Data collection plan
- Communication plan (i.e., how the findings will be shared with or used by the community and other stakeholders)

The RFP will identify who is eligible to apply for the funding. Take note of the following:

- Can organizations apply for the funding, or must it be an individual?
- Does the RFP state requirements for the population the organization must serve or the services it must provide to be eligible for the funding?
- Does the funder require that the applicant be new to them or will the funding opportunity be open to applicants who have been funded in the past?
- Are there geographic location restrictions on the funding?
- Are there requirements about the size of the organization or how long it has been in operation?
- Are there any staffing requirements?

Budget

The RFP will specify the amount the funder will award to an organization. Your budget demonstrates to the funder that you have a realistic plan to implement the project you have proposed within the amount you are requesting.

When reading the budget section of the RFP, note any activities or expenses that the funding cannot support. For example, often the funding can be used for research or program costs but not direct services (e.g., counseling, case management, healthcare). Typically, the funding announcement will state whether overhead costs are included in the budget and what percentage of the budget can be allocated to overhead.

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Application Process And Key Dates

The application process section will provide detailed instructions for submitting the proposal. First, note the submission parameters and logistics.

- On what date, at what time and in what time zone is the application due?
- What is the medium or platform for application submission?
- What are the guidelines for the application format? Is there a page limit? Is there a font size or font guideline? Are there line spacing requirements? Are there specified margins? Is there a word count limit?

Next, determine whether any supplemental materials are required or recommended along with the proposal.

- Are Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or Letters of Intent or Interest (LOIs) recommended or required from partners?
- Are resumes/curriculum vitae (CVs) to be included?
- Does the FOA or RFP supply a budget template or any other template for supplemental information?
- Are appendixes and supplemental materials included in the page limit?

In some cases, funders may hold a question and answer (Q&A) webinar or offer applicants the opportunity to submit questions by a specified date. If so, they may also state when the questions and responses will be posted, or you may only be able to see the responses to the questions that you submit. Other RFPs will state that you can submit questions any time during the application period. Other dates to look for in the RFP are when you are expected to start the project and when it should be completed.

Scoring System

Each RFP should describe how the funder will be evaluating responses and when. Some RFPs have hard deadlines, while others are set up to accept proposals on a rolling basis.

Reviewing the scoring criteria helps you to understand what's important to the funder so that you are sure to include those elements in your project plan and in your proposal. Often, the scoring system will emphasize clearly stated objectives, a feasible implementation plan and the sustainability of the project. Develop a list of the scoring criteria while you are reading through. You can use it to review your proposal before you submit it.

Terms And Conditions

Funding announcements will usually include a contract that should be reviewed by your contract officer or legal team. They can determine whether you can comply with the contract exactly, or if you will need to request some exceptions or modifications to the language in the contract. Some RFPs will state that they will not grant any exceptions. Adjusting the contract can cause delays in submitting your proposal, so it is important that you send it to your legal team early in the proposal development process. If your organization does not have legal or contract staff, ask your board members if they have expertise in this area or if they can help locate free legal services in your area.

Appendix 1-1- Sample Checklist

Name Of RFP	
REQUIREMENTS	YES/NO
Cover letter	
Research questions	
Population of interest	
Scientific objectives	
Hypotheses	
Outcomes	
Data Collection Plan	
Data Analysis Plan	
Communication Plan	
Sustainability Plan	
Timeline	
Budget	
Resumes	

Application Instructions	
Deadline	Enter date.
Submission guidelines	Enter all submission instructions.
Process for questions	Date, email and any other information provided.
Supplemental materials	Are there any supplemental materials required? Staff resumes? MOU or any other letters of commitment from partners?
Review contract	Has your legal team or contract officer approved? Are there any exceptions?

Proposal Requirement Checklist

As you read the RFP, you can develop a checklist to cross-reference the proposal you write with the requirements in the funding announcement. This tool will help ensure that your proposal complies with the RFP requirements and you have not left anything out. The checklist also has space to include the application processes. It will help you quickly communicate the instructions, guidelines and requirements of the RFP with others in your organization and your partners. Most of the terms in the checklist are hyperlinked to the modules of the toolkit where they are described in detail.

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02 Module

DECIDING WHETHER TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

About This Module

In deciding whether your organization will submit for a particular funding opportunity, you will need to assess whether your organization has the capacity to write a complete proposal and implement the research. You will weigh your organization's eligibility for the opportunity, the fit of the opportunity to what you would like to fund and the sustainability of what you propose beyond the initial funding opportunity. CBOs excel at making the most of their available resources; still, you may be at capacity and will want to consider this carefully. By taking the time to carefully assess whether your organization will pursue this opportunity, you can identify areas that you can improve upon before you submit the proposal. This may help strengthen your proposal and help you avoid spending hours writing only to realize halfway through that it is not a good fit for you.

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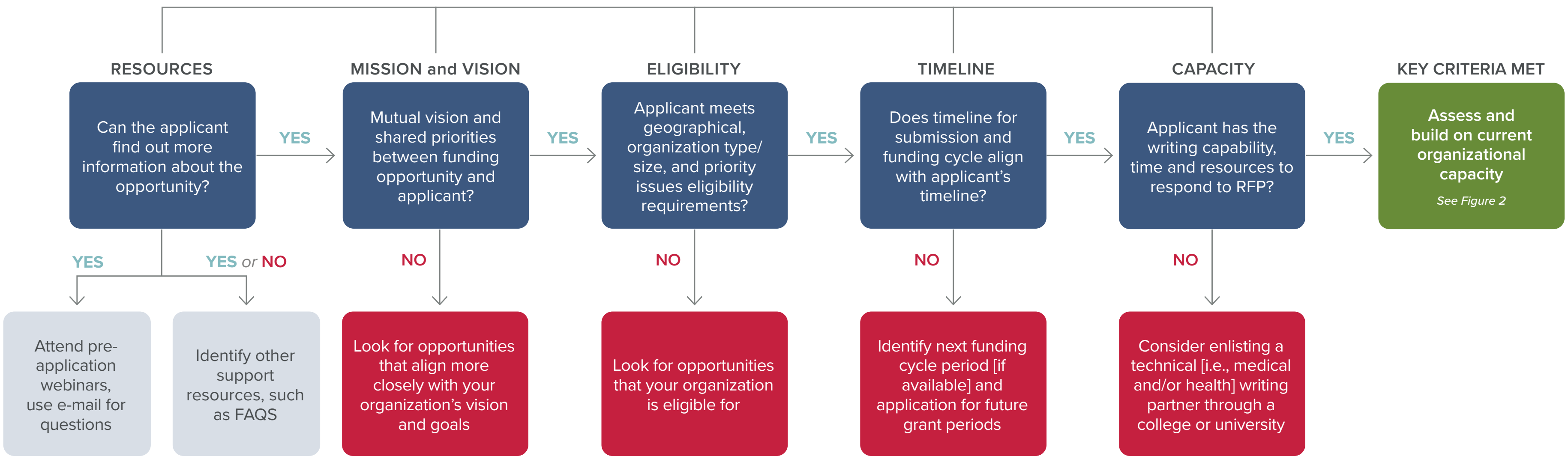
Figure 1 below provides an overview of the factors you may consider when making this decision. Each will be discussed in further detail followed by suggestions for increasing your organization's capacity to submit and implement a proposal.

Figure 1. Meeting Initial Criteria Five-Step Decision Tree



Consider Your Organization's Eligibility

Before beginning the proposal, consider the following:

- Is this a new opportunity or has the grant been offered previously? If not new, how does my organization or my proposed research project compare to those previously funded?
- Does my organization meet the size, geography, service area or other funding eligibility parameters elicited in the funder's RFP?

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Figure 2: Key Elements for Assessing and Building On Current Organizational Capacity

Internal Capacity	Partnerships	Financial Standing	Other Resources
Skills and Experience • Grant-Writing • Research expertise (i.e., research design, data collection and analysis, reporting); Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) • Community relationships **Availability** • Proposed staff has bandwidth to take on the proposed work in addition to their present responsibilities. **Leadership Buy-In** • Organizational and/or community leaders can demonstrate support (e.g., letter of support, endorsement) of the proposed research project.	• Organization has engaged existing partnerships relevant to the proposed research project. • Organization can demonstrate history of effective partnering. • Organization has identified potential partnerships to support the proposed research project.	• Organization has calculated overall cost of proposed research project. • Organization can demonstrate intent to leverage the resources from the funding opportunity to access money from other sources to sustain proposed research project beyond initial funding. • Organization can demonstrate that the funding opportunity be sufficient to start and finish the research project entirely or that it has identified additional resources to make up the difference.	• Organization has or can secure any equipment, tools or software needed to execute proposed research project. • Organization demonstrates that it can access or easily collect any data necessary to support proposed research project. • Organization has access to a research determination and ethics review body (e.g., Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Assess Your Capacity To Respond To The RFP

A. Organizational capacity:

a. **Grant-Writing:** Does my organization have an experienced and available grant-writer to prepare the proposal? With your expertise, experience and this manual, could it be you or someone on your team?

b. **Research capability:** Does my organization or our partners have experience conducting a research project? Do we have experience with:

  i. Data collection and data management. Have you ever gathered information and numbers from your program to assess your current capacity and look for ways to improve operations or be more efficient?

  ii. Data analysis

  iii. Human subjects research requirements (e.g., institutional review board (IRB) approval). An academic partner can be helpful in this area, and there are other resources to help fill this requirement if you are not familiar with it.

c. **CBPR:** Does my organization have experience conducting research that involves community members in each stage of the process? Has your organization or staff ever helped a community partner or university with its research? Do we have:

  i. Community ties, relationships and social or political standing

  ii. Understanding and awareness of the social and health systems and structures relevant to the proposed research project and the community

  iii. A plan for communicating and presenting results to various audiences, such as at workshops or conferences, or preparing annual reports

B. Staffing

a. If the organization has the skills set(s) necessary for the proposed endeavor, do the personnel have the capacity to take on the proposed work in addition to their present responsibilities?

b. Is my organization prepared to allocate adequate staff time to implement the project?

C. Leadership buy-in

a. Which leadership figures in your organization or community need to buy into your proposed research project for you to succeed?

b. How can you demonstrate that you have support from your leadership and board of directors?

Assess Partnerships

Partnerships are integral to the CBPR approach. Collaboration with other entities who have research skills enables communities to carry out research apart from academic or other professional organizations such that the research data comes directly from the community and the results go directly back to the people most affected by the problem or need being studied. Partnerships can also mitigate gaps in skills and knowledge in a community-based research project.

Potential questions:

- What existing partnerships does my organization have that are relevant to the proposed research project?
- What potential partnerships might my organization be able to cultivate to support the proposed project?
- Do I have the need and resources to bring subject matter experts on board to advise on the proposed research?

Take Stock Of Other Resource Needs

- Does my organization have, or do we have access to any equipment, tools or software needed to execute the project?
- Can my organization access or easily collect any data that we propose to use or gather? Can we do it in a timely manner?

Assess Finances

- How much will this project cost my organization?
- Will the funding opportunity be sufficient for my organization to start and finish the project entirely? If not, does my organization have other resources to complete the work?
- Can my organization demonstrate in our proposal that the project is sustainable or scalable once the funding stream has ended? Can my organization speak to the lasting difference the information the research generates will make to our community?

Capacity Assessment

Review the results of your assessment with your project team and leadership. Are there areas in which your capacity is lower than you would like for this opportunity? Look through those elements and discuss whether they are significant enough to prevent you from submitting a proposal.

Below are some additional suggestions to assess your organization's capacity to implement the research project that you plan to propose:

- If your staff does not have sufficient data management or analysis skills, could you plan to make room in your budget for a data analyst to be hired for the number of hours needed for that task?
- If none of your staff is able to dedicate 100% of time to this project, could you have two people who could shift 50% of their responsibilities elsewhere? Or could you hire a new employee for the length of the grant period?
- If you do not initially have support from your organization's leadership, could you identify the reason for the hesitancy? Could you find common ground in supporting this project?
- If you haven't established a partnership with an academic institution to work with you in implementing this research project:
    - › Does anyone on your staff have contacts at an academic institution in a department that would be interested in this project? If there are no existing networks and relationships you can leverage, could you reach out to local universities, colleges and research institutions to explore potential collaborations; or reach out to faculty members or researchers whose work aligns with your organization's mission and goals?
    - › What other partnerships would strengthen your ability to conduct this research?
- If your organization does not have access to the equipment, tools or software needed to execute the project, could you ask your partners if they have it?
- If your entire project is not sustainable, are there elements of the project that can be sustained? Consider whether the project will increase community capacity to conduct research or offer services to the population of interest. Will the project create a sustainable infrastructure for maintaining partnerships beyond the duration of a single research project, fostering ongoing collaboration and capacity building within the community? Will the results of the research project lead to larger scale projects or be replicated in other communities?

Reasons To Decide Not To Submit A Proposal

While many barriers to submitting a strong proposal can be overcome, in some cases, the best decision may be to pass on a particular funding opportunity and continue looking for a good match. Some common justifications for not writing a proposal are:

- Lack of support from leadership: The organization's leadership may decide they want to devote their resources elsewhere rather than using staff time to write the proposal and carry out the research project. Alternatively, leadership has not rejected the project, but they are not giving it support. However, it is essential that you have strong support from your organization's leadership.
- The submission window is closing too soon for you to write a quality proposal: You are better off looking at the funder's website to see if there are other open or upcoming opportunities rather than trying to write a proposal within an unrealistic timeframe.
- Mismatch between the public health need and your organization's mission: If the RFP describes a public health problem that or scope of work that is similar to, but not exactly aligned with what you are proposing, you may be tempted to submit a proposal. This is not advisable. Funding opportunities have very specific parameters, and your research project must fit within them.
- Lack of community or academic partnerships: CBPR requires the participation of community members at each stage of the research process, so you will need strong, established partnerships in the community.

If you decide this is not the right opportunity for you, continue to explore research grant opportunities until you find one that aligns with your organization's mission, goals and capacity.

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03 Module

WRITING A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

About This Module

Writing a proposal narrative requires careful planning, effective communication and strategic thinking. Before you begin writing, you will need to set up a plan for crafting the proposal using the following steps:

01. Determine who will be involved in the writing process.
02. Establish a timeline, allowing time for writing, review and revisions.
03. Develop a narrative that highlights the unique strengths of your proposal and organization.
04. Create a detailed outline that provides a clear structure for the writing process.
05. Hold a proposal kickoff meeting.

This module will guide you through each of these steps; the remaining modules will provide guidance on further developing each component of the research project and the corresponding section of the proposal narrative.

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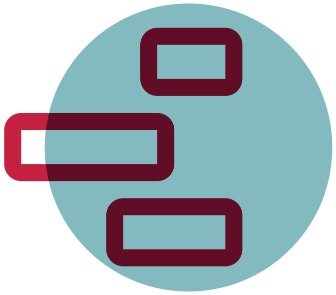
Step 1: Assemble A Proposal Team

As you think about assembling a team to respond to an RFP, consider the project's requirements and determine the staff in your organization that possess the required expertise to write each section. The proposal team usually includes the primary investigator (PI), data coordinator, reviewers, editors and contract support.

Suggestions for assembling a proposal team:

- Assess your staff's current workload before assigning roles. If you do not have the expertise or availability, consider bringing in external consultants or ask your community partners to contribute to the proposal writing process.
- Depending on the scope and requirements of the proposal, you may have a small team of one or two writers or a larger team of several writers with the skills and knowledge relevant to the RFP.
- Designate a project manager to guide the team through the proposal development and submission process. Ideally, this person is not assigned to write any of the proposal narrative so that their time can be devoted to coordination and management tasks. However, if staff resources are limited, the project manager may also be a writer or even the primary writer. The role of the project manager is to:
  - Oversee content development.
  - Facilitate communication and collaboration among team members.
  - Set up brainstorming sessions to generate solutions to issues that arise.
  - Provide regular progress updates to ensure that the proposal stays on track and reflects a cohesive and comprehensive approach.

Step 2: Develop A Proposal Writing Timeline



Developing a timeline is essential for ensuring that the writing process remains on track and that the proposal is submitted before the deadline. Begin by identifying submission deadlines, internal review dates and any other relevant milestones. Schedule regular team meetings to check in on deadlines and make adjustments as needed. Allow time for team members to review each other's work, provide feedback and incorporate revisions into the proposal.

As you continue to build the timeline, keep in mind the following suggestions:

- Create a visual representation of the schedule to share with your team on a spreadsheet or calendar. (See example in Appendix 3-2.)
- Build in time to compare the proposal with the funder requirements checklist you developed in Module 2.
- Include some flexibility in the timeline to allow for adjustments needed to accommodate unforeseen challenges/events, staff leave or changes in direction.
- Be willing to adjust the schedule based on feedback from the proposal team.
- Check in with team members regularly to ensure that tasks are being completed on schedule and address any issues or obstacles that arise.
- Allocate time at the end of the timeline for finalizing the proposal, editing, formatting and ensuring compliance with submission guidelines.
- If time allows, plan for three levels of review:
  - First review can be a rough draft or outline with bullets. Reviewers will primarily provide feedback on the content, making sure that all required and relevant information is included and in the correct section.
  - Second review can be a more comprehensive review, ensuring that the common terminology is used, that the narrative is compelling.
  - Final review can be conducted by the PI and/or someone in leadership. Changes are usually made by one person, who makes sure the proposal has "one voice" A checklist for this level of review is in Appendix 3-1.

Step 3: Write Your Narrative

The proposal narrative is your opportunity to communicate to the funders that you have a project that is aligned with the intention of the RFP and is realistic within your organizational capacity and the timeline and budget allocated. It is also your opportunity to capture reviewers' attention with a statement that clearly articulates the problem or need your project addresses, followed by a narrative highlighting the strengths of your organization and your proposed approach. Integrating key messages and benefits of your research project throughout the narrative reinforces your ability to meet the requirements of the RFP. Most likely, you considered these factors when you were deciding whether to pursue the funding opportunity.

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Step 4: Outline The Proposal Narrative

The proposal narrative typically takes 10 to 20 pages to lay out. Some RFPs are prescriptive about the sections you should include in the proposal narratives, what should be included in each of them and how many points each will be worth. In this case, you know exactly how to outline the proposal and can allocate space for each section according to the points it is assigned. For example, if the organizational capacity and previous experience sections are both worth 15 points, plan to write about the same length for each of them.

Other RFPs will state what is to be included without providing a specific structure or scoring system. Since the narrative will be easiest to read and evaluate organized into sections, create an outline with a section devoted to each component. Look back at the Proposal Requirement Checklist you developed in Module 2 and create an outline using each of the elements the RFP requested.

Whether the guidelines are specific or general, most require the same essential components:

- **Title:** Choose a title that succinctly characterizes what it is you will study.
- **Abstract or executive summary:** If space allows (less than one page), clearly summarize the research proposal. Include the focus of the study, how you will determine the community's needs and priorities, how your study will contribute to what is already known about your community and the health problem you propose to address, and what you expect or hope to find as a result of the research.
- **Contextual factors:** Describe the community in which you propose to carry out the study. Include where the community is located, where the geographic boundaries of your study are, the characteristics of the setting in which the community is situated (rural/urban, etc.) and any demographic information that will accurately characterize the community.
- **Public health problem:** Identify the public health problem or therapeutic area the proposed research project will address, keeping in mind that CBPR focuses on public health problems that are relevant to the local community, and it uses an ecological approach that considers multiple determinants of health. Be sure to cite any sources of data accurately and consistently using a widely used citation format such as APA or MLA.
- **Research questions and/or hypothesis:** Identify a research question that is relevant and meaningful to the community. This can be generated through community engagement activities such as focus groups, interviews or surveys. It is essential to involve community members in this process to ensure that the research addresses their needs and priorities.

- **Goals and objectives:** List the goals and objectives for the research, ensuring that your description lays out how the goals will lead to your intended results. Clearly define the objectives of your project. What are your research questions or hypotheses? Outline the specific aims of your project and articulate the significance and potential impact of your research. Ensure that your objectives align with the priorities and interests of the funding agency and that community input has been considered.
- **Proposed research project:** Outline a detailed plan for how you will conduct your project. Describe how the project aligns with the research objectives outlined in the RFP.
- **Project timeline:** Lay out the project timeline from the kickoff date to the conclusion, including each task, project deliverable and milestone.
- **Research design, methods and analysis:** Describe the design and approach of the study. The description should include the type of research (e.g., community-based, participatory, empirical), the methods and the data collection, analysis and communication plan. Describe how you will analyze and interpret the data collected during the study.
- **Organizational capacity:** Provide a brief overview of the organization, including its mission, history serving the population and its capacity to carry out the proposed study. This may include a statement related to the organization's capacity to anticipate and mitigate risks.
- **Previous experience:** Describe previous research projects relevant to the current proposal, including the project's objectives, scope, duration and outcomes.
- **Partnerships:** CBPR typically depends on strong partnerships between researchers and community members. Describe how you will establish and maintain these partnerships, including strategies for building trust and fostering collaboration. Highlight the expertise, resources or experience serving the population that each partner brings to the table and explain how you will ensure that decision-making processes are inclusive and participatory.
- **Staffing:** Outline the structure of the proposed project team including the team's expertise and capacity to execute the project successfully. If requested, provide names of key personnel, resumes, bios and an organizational chart for the project team.
- **Scientific rationale/benefits to the community:** Describe how the project will ensure that findings are meaningful and relevant to the community impacted by the public health problem or the scientific community. Discuss how you will involve community members in the interpretation of findings and the development of recommendations.
- **Communication plan:** How will you share the findings with the community? Who will the results be shared with and in what format? How will the findings be shared in a way that is accessible and useful to diverse audiences (e.g., community members, professional audiences).
- **Budget:** While the budget will be described in a separate section, your proposal project should demonstrate that the activities described in the narrative are consistent with the budget. Briefly outline your budget categories, describing how grant funds will be allocated and managed throughout the project's lifecycle.

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Step 5: Hold A Proposal Kickoff Meeting

Once the proposal outline is developed, the project manager should set up a meeting with the proposal team to “kickoff” the writing process. The kickoff meeting is an opportunity to clearly communicate the project’s objectives and expectations to all team members as well as to ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.

Suggestions for a useful kickoff meeting:

- **Before the meeting:** Send the agenda (Appendix 3-3 for example) to the participants along with the following materials:
  - › Proposal outline (with writing assignments)
  - › Writing template
  - › Proposal writing timeline

Other Components Of The Application

After the kickoff meeting, as the writers begin on the narrative, the project manager can begin assembling the other materials requested in the RFP such as:

- **Cover page:** If formatting parameters allow for a cover page, be sure to include one. The cover page should capture the reviewers’ attention. Your cover page should include important information, e.g. funding opportunity title or name; funder or funding agency name; your organization’s name; date; contact information; etc. Optional: Photo of community or research element.
- **Cover letter:** Your cover letter should be limited to one page and should introduce your organization and the general topic of your proposed research project. Consider speaking to your organization’s mission and how the proposed research project will help you to advance your mission. The cover letter should convey your enthusiasm for the opportunity and your confidence that you have thoroughly corralled the resources you will need to carry out a strong research project that will benefit your whole community. It should highlight your ability to reach the population needed for the study.
- **Supplementary documentation:** Be sure to adhere to any guidelines from the funding agency on what or what not to append. Appendix material might include resumes of proposed staff, letters of commitment or support from partners or community leaders, a logic model or other figures to demonstrate your project vision and descriptions of any relevant past projects or other relevant experience.

Appendix 3-1: Final Review Checklist

Review Questions
☑ Have you reviewed your Proposal Requirement Checklist? Have you included each element on the list using the language in the proposal?
☑ Have you reviewed the list of scoring criteria you developed? Have you emphasized the things that are important to the funder?
☑ Have you described how community members will be involved in each stage of the research process?
☑ If you have multiple writers, does the proposal sound like "one voice?"
☑ Has the proposal been reviewed by an editor?
☑ Has the proposal been read by someone unfamiliar with the research methodology?
☑ Does the proposal adhere to the formatting and submission guidelines in the RFP?
☑ Are all required attachments and supporting documents included?

Appendix 3-2: Sample Proposal Writing Timeline

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1 RFP Released First Reading	2 Second Reading Decision Meeting	3 Create Proposal Team and Outline	4 Kickoff Meeting	5
8	9 1st Drafts Due COB Initial Graphics Due	10	11 1st Review Due COB	12 Questions Due
15 Graphic Updates Due	16 2nd Drafts Due COB	17 2nd Review Due COB	18	19 Final Graphics Due
22 Writers Final Drafts Due COB	23 Final Reviews Due COB	24 Final Editing (Proposal Manager)	25 Finalize Document Produced	26 Submit Proposal
29	30 Proposal Due	31		

Appendix 3-3: Sample Proposal Kickoff Meeting Agenda

Time	Topic	Description
10:00 a.m.	Agenda review and introductions	Staff and partners introduce themselves and their roles on the project.
10:10 a.m.	Overview of RFP	Provide a brief overview of the funding opportunity.
10:15 a.m.	Discuss planned approach	Describe the scope of work planned and high-level description of the research objectives and design.
10:45 a.m.	Proposal preparation process and logistics	Share timeline for writing and proposal submission. Timeline should include writing assignments. Discuss any future meetings and process for sharing files.
10:55 a.m.	Wrap up	Ask for questions on meeting content. Review next steps.

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04 Module

FOCUSING YOUR RESEARCH

About This Module

The research approach section of your proposal presents an opportunity to describe the scope and feasibility of your research design within the specified timeframe and budget outlined in the RFP. While this toolkit does not provide instruction in CBPR methods, it outlines the basic components of a research proposal.

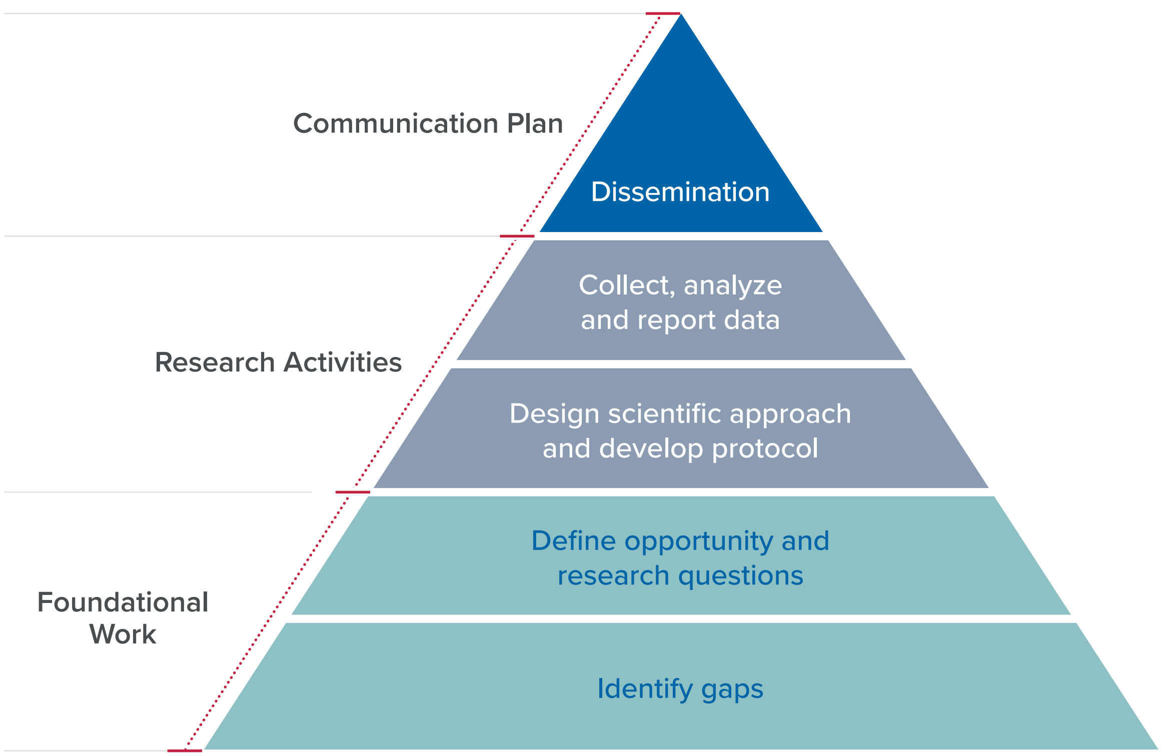
Determining which question(s) you will address in your study is the most fundamental element of a research proposal. The research question(s) will focus your project and ensure that your research findings are relevant and useful.

In this module, we will learn how to:

01. Formulate research questions from a broad topic.
02. Identify measurable study objectives.
03. Identify and choose data source(s), how to collect and manage that data and how to use the data to address the research question or questions.

The pyramid chart below depicts the research process, from identifying an issue to disseminating your findings. Take a minute to look through the framework as a whole before you begin developing your research questions.

Community-Based Research Framework



01. Communicate!

02. Thoughtfully and compliantly collect, analyze, and report data

03. Design your scientific approach to define clear endpoints

04. Define opportunity and research questions

05. Identify gaps and define your opportunity in partnership with the people you serve. Become familiar with the landscape and your community, listen to stakeholders, identify pain points, and translate these to the challenges that you want to solve.

Recommendations for Real-World Study Protocol

- Present clear, detailed and measurable objectives
- Delineate a strong scientific approach that is operationally feasible
- Include description of the variables chosen to estimate the outcomes of interest
- Include potential covariates or confounding factors
- Include ethical and regulatory considerations (in compliance with International Council for Harmonisation [ICH] Good Clinical Practice [GCP]' and/or Good Pharmacoepidemiology Practice [GPP] guidelines')
- Adhere to sponsor standards; comply with internal policies and good documentation practices (GDP)
- Allow for the anticipation of issues and upfront agreements to all study objectives and procedures

Research Objective

Before formulating your main research question or questions, define your research objective. A research objective is a statement of the purpose and aims of your study. The research objective identifies why your organization is interested in carrying out the research. A research objective may be any or all of the following:

- **Descriptive:** The research will result in a detailed picture of a public health issue or community.
  Example: "To describe the resources available within and attributes of the [COMMUNITY] for HIV care."
- **Exploratory:** The study seeks to deepen understanding of a topic that is new or poorly understood.
  Example: "To identify barriers to HIV testing and care in [COMMUNITY]."
- **Explanatory:** The study looks to explain causes or reasons for things.
  Example: "To examine the relationship between having health insurance and receiving HIV care in [COMMUNITY]."
- **Evaluative:** The study looks to evaluate an existing or proposed intervention or initiative.
  Example: "To evaluate whether our mobile testing initiative is reaching the prioritized population and those benefiting from the service in our community."

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Research Questions

In CBPR, the community and the researchers co-develop the research questions and co-design how to answer the questions. Once you have stated your research objective, work with your community to formulate a research question or questions that are focused, feasible to answer and will result in useful and actionable information.

Now it is time to develop your research question(s) from the research objective you have decided on:

- Include details to narrow the focus. In what city or geographical area will you conduct your research? What is the population you will study? What timeframe will you study?
- Be measurable. Is this a question you can address with available, accessible data sources?
- Be ethical. Will addressing your research question put anyone in an unfair or uncomfortable situation?
- Aim to generate findings that are practical and actionable for the community.
- Lead to other questions. Questions with a yes-or-no answer, or that may be answered with a single data point, are not good research questions.

Example Research Questions

Research objective: To evaluate whether our mobile testing initiative is reaching the intended beneficiaries in our community and those in need of services.

Potential questions:

How and to what extent has our mobile testing initiative increased access to testing and care for trans persons in the community?

Who has the testing initiative reached outside of the trans experience in [CITY]?

What was the experience of those who have been tested through the initiative?

Is the initiative operating as intended?

Research Goals

Research goals or end points are the intended or targeted outcomes of the research. The objectives or end points should be **SMART**:

- **Specific:** The objective or end point should state specifically what you would like to achieve.
- **Measurable:** The objective or end point should include measurable criteria for determining outcomes.
- **Achievable:** The objective or end point should be realistic and doable.
- **Relevant:** The objective or end point is relevant to the community's priorities and needs.
- **Time-Bound:** The objective or end point should include the timeframe for achieving it.

Descriptive or exploratory research objectives, by their open-ended nature, might not have measurable goals. In this case, your proposal will not include specific goals but will specify the data sources and methodology you will use to answer your research question and any subquestions.

Study Design

Your study design will describe your data sources and the approach(es) you will take to address your research question(s). As you identify your data sources and your design, you may find yourself adjusting your research question(s) to ensure alignment between what you are asking and what you can feasibly answer.

CBPR projects use a variety of data sources to answer research questions, and using a mixed-methods approach incorporating more than one data type is often useful in providing different perspectives on your research questions. As you read through the methods below, consider which data types will best answer your research questions, what data you will realistically be able to collect and the cultural appropriateness of collecting that data within your population of interest.

Quantitative Methods

Quantitative research collects numerical, multiple choice and other data that has set responses. It is useful when collecting data from a large number of people or when there are only a few possible answers. For example, did you go to the eastside clinic or the westside clinic? Are you 18 and over or under 18? The advantage of this approach is that it takes less time for the participants to fill out, and it is less time consuming to analyze.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods use open-ended questions which allow for more in-depth responses. They're usually given to a smaller group of participants as they take longer to administer and analyze but provide deeper insights into their experiences.

Because both methods have their advantages, they are often used in combination.

As you write up your study design, address this question: "What are the limitations or assumptions of the research?" This will help you to focus your design and promote actionable results.

Data Collection Methods

You can use **survey questionnaires** to gather information from the subjects of your research question, your community or your program participants. Surveys can provide descriptive information to address your research question, while protecting the anonymity of the survey respondents. In your proposal, you will want to describe:

- To whom you will administer the survey
- How many participants you are targeting for the survey
- How you will ensure that the survey is reaching the balance of people who can provide you with a complete picture
- Who will analyze the survey results
- How you will ensure data integrity and security

Group or individual interviews with knowledgeable persons or persons most affected by the question you are trying to answer can yield rich insights on how things work in the context in which you are carrying out your study. If you use interviews as an approach for your research question, you will want to lay out in your proposal who you will interview, how many people you will interview, who will conduct and analyze the results of the interviews and how you will ensure that your interview questions are appropriate and will elicit the information you want.

Structured observation can be a useful approach for understanding whether an initiative or intervention is being implemented as intended. In your proposal, indicate who or what you will observe, how you will structure and record the observations and how the observations will help you to answer your research question.

Data Management And Analysis. In your proposal, demonstrate that you have the time and the resources to collect, analyze and appropriately manage the data that will answer your research question. Your project plan should state who will own the data collected and ensure that it will be stored securely. One way to demonstrate this is through a data analysis or management plan. This can be a simple matrix organizing your multiple data sources, timeline and persons responsible. See Figure 1 for an example.

Data Management Plans (DMPs) are created to describe the data to be analyzed, data storage and access parameters, and plans for data destruction or archival. Like data analysis plans, a DMP is a planning document created prior to data collection and analysis.

Common Elements Of A DMP:

- Dataset title
- Study type/design
- Frequency of data collection (i.e., monthly, quarterly)
- Responsible person/contact information
- Description of standards for collecting data
- If data are to be released, description of level of access to data (i.e., free public access, restricted access, no access) and when it will be made available (i.e., with peer-reviewed publication)
- Procedures for data security, privacy/confidentiality such as removal of personally identifiable information (PII), data use agreements, website security, etc.
- Description of the established standards used to ensure usability and interoperability of data (e.g., ICD codes, CSV files, etc.)
- Description of documentation that will be available for analysis (e.g., data dictionary, sample code)
- Description of plans for archival and long-term data preservation

Ethics, Privacy And Confidentiality

All research must respect and protect the personal data of others. In your DMP, include procedures for data security and privacy. Additionally, check with your institution and/or research partners on whether an IRB review or ethics committee review is needed to pursue the research. These processes can sometimes take months to undergo and usually require details regarding how data will be collected, stored and shared.

In traditional research, an IRB or other ethical review board is responsible for ensuring that the research approach protects the research participants' rights. If your research team has an academic partner, you may be able to use that institution's IRB to vet your research project. You can also engage an independent review board for your project.

Reminders For Writing The Research Methods Section:

01. Use your proposal outline and writing template (Module 3).

02. Keep an eye on the proposal writing calendar you developed (Module 3) and adjust as needed.

03. Use the specific language in the RFP you are responding to.

04. Reinforce your proposal themes where appropriate. For example, note if your methodology is unique or innovative. Detail prior experience with this type of research.

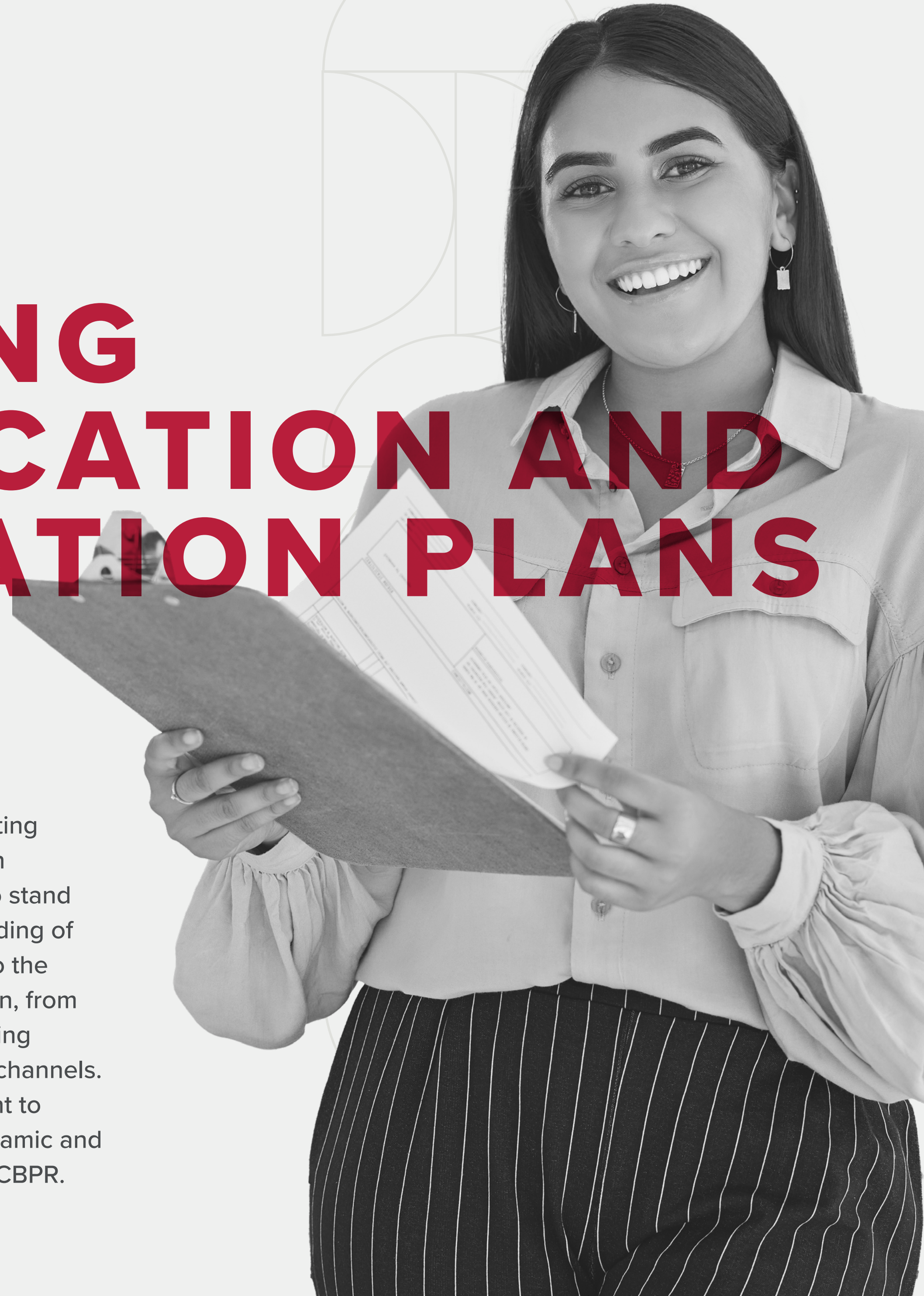
05. Put a check mark on the "Proposal Requirement Checklist" (Module 1) when you have developed each requested element in this section.

Figure 1. Example Data Management Plan

Research Questions and/ or Hypotheses	Data Source	Collection Timeline	Who Is Responsible	Analysis and Communication Timeline

05 Module

DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION PLANS



About This Module

Sharing the findings of CBPR is a fundamental part of conducting research. Engaging community partners in the communication process ensures that the research outcomes reach those who stand to benefit the most and allows for a more nuanced understanding of the implications of the findings. In this module, we'll delve into the essential elements of a communication and dissemination plan, from setting clear objectives and identifying key audiences to crafting tailored messages and selecting appropriate communication channels. The phases outlined—from planning and product development to interactive presentations and evaluation—underscore the dynamic and collaborative nature of effective communication strategies in CBPR.

What Is A Dissemination Plan?

A dissemination plan is a structured process of sharing research findings with professional audiences to increase their impact and potential for use in other settings. Technical language is used, and the findings are typically shared through peer-reviewed journals and conference presentations. While these activities may be part of disseminating findings from a CBPR project, sharing results with the community in a way that is easily accessible and understood is essential for the use of research findings in a community context and is crucial for the implementation and sustainability of CBPR projects.

What Is A Communication Plan?

Communication plans target a wide array of audiences, including the media, community members and the public. They encompass details about the research project, insights gained and broader implications that extend beyond the replication of results. These plans may use various channels such as newsletters, press releases, project fact sheets, brochures and social media platforms. These plans may also identify peer-reviewed journals, academic or practitioner conferences, and other scientific or professional venues for sharing results. The language used is intentionally straightforward to ensure accessibility for non-experts and promote utilization by the community.

Most RFPs will require that a dissemination plan or communication plan is included in the proposal. For the purposes of this module, we will use the broader term “communication plan” to include the wide range of audiences and objectives included in the CBPR process.

Developing A Communication Plan

A communication plan is a structure for sharing the outcomes, lessons learned and other important information about your project with others. Broadly speaking, the communication plan addresses the following:

- What do you hope to achieve by sharing your findings?
- Who is the audience you are trying to reach? How will you tailor the information you share for that audience?
- What do you want your audience or audiences to do with the information? Is there a call to action?
- How will you know if you have achieved the goals of your communication plan?

In outlining the communication plan in your proposal, include your plans to develop materials and share findings. These steps, described in detail below, can be tailored to fit your project.

COMMUNICATION PLAN - OUTLINE

Phase 1: Planning

01. Establish communication partners.
02. Define communication objectives.
03. Identify audiences.
04. Develop communication messages.
05. Select communication channels and products to be developed.
06. Create a timeline and an action plan.

Phase 2: Product Development

01. Develop communication materials.
02. Write reports for the funding organization as required.
03. Develop manuscripts for publication.

Phase 3: Presentation And Follow-Up

01. Hold interactive community presentations.

PHASE ONE

Phase 1: Communication Planning

01 Establish communication process.

The first step is to assemble community partners who will actively participate as co-creators in developing the communication plan. Established community partners and existing community advisory boards are potential sources of partners and can assist in identifying other stakeholders interested in contributing to this process. It is advisable to involve at least one strong community partner and ideally members of the community. Their insights are invaluable for shaping messages, selecting effective communication channels and placing findings in the appropriate context. If English is not your first language, and you would benefit from partners who can help with effective communication, they can be added to your team as well. Academic partners can play a crucial role in developing manuscripts, preparing abstracts for conferences and crafting communication strategies. Refer to plainlanguage.gov for a refresher and to answer questions as you write.

Once you determine who your dissemination partners are, begin by convening meetings to develop an inclusive process for developing the plan and timeline, allowing all stakeholders to contribute their perspectives and insights. During these meetings, determine the following:

- What are your shared missions or goals?
- How will you ensure that the plan reflects the diverse needs and interests of the community?
- What are potential barriers to dissemination and utilization of your research and how will you address them?
- Who will be responsible for each step in your plan? Will community partners be co-authors and co-presenters if interested?

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02 Define communication objectives.

The communication plan should describe what you and your community partners want to achieve by sharing the information learned from the project. Set clear, measurable objectives. The purpose may be to benefit the community, the scientific field or to inform your future work. There may be multiple goals for sharing research findings, such as to:

- Raise awareness about the research among a community, professionals or the public
- Educate community members about the public health problem and the research findings
- Get feedback from the community
- Promote change in systems or organizations
- Advocate for and support community action
- Influence local, state or national policy

03 Identify audiences.

The next step is to identify the various individuals, groups and organizations interested in your project and its outcomes. Each audience has distinct information needs and preferences, which will influence your choice of communication channels and message development. For instance, you may create materials tailored for patients to be distributed in clinics, alongside specific messages for healthcare providers at those facilities. The style and content of these materials will vary accordingly.

Potential audiences may include community groups, policymakers, healthcare professionals, funding agencies, donors, advocacy groups and government entities. Additionally, consider internal stakeholders such as partners and colleagues within your organization. It's also essential to include the funding organization among the key audiences in your communication strategy.

In generating a list of the audience for your communication activities, discuss with your community partners:

- Who will benefit from this project and the research findings? How can you involve them in the communication planning process?
- What potential difficulties are there in communicating with your audiences? For example, do they see you as a trusted source of information?
- Are there barriers to their receiving or finding your research or to their abilities to use it?

04 Develop communication messages.

A communication plan requires clear, concise messages that succinctly outline your research findings. Tailor these messages to resonate with your target audience and highlight the significance of your findings. Ensure your communication includes a clear call to action wherever feasible. Implement the Bottom-Line Up Front (BLUF) method by crafting a one- to two-sentence summary that encapsulates the core message of your communication materials.

Use plain language to summarize key points clearly. Distill the main findings or concepts into concise messages using simple language. Focus on the most critical information that your audience needs to understand.

Include a call to action. Even short social media posts should include a call to action. What do you want the audience to do with the information in the message? It may encourage them to take specific actions based on the research findings, advocate for change or be aware of a particular issue. A call to action can foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the research outcomes and their broader implications for the community and the scientific field.

Tailor messages specifically for each audience based on their priorities and concerns. Focus on highlighting research findings that directly relate to what matters most to each audience. Since research projects often yield multiple findings, create different messages to present those findings that are most relevant to each specific audience. Messages aimed at other researchers should address whether the findings are applicable across different geographical contexts or populations and identify limitations to their generalizability. Highlight novel findings and discuss potential for replicating the findings on a larger scale.

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05 Select communication channels and products.

Work with your community partners to identify the most effective communication channels to reach your target audience or audiences. How does each audience typically access news and health-related information? The delivery methods you select to disseminate your messages may include local media channels, community gatherings, social media platforms and grassroots organizations. Consider joining an existing community group or town hall meetings or host informational sessions to share your findings. Ask community partners to share your messages on socials channels. Health or biotech-related events in the area where the work was done may also provide opportunities to present results. Use the table in Appendix 5-1 to develop a plan to assess the preferences of each of the audiences you have identified.

Choosing the appropriate communication products is crucial for effectively sharing your messages with different audiences. Select formats that best resonate with your target audience's preferences for receiving information. Develop visually appealing and easily understandable materials such as brochures, posters and infographics. Consider utilizing multiple platforms including paid and organic social media, websites, blogs, radio announcements, fact sheets, policy papers, academic journal articles and white papers. Reports can be modified into a video format to share in different communication channels. Additionally, plan to translate materials into multiple languages when needed.

Your proposal should include the number of events and products you have planned and any other elements that have time and budget implications. However, it is important to create a flexible plan that can be tailored to each community group and evolve through continued dialogue with the community.

Tips For Working With The Media

- Develop relationships with those who are interested in your health topics and services.
- Be responsive when they reach out to you for information.
- Prepare talking points in advance and stay on message.
- Be open about what you don't know or what is uncertain in your field.

06 Create a timeline and an action plan.

Next, establish a timeline for your communication plan. Sharing findings in a timely manner with the right audiences enhances their potential to drive meaningful change. Decide on the schedule and frequency for disseminating your data, findings (including preliminary ones), research process, methodology and lessons learned. Determine when you will post messages on social media, when presentations will be held, when fact sheets and other materials will be finalized and distributed, when they will be evaluated, etc. Use the Timeline Worksheet in Appendix 5-2 to plan your activities and ensure that they stay on track.

After completing these steps, develop an action plan tailored to each audience using the table provided in Appendix 5-3.

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PHASE TWO

Phase 2: Product Development

01 Develop communication materials.

As you develop the materials that were outlined in the planning phase, you can use the following guidelines:

Lead with the "BLUF" (Bottom Line Up Front): Ensure materials start with the most crucial message for that audience. Given that most people only read the first few lines, particularly online, beginning with the key message maximizes communication effectiveness.

Use plain language: Avoid jargon and unnecessarily complex language. Even academic audiences appreciate clear, easy-to-read materials. Replace complex terms with simpler alternatives whenever possible. For example, instead of "utilize," use "use;" instead of "facilitate," use "help." If technical terms are unavoidable, provide definitions in plain language either within the text or in a glossary. Provide links or references to more technical scientific materials for readers who want more information.

Consider your audience's literacy level: Assess the literacy level of your audience and ensure readability by having someone from your target audience or a community partner review your content. This feedback can highlight areas where the language might be unclear or where adjustments are needed to improve comprehension.

Consider cultural context: Cultural context should always be considered in the presentation of research findings. Collaborate with community partners to ensure the content aligns with cultural norms and values, using imagery, colors, symbols, graphics or pictures that resonate effectively with the audience.

Create plain language summaries of scientific materials: Develop versions of research materials with detailed scientific information that use plain language and present complex concepts in an accessible format. Incorporate visual aids such as charts, graphs or infographics to enhance comprehension. Use formatting techniques like bullet points and headings to organize information logically. Include white space in the materials so that they are not text-heavy and are more appealing to read.

02 Write reports for the funding organization as required.

The communication plan should include preparing and submitting reports to the funding organization as specified in the RFP. These reports should provide a comprehensive overview of the research project and its outcomes, including all of the information specified in the funding announcement. Emphasize the impact of these efforts in advancing knowledge and fostering positive community change.

03 Develop communication materials.

Prepare manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals, adhering to the specific guidelines and standards of each publication. Collaborate closely with community partners and stakeholders to ensure accurate representation and interpretation of research findings. Acknowledge the contributions of community members throughout the publication process, acknowledging their valuable insights and support. For additional recommendations about preparing and submitting journal articles visit: https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/

PHASE THREE

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Phase 3: Presentation Phase

01 Hold interactive community presentations.

Conduct interactive community presentations that facilitate meaningful discussions and generate input from those directly affected by the findings or the health issue. These meetings offer an opportunity for community members to offer insights into how the findings resonate with their experiences, potentially enhancing their relevance in both community and professional settings. Consider having a community partner co-lead or facilitate the meeting to enhance trust and encourage participation in discussions.

Allocate sufficient time for questions, comments and open discussions to create a collaborative environment where community members feel acknowledged and valued. Use storytelling and real-life examples to make the information relevant and engaging. Encourage researchers and community members to share personal anecdotes related to the findings or the research process.

During these gatherings, attendees may suggest customizing the messaging or recommend additional groups for presentations. Refine the dissemination process based on participant feedback. Consider scheduling additional meetings to gather ideas that can inform future research directions.

Summary

Developing a comprehensive communication plan is essential for ensuring that research findings are effectively communicated and used by diverse audiences. Engaging community partners at every step is paramount, as their insights not only enhance the relevance and cultural sensitivity of communication materials but also foster trust and participation among stakeholders. Incorporating calls to action and emphasizing inclusivity can inspire meaningful community engagement and promote tangible outcomes that address local needs and advance scientific understanding.

Reminders For Writing The Communication And Dissemination Plans Section:

01. Use your proposal outline and writing template (Module 3).

02. Keep an eye on the proposal writing calendar you developed (Module 3) and adjust as needed.

03. Use the specific language in the RFP you are responding to.

04. Reinforce your proposal themes where appropriate. For example, can you highlight a community partnership that will increase the reach and impact of your findings in the community? Do you have strong media partners or experience with creative communications materials?

05. Put a check mark on the "Proposal Requirement Checklist" (Module 1) when you have developed each requested element in this section.

Appendix 5-1: Audience Assessment

Audience	Demographics	Priorities/Values	Preferred Channels	Relevant Project Data To Share	Project Involvement

Appendix 5-2: Timeline Worksheet

Task	Person Responsible	Due Date
Ex: Develop fact sheets.		
Ex: Distribute fact sheets to clinics.		

Appendix 5-3: Communication Action Plan

Audience	Communication Objective	Message/Call to Action	Product	Channel/Dissemination Method	Timeline	Evaluation Measures

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06 Module

EVALUATION AND SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

About This Module

This module focuses on maximizing the long-term impact of CBPR projects. The evaluation plan is designed to measure the project's effectiveness, and the sustainability plan increases the potential that its benefits will continue beyond the funding period.

This section provides best practices and suggestions for writing the evaluation and sustainability plan sections of your proposal, emphasizing strategic thinking and alignment with the funding opportunity. Tailor the content further based on specific details and objectives unique to your CBPR project and the requirements of the RFP you are responding to.

Evaluation Plans

The evaluation section of your proposal can demonstrate how you will measure the project's results and identify ways to improve it as you implement it. Evaluation plans might address:

- What does the evaluation aim to answer?
- What measures will answer the question(s)?
- Who will be involved in the evaluation?
- How will the findings be disseminated and used to improve the project?
- What outcomes could be explored for future research? Could it be expanded to a larger scale after your study?
- What aspects of the project are sustainable and have long-term value for the community? (Many RFPs will specify that they are interested in funding projects that have value beyond the funding period.)

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Evaluation Questions

The evaluation plan outlines the evaluation questions and data sources you will use, such as interviewing study participants or partners and reviewing records to gather relevant data. Most evaluation plans include some objectives related to the project implementation (process evaluation) along with others looking at the results of the study (outcome evaluation). Depending on the project and the data available, you may only have process evaluation questions. In either case, the evaluation plan will help you communicate the effectiveness of your research project.

Process evaluation questions look at the research project's planning and logistics to determine what went well and what could be improved in the future. For example:

- Did we involve the community in identifying a public health need?
- Did we examine existing data sources in identifying a public health need?
- Did we set up and stay within the timeline?
- Were staff and others trained and prepared to do the work?
- Did we have strong partnerships and support from the community?

Another area the evaluation could examine relates to the study outcomes or results:

- What limitations or assumptions were built into the research?
- Were the findings in line with what we expected?
- Do we know why we got the outcomes that we did?
- Did the project have any unanticipated effects in the community (positive or negative)?
- Did community members have different reactions to the outcomes than expected?
- What could we change to make the study outcomes more meaningful in the future?
- Did our leadership and board of directors find value in the project and support applying for similar funding in the future?

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Logic Models

Although commonly used to evaluate program processes and outcomes, logic models can be used for planning the objectives, expected achievements and potential impact of a research project. They can be thought of as road maps detailing how project activities will lead to the desired outcomes. While not required by most RFPs, they can be useful in communicating connections between your activities and expected outcomes with your partners and community members. The format of a logic model is flexible, allowing for visual representations such as flow charts or maps that illustrate the connections between project inputs and expected outcomes.

A worksheet for thinking through the components of your project's logic model is found in Appendix 6-1.

Stakeholder Involvement

CBPR emphasizes the importance of engaging stakeholders in all phases of research, including evaluation. Discuss the role of community members and other partners (e.g., academic partners, study participants, people with lived experience) in the evaluation design and implementation process. Think broadly about who your stakeholders are and consider:

- Beneficiaries – those who receive your support
- People with lived experiences
- Individuals, foundations or companies that provide financial contributions
- People who volunteer their time and skills
- Local governments
- Community partners
- Leadership
- Anyone who ensures you remain effective, responsive and committed to your mission

Disseminating And Using Results

Consider how you intend to use the evaluation results you generated from the questions developed in Module 4. Will you use the results to strengthen your community partnerships? Will you develop lessons learned from your research project to improve future research for your organization and other CBPR projects? The intended use of the findings informs the evaluation questions and approach you develop. For example, if one of the objectives is to evaluate the strength of your community partnerships by conducting interviews with your partners, this section of the proposal could describe how you will share the findings with your partners and discuss what is working well and what could be improved.

Outcomes For Future Research

Lastly, the evaluation section might include a discussion of how you would develop outcomes and funding for future research. For example, you could hold a meeting with your academic and community partners at the end of the project to discuss what questions remain for future research. You could host a town hall to generate ideas or this may be a discussion you will have internally with your research team or leadership.

What Is Sustainability?

Sustainability can be defined as ensuring that the benefits and outcomes achieved continue to impact the community after the project period. It involves strategic planning to maintain project achievements and foster ongoing community engagement.

Sustainability in CBPR goes beyond continued funding. Depending on the project goals, it can include increased community capacity to conduct research, the integration of project outcomes into local systems and the continuation of positive health impacts. It involves creating pathways for communities and organizations to maintain and build upon the progress achieved through the research partnership.

Why Plan For Sustainability When Writing The Proposal?

A well-designed sustainability plan not only extends the longevity of CBPR projects but also strengthens community resilience and empowerment. Every day, in every role within your nonprofit, you embrace sustainability as a guiding principle. It's not just a goal; it's the heartbeat of your mission and accountability to the community. By nurturing this commitment in this research project, you ensure that this impact is not just for today, but for the future. Remember, the dedication you show in your daily work is already creating sustainability within your CBO. Some specific benefits of sustainability planning include:

- **Maximizing Impact:** A well-structured sustainability plan increases the value and effectiveness of the project by continuing to benefit the community over time or expanding into other populations or geographic areas.
- **Future Planning:** Some obstacles to sustainability will take time to address. By planning early, you will have the opportunity to put solutions in place by the time they are needed. Determine what aspects of the project are essential if funding is reduced and you are not able to continue activities at the same level you were during the funding period.

Developing A Sustainability Plan:

Identify which aspects of the project have been most beneficial and which are most critical to sustain. Assess the feasibility of continuing each part of the project. Can ongoing funding be identified? Is it resource-intensive? Additionally, consider whether the activity aligns with community priorities, organizational mission or scientific objectives. See Appendix 6-2 for a Sustainability Planning Worksheet. Other considerations:

- **Scalability:** Determine what can be maintained at current levels and what can be expanded. Decide if the project can be developed into a model that can be implemented in multiple communities or can be scaled up to reach a larger population.
- **Impact on community capacity:** Evaluate whether community capacity for CBPR is expected to grow and how that growth can be sustained. Assess the potential for continuing community partnerships established through the CBPR process.

Engage Stakeholders:

- Involve community partners and stakeholders in the sustainability planning process from the beginning. Their insights and perspectives are invaluable in determining what strategies are a priority for the community.
- Discuss opportunities to develop the capacity of community members and organizations to independently continue or adapt the project activities. Address what training or skills development might be needed.

Assess Resources Needed For Sustainability:

- **Organizational/human resources:**
  - Define the ongoing role of your organization in sustaining project activities.
  - Assess leadership support available to maintain partnerships and other activities beyond the project period.
  - Plan for staff turnover by documenting important procedures and information.
  - Identify resources within the community that can support sustainability efforts (e.g., local leadership, institutional support and community networks).
  - Explore opportunities for community organizations to assume ownership of ongoing activities.
- **Financial resources:**
  - Consider what level of funding is necessary to continue the partnership and other outcomes in your sustainability plan.
  - Determine if it is necessary to seek the same level of funding as during the project period.
  - If needed, begin fundraising and engaging a grant writer to identify other funding opportunities and to write proposals.

Identify Barriers To Sustainability And Strategies To Overcome Them:

- Anticipate potential barriers to achieving sustainability goals, such as funding reductions or staff turnover.
- Develop strategies to overcome these barriers, such as diversifying funding sources or enhancing community buy-in through outreach and education.

Reminders For Writing The Sustainability Plans Section:

01. Use the proposal outline and writing template from Module 3.
02. Refer to the proposal writing calendar developed in Module 3 and adjust as necessary to meet deadlines.
03. Incorporate language specific to the RFP to align with the funder's expectations and criteria.
04. Reinforce themes, emphasizing the project's potential for long-term impact and lasting community partnerships.
05. Complete the "Writing The Sustainability Plans" section of the "Proposal Requirement Checklist" from Module 1 to ensure all requested elements are addressed comprehensively.

Appendix 6-1: Logic Model Planning Worksheet

You may use this worksheet to think through the outcomes you hope to achieve through the activities you have planned. The worksheet has several components to help you plan your project including:

- **Purpose or mission:** The need for change or the problem that the project is addressing
- **Process components:** The essential elements needed for the project:
  - **Inputs:** Resources allocated to the project, including materials, funding, personnel and expertise
  - **Activities:** Specific actions undertaken to achieve project goals, encompassing processes, events, products or services
  - **Outputs:** Tangible, countable findings generated by each activity, crucial for tracking progress toward desired outcomes
- **Outcomes or goals:** The anticipated results of the project:
  - **Short-Term Outcomes:** Changes in awareness or knowledge expected within weeks or months
  - **Intermediate-Term Outcomes:** Changes in behavior anticipated within months or years
  - **Long-Term Outcomes:** Changes in social or life conditions expected over years or decades

Purpose (Mission):					
Process			Outcome		
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short	Intermediate	Long

Appendix 6-2: Sample Sustainability Planning Worksheet

Objective	Priority	Facilitators	Barriers	Other Considerations	Decision
Objective 1: Examine feasibility of implementing a new evidence-based practice.	High community priority	Aligned with my organization's mission Strong community partner	Resource intensive No further funding identified	Fills a gap in scientific field	Will continue if supported by my org and community partner
Objective 2:					

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07 Module

BUDGET AND TIMELINE

About This Module

This module provides guidance on creating a budget and timeline tailored specifically for CBPR initiatives, ensuring alignment with project goals and facilitating effective resource management. These elements are crucial components of a funding proposal, demonstrating strategic planning and a commitment to achieving impactful outcomes through collaborative community research.

Creating A Project Budget

Refer to the RFP guidelines to determine the preferred format for submitting budget details. Depending on the requirements, you might need to submit a separate Word document or an Excel spreadsheet using a template provided by the funding agency. Alternatively, the submission process may involve an online portal where you can follow step-by-step instructions and fill out forms for entering budget information. If no submission instructions are provided, inquire as to whether there is one before creating your own. Consider all project expenses beforehand and strategize how funding will be allocated before proceeding with data entry. Taking this preparatory step ensures clarity and accuracy in budget allocation during the submission process.

In general, the budget includes the total proposed amount organized by year.

The funding agency may have its own template (MS Word document or an Excel spreadsheet) or structure (an online portal) for the budget.

Review proposal requirements in the RFP to ensure your budget complies to internal and external requirements.

01. Identify costs: Below are some common cost components to consider. Note any limitations on the types of costs prohibited in the RFP. For example, some RFPs state that funds cannot be used for equipment purchase, staff costs or car rental.

DIRECT COST

Direct costs are expenses that can be directly tied to the project's budget:

- **Personnel:** Allocate funds for project staff, including researchers, community coordinators and administrative support. Consider salary, benefits and subcontracting costs (e.g., contractors, focus group facilitators).
- **Materials and supplies:** Budget for project supplies such as data collection tools and materials for community meetings.
- **Travel and meetings:** Include expenses for travel to community sites, meetings with stakeholders and conferences. Include airport transportation, parking and per diem if applicable.
- **Community engagement:** Allocate resources for community meetings, focus groups, workshops and incentives for participants.
- **Evaluation and data analysis:** Budget for data collection tools, software licenses, statistical analysis packages and evaluation reports.
- **Communication and dissemination:** Include expenses related to developing and producing print materials as well as presenting at conferences, town halls and other meetings.

INDIRECT COST

Indirect costs are expenses not explicitly tied to the project's budget but are necessary for the general operation of project activities

- Overhead expenses
- Facility costs
- Administrative fees

02. Develop a budget narrative: In your proposal narrative, explain the rationale behind the budget, describing how each cost aligns with specific project activities and contributes to the overall of the CBPR initiative. Ensure that the budget items and narrative align with the project objectives outlined in other sections of the proposal.

Establishing A Project Timeline

Describe the steps of the proposed research project in a timeline that lays out the work task by task, including expected outcomes and projected dates of completion for each key task.

01. Project phases and milestones: Establish a logical sequence of activities, ensuring that each phase builds upon the previous one and aligns with project goals and timelines.

- **Planning:** Outline activities such as community needs' assessments, stakeholder engagement and research protocol development.
- **Implementation:** Specify timelines for data collection, community interventions and ongoing collaboration with stakeholders.
- **Analysis and reporting:** Allocate time for data analysis, interpretation of findings and preparation of reports for stakeholders and funders.
- **Dissemination and evaluation:** Plan for sharing results with the community, presenting at conferences and conducting evaluations.

02. Timeline visualization:

- Provide a clear, comprehensive timeline that outlines project milestones and activities from start to finish. Include key dates for data collection, community engagements and dissemination of results.
- For another approach, create a project timeline using a template built into Excel.
- These visual tools illustrate key milestones, deadlines and relationships between project activities. This helps team members and stakeholders keep track of activities and deadlines throughout the project period.

03. Flexibility: Build in some extra time in the plan to accommodate unexpected delays and any adjustments needed during the research process.

Timelines Will Generally Include:

- The duration of each phase
- Objectives within each phase
- Deliverables per phase
- Dates of completion for each task

Funding agencies commonly request a visual tool to ensure the timely completion of agreed-upon deliverables.

Glossary

Capacity Assessment is the process of assessing the knowledge, skills or resources of an individual or organization to help them more effectively reach their goals.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a collaborative approach to research that involves all stakeholders throughout the research process, from establishing the research question, to developing data collection tools, to analysis and dissemination of findings.

Dissemination Plan is a framework that outlines strategies for sharing research findings with various audiences. The plan outlines how the information will be shared in an understandable, respectful and meaningful way for each audience.

End Points are outcomes that are measured objectively to determine whether study aims are achieved.

Feasibility is the plausibility of carrying out the proposed research activities within the specified timeframe and budget outlined in the RFP. It demonstrates an understanding of the critical aspects of a project to determine the probability of completing it.

FOA is an acronym for Funding Opportunity Announcement. See Request for Proposals (RFP) below.

Hypothesis is an assumption, an idea that is proposed for the sake of argument so that it can be tested through research to determine its validity.

Qualitative Research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. Instead of collecting numerical data points or intervening or introducing treatments as in quantitative research, qualitative research helps provide context to further investigate and understand quantitative data.

Quantitative Research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon.

RFA is an acronym for Request for Applications. See Request for Proposals (RFP) below.

RFP is an acronym for Request for Proposal, a document typically issued by a company, organization or government agency to solicit proposals from vendors, contractors or service providers for a specific project, program or initiative. May also be called FOA or RFA.

Research Methods (Design) describe the framework of the research project and how to collect, measure and analyze the data.

Stakeholders are individuals, organizations or communities who have an interest in research or will experience a direct impact from the research outcomes. For example, this could be community members; community-based organizations; academic researchers; local, state and federal partners; faith-based leaders; policymakers; or those committed to achieving health equity.

Sustainability can be defined as ensuring that the benefits and outcomes achieved continue to impact the community after the project period. It involves strategic planning to maintain project achievements, foster ongoing community engagement and identify diverse funding streams.

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Community-Based Research Proposal Development Toolkit

Tailored guidance for understanding and responding effectively to community-based research funding opportunities

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