

Tips from Previous Research Assistants

“Try to develop a good sense of the organization you are working for. Find out what the organization’s goals for the project are and how those goals developed.”

“Make sure you understand why the community organization needs the research and how they intend to use the results. This will help you shape your project.”

“Make sure roles are clearly defined before starting the project. Clearly define what you believe you can accomplish and find out exactly what your community organization wants from you.”

“Don’t be afraid to ask specific questions about what should or shouldn’t be included in your research. Otherwise, you may end up re-doing what you’ve done before, with a slightly different bent.”

“Make sure you know who your mentors are supposed to be and that you will be counting on them to help you out. Use that resource!”

“Plan ahead and manage your time well. Stay in good communication with your supervisor. Try to map out a realistic timeline for your work and stick with it as closely as possible.”

“Though your work will be fairly independent, maintain contact with everyone involved throughout the project. Continue to make sure everyone involved has the same goal in mind.”

“Try to be flexible. Don’t be surprised if the goals of the project change halfway through. This is why it is always important both to keep an open mind and to communicate.”

“You must be self-motivated. Others will help you and give you guidance, but the energy needs to come from you.”

“Be prepared to work independently and to deal with the frustration of not always knowing exactly what the community organization wants. Communication is the key.”

“Use it as an opportunity to build a career network. It is a great opportunity to apply academic work to the real world.”