CURA
Community-Based Research Program
Orientation Packet
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CURA Community-Based Research Programs: An Overview

Introduction

CURA has two CBR programs: the Community Assistantship Program (CAP), which serves greater Minnesota; and the Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program (Nelson Program), which serves the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. Both programs match the research and technical needs of organizations with student research assistants to carry out community-defined and guided projects. Both provide graduate or undergraduate student assistance for applied research projects, program planning and development, program evaluation, and other short-term projects. Student assistantships are generally 200 hours (10 hours per week) during spring or fall semesters, and 260 hours (20 hours per week) during summer. The goals of these programs are to

- enhance the capacity of community-based groups in Minnesota to meet their goals by giving them an opportunity to accomplish relevant applied research; and
- provide students and faculty with useful community-based applied research and learning opportunities.

These community research projects typically place students in part-time research assistantships for one academic semester or over the summer. Students are selected by and report directly to the community organization.

Community Assistantship Program (CAP)

Focus: Serves Greater Minnesota and statewide projects
Website: www.cura.umn.edu/CAP
Program Director: Will Craig, wcraig@umn.edu, 612-625-3321

Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program (Nelson Program)

Focus: Serves metro-area community-based organizations and suburban government agencies
Website: www.cura.umn.edu/Nelson-Program
Program Director: Neeraj Mehta, nmehta@umn.edu, 612-624-8988

What Is Community-Based Research?

Community-based research (CBR) is where community knowledge and University knowledge come together to solve the problems of our time. Merging community knowledge with the resources and expertise of the University leads to new light being shed upon today’s challenges and calls for innovative directions to solve them.

According to a key article in the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, CBR has three defining characteristics. First, it is a collaborative enterprise between academic researchers and community members. For CURA, this means that the research questions
are defined in partnership and that the project is community driven. Second, CBR seeks to
democratize knowledge by validating multiple sources of knowledge and promoting the
use of multiple methods of discovery. For CURA, this means that academic and commu-
nity knowledge are valued equally and that student researchers use a variety of approaches
to tackling the research questions. Finally, CBR has a goal of social action for the purpose
of achieving social change and justice. For CURA, this means that the emphasis is always
placed on the use of the research results by the community.

For more information about community-based research, see Kerry Strand, Sam Marullo,
Nick Cutforth, Randy Stoecker, and Patrick Donohue, “Principles and Best Practice for
Community-Based Research, Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning 9,3 (Summer
2003): 5–15. Article available from Jeff Corn at jcorn@umn.edu.

What Does CBR Achieve?

CURA community-based research achieves the following objectives:

With community organizations

- Connects the organization to other community groups and similar efforts locally and
  nationally
- Makes organizations more credible, positioning them to take a leadership role on
  issues
- Makes organizations better able to make informed, data-driven, strategic decisions
- Provides capacity, space and perspective to see an issue or constituency in different
  ways, leading to fresh approaches to community problems
- Opens doors and creates opportunities for community members at the University

With students

- Provides opportunity to apply academic learning to real world problems in a way that
  can have direct benefit to the community
- Provides tuition remission and salary
- Develops the students professional and personal network
- Builds and expands skills and knowledge of the community and field of work
- Makes students more employable and can lead directly to a job

With the wider community

- Contributes to policy discussions on community and regional levels
- Acts as a model of what works in communities that can be replicated by others
- Provides relevant information that would not otherwise be accessible
**Project Participant Roles and Responsibilities**

**Student Research Assistant**

Student researchers are hired by communities and are responsible for conducting applied research and providing the community group with the specified product. It is expected that the student will be self-motivated and that he/she will stay in regular contact with the project supervisor. Though the project may entail performing a small amount of related clerical tasks, the focus of the student’s activities should be on the research project. The research assistant should keep the needs of the community organization and the purpose of the research foremost in their minds throughout the project. It is expected that upon the project’s completion, the student will submit a final report or project summary to CURA.

**Community Project Supervisors**

Community project supervisors oversee the project. They recommend to CURA their preference for which student researcher to hire, provide ongoing guidance, and make sure the student is getting the support needed to successfully complete the project. The student is directly accountable to the project supervisor. It is important to the success of the project to clarify the lines of accountability and support at the outset of the research. No matter how motivated and independent the research assistant may be, it is impossible for them to meet the community’s needs without a clear explanation of the history and purpose of the project and the objectives that need to be met.

**Faculty Mentors**

At the student researcher’s request, he/she is matched with a faculty mentor to assist with the project. Mentors should be considered a resource not only for the student, but also for the community organization, since their input will strengthen the final product. The faculty mentor offers advice on research design, methodology, and current literature relevant to the topic. A faculty mentor should be considered when the student needs assistance in developing a research methodology and identifying resources.
Community Projects Process

Proposal
1. Community organization identifies an issue or concern
2. Community consults with CURA staff, completes the CURA Community-Based Research Programs Application, and submits proposal
3. Proposal is assigned to the appropriate CURA program and reviewed by the program review committee
4. Proposal is approved, referred to another CURA program, or denied, and organization is notified of decision

Hiring
5. If approved, a job description is developed, approved by the organization, and posted
6. Students apply directly to the community organization, or online via the U of M employment system
7. Community organization completes Student Recommendation Form (page 24) to recommend to CURA a student for hiring
8. If the community is providing matching funds, commitment needs to be formalized at this point, before the student is hired (See CURA Administrative Procedures, page 89)
9. Student is contacted by the CURA administrator and completes hiring paperwork

Project
10. CURA staff meets with student and project supervisor to develop a work plan (page 25)
11. At the student researcher’s request, community and faculty mentors are recruited
12. Mid-point check-in (page 28) is completed and returned to the appropriate CURA Program
13. Student completes final report (page 16) and sends an electronic copy to: curacbr@umn.edu. CURA reviews the report and sends a final copy to the community organization

Wrap Up
14. Report is placed online in the CURA Publication Catalog on the CURA website
15. Project participants complete a program evaluation
16. Publicize project results

Evaluation
17. CURA staff will stay in touch with the community organization over time to learn about the long-term impact of the research
Administrative Procedures and Requirements

CURA Administrative Procedures

Job Description and Selection of Student

CURA staff will work with the community agency to draft the student job description. The completed job description will be posted on the University of Minnesota’s Employment website and the CURA website.

Once an agency has selected a student to be hired, they notify Jeff Corn at CURA by e-mail using the Student Recommendation Form (page 24). The community group may notify the successful candidate of its decision, but should make it clear that CURA makes the hiring decisions and that the student does not have a job until CURA determines that he/she is eligible for employment and he/she has been placed on payroll. In addition, the student cannot begin working until he/she has completed employment paperwork at CURA. This restriction is based on federal law.

Matching Funds

CURA appreciates matching funds from the community. It helps stretch our limited resources and allows us to fund more projects. There is no requirement for a match, but if two proposals were of equal merit, we would select the one that cost us less.

There are two ways to provide the match: as a gift or through a contract. In either case, this arrangement must be formalized before the student can be hired.

- Gift. A gift is the simplest way to provide a match; simply write a check to CURA, University of Minnesota. The community organization formalizes this approach by submitting a written statement saying they are committed to providing $XX.XX in support of the specified project. Please name the CURA program (CAP or Nelson Program) and provide the title of the project. We expect the full gift amount to be paid before the student is hired.

- Contract. Some organizations would prefer to use a formal contract; CURA will provide a standard University contract on request. A signed copy of the contract must be delivered before the student can be hired. Organizations will be asked to pay half their commitment up front, and the other half when the project is completed.

Hiring Process

CURA’s administrator will contact the student to schedule an appointment with him/her to process the appropriate University of Minnesota payroll and human resources paperwork. If the student has not worked at the University in the past 12 months, he/she will need to provide verification of eligibility to work in the United States, such as a passport or driver’s license and Social Security card. International students will need to have appropriate visa status and receive employment verification from the payroll department. At the meeting, the student will be given timesheets for reporting hours worked.
**Time Sheets**

The student’s agency supervisor is responsible for monitoring the student’s time and approving the timesheets before he/she submits them to CURA. Time sheets are due at CURA by 12:00 PM on the day after the pay period ends. Students may deliver, mail, e-mail, or fax the time sheets. CURA will process a time sheet without the supervisor’s signature, but we must receive the original or copy of the time sheet with the supervisor’s signature before we process another time sheet for the student. The University has a biweekly payroll schedule. Time sheet due dates and paydays are listed on the back of each time sheet. Time sheets can be faxed to (612) 626-0273 or e-mailed to cura@umn.edu.

**Fringe Benefits**

For appointments during the academic year, graduate research assistants will receive tuition remission and health insurance premium benefits based on the number of hours they work during the semester. Students must work at least 97.5 hours to qualify for some tuition remission, and 195 hours to receive the full quarter-time RA tuition benefit. Students must work 195 hours to qualify for health insurance premium benefits. Hours worked before or after the semester payroll period will not generate these benefits. For summer appointments, health insurance premium benefits will be covered for those working at least 50% (130 hours during summer), but tuition benefits ordinarily are not supported. For more information, see www.cura.umn.edu/students/summer-assistantships.

**Maximum Work Hours**

The University of Minnesota and the federal government have a variety of restrictions on the number of hours a student may work each week during the academic year as a total of all of their University of Minnesota jobs. They are as follows:

- **Undergraduate students**: 40 hours/week (we recommend 10–15 hours/week)
- **Graduate students**: 30 hours/week (we recommend 10 hours/week; more than 30 hours/week only with written permission of the Graduate School)
- **International students**: 20 hours/week during scheduled class periods and finals week

Please be aware that, per federal law, we cannot pay international students for hours worked above this limit. A payroll schedule and other useful information for F-1 and J-1 visa holders can be found at www1.umn.edu/ohr/payroll/international/index.html.

During semester breaks and summer, ALL students may work 40 hrs/week.

**Final Report Requirements**

CURA Community-Based Research Programs require research assistants to complete and submit a final report to both CURA and the community organization directing the project. This final report assures the project research will be available to other community
organizations. The report will be posted on the CURA website for researchers and community organizers to use. More information on the requirements for the final report can be found on page 16.

**Expense Reimbursements**

CAP pays mileage, at the University of Minnesota reimbursement rate, for up to two student trips to the project region if located outside the 7-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. Reimbursement for additional trips can be negotiated with program staff. CAP expects the supporting community organization to provide lodging, meals, and project related expenses. To request reimbursement, students need to complete a University Employee Expense Worksheet and submit it to Jeff Corn (jcorn@umn.edu) for review and approval. Requests for expense reimbursements should be submitted to CURA on a monthly basis or when expenditures total at least $25.00. A copy of the expense worksheet is available online.

For the Nelson Program, the community agency will reimburse student employees for out-of-pocket expenses.
University of Minnesota Human Subjects Research Requirements

Student research assistants in a CURA program should be aware that their research may involve human subjects. At the University of Minnesota, human subjects’ research is overseen by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that projects meet institutional and ethical standards for the protection human subjects. The IRB administration and CURA have worked together to ensure that these standards are being met. What follows is a guide to the CURA/IRB relationship.

What is human subjects research?

Human subjects research involves collecting and/or analyzing data from people. In a CURA project, human subjects research is involved if the research assistant is conducting focus groups, surveys, or interviews; reviewing reports of focus groups, interviews, or surveys conducted by others; or working with information from an organization’s client database.

What are the issues and concerns for human subjects research?

Although there are a number of legal regulations and ethical guidelines concerning human subjects research, the IRB has two broad standards:

- subjects must not be placed at undue risk, and
- subjects must give uncoerced, informed consent to their participation.

Another set of guiding principles for human subjects research comes from the *Belmont Report*, which was released by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1979. The *Belmont Report* identifies three core values for human subjects research:

- respect for persons: all individuals have autonomy;
- beneficence: all potential risks and benefits to individuals must be weighed; and
- justice: no population should bear undue risk from research if they will not also share in the benefits.

Privacy and confidentiality are other major concerns. Information that personally identifies a research subject, or makes it easy for others to identify him or her, must not be included in project reports that will be available to the public. Researchers, of course, also should not share information about their subjects with others outside of the research project.


The website also contains an online tutorial on informed consent and several sample consent forms, including some translations. Visit www.irb.umn.edu/guidance/icp.html.

Finally, the website has information about data privacy and confidentiality. Visit www.irb.umn.edu/guidance/hippa.html#ways. (See item #5, “Using Data that is De-Identified.”)
**Does my CURA project need to be reviewed by IRB?**

The Regents of the University of Minnesota have established a policy for determining when a project must be reviewed by IRB:

- if the research is being done by a University student, staff member, or faculty member;
- if the research involves data collection or data records of human subjects; and
- if a student researcher is using the research to fulfill graduation or degree requirements.

Although many CURA projects meet the first two criteria, the IRB has determined that most CURA projects do not require IRB review. This is because students working on CURA projects, although employed by the University of Minnesota, are really doing their work for an outside organization. This means that CURA research assistants are generally conducting research as a job for an employer, so the employer is responsible for ensuring the safety and obtaining the consent of the research subjects.

**How do I know if my CURA project needs to be reviewed by IRB?**

There are two circumstances in which a CURA project may require further consideration by IRB:

- if the human subjects belong to a population that would be considered “vulnerable”; or
- if, in addition to conducting the research for the community organization, you also plan to use the data you gather in a course paper, a thesis, a journal article, or some other academic application.

At the beginning of each semester and each summer, CURA staff send descriptions of our projects to the IRB to identify any projects that might warrant further consideration by the IRB. The IRB can ask CURA for more information about a project, even if the student research assistant is not planning to use the research for an academic purpose. When the IRB expresses concern about a project, CURA staff provides the IRB with additional information about how the research will be conducted, who will be supervising the research, what qualifications they bring to the work, and so on to build all parties’ confidence that the project will be handled professionally and ethically.

**Projects Involving Vulnerable Populations**

One of the IRB’s concerns has to do with projects involving a vulnerable population, such as children, the disabled, people of color, people living in poverty, undocumented workers, etc. Even in these cases, however, a project may not require IRB review. If the research questions are about a program serving the vulnerable population, rather than individuals, it probably will not need IRB approval; as a general rule, program evaluations an organization conducts to assess its effectiveness...
and improve its services do not require review. The same is true if a research assistant is analyzing data that the organization has already gathered and the organization has deleted all personally identifying information about the participants. If a research assistant is working with personally identifiable information about specific individuals and the IRB determines that the project will require the submission of an application for prospective review, CURA staff will work with the student and the community organization to make sure sufficient time is allowed for this process and to assist in any way we can.

**Using Research from a CURA Project for Academic Purposes**

A student will always need to submit an application to the IRB for a project if he/she decides that besides providing the requested information to the community organization, he/she would like to incorporate the research conducted through a CURA assistantship into an academic project. This guideline applies whether the student knows at the beginning of a CURA project that they plan to use the research for an academic purpose, or whether they decide to do so sometime after completing the CURA project. If a student decides later to use the project for an academic purpose, he/she can probably apply under “exempt category 4,” for use of existing data.

If a student knows at the beginning of a CURA project that they plan to use the research for an academic purpose, they should be aware that because CURA views its research assistants as employees of the community organization, any academic use students make of CURA-sponsored research is considered to be the student’s own pursuit (that is, it is not part of what the community organization has hired the student to do for them) and thus will not be compensated by CURA. This includes the time it takes to secure IRB approval for the project. However, to keep community work from being delayed while a student seeks IRB review for an academic project, CURA staff will be happy to help facilitate the process in any way we can.

**What if a student research assistant is not comfortable with the way a community organization is handling the research?**

Although the community organization, as the student’s “employer,” is considered to have primary responsibility for how the research is conducted, student research assistants should still be aware of and committed to the standards of human subjects protection. CURA staff believe students should never have to compromise their ethics as part of their CURA job. If a student is uncomfortable with how the organization is conducting the research or has concerns about participants’ privacy, protection from risk, level of consent, or knowledge of how the information they provide will be used, the student’s first step should be to talk to his or her community supervisor. If the supervisor is not responsive to the student’s concerns, the student should contact the coordinator of the CURA program sponsoring their research assistantship (see contact information below). CURA staff will work with the student and community supervisor to achieve a positive resolution, if at all possible.
Students may also contact the IRB with questions about research ethics and they will assist in any way they can.

**What if, while doing research, a student receives sensitive information relating to abuse, neglect, or criminal activity?**

As a general rule, part of protecting the human subjects involved in research includes keeping their information confidential and making sure that information about their personal lives and activities will not be used “against them” in any way. Students are not obligated to report any criminal activity they hear about in their work at CURA—and they may not want to if doing so might harm their research subjects. In cases of abuse, neglect, or maltreatment of a child or a vulnerable adult, however, a student may want to tell someone who is in a position to help the victim. If a student thinks this subject could come up during his or her CURA project, he/she should talk to the community supervisor early in the project about how to handle these situations; the supervisor or someone else in the organization may be required to report suspected abuse or neglect under state law. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) website also provides information on how to report such cases to appropriate authorities. An individual’s identity as the reporter is kept confidential by the investigating agencies.

**Questions? Contact one of the following individuals:**

*Jeff Corn, Nelson Program, 612-625-0744 or jcorn@umn.edu*
*Will Craig, CAP Program, 612-625-3321 or wcraig@umn.edu*
*Jeffery Perkey, IRB Liaison to CURA, 612-626-5922 or perke001@umn.edu*

For information on reporting cases of child abuse or neglect, or maltreatment of a vulnerable adult, visit [www.dhs.state.mn.us](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us).
CURA Final Report Requirements

CURA Community-Based Research Programs require research assistants to complete and submit a final report to both CURA and the community organization directing the project. If you complete a report for the community organization as part of your project, this same report will also fulfill the report obligation to CURA. If the project does not include a formal final report (for example, a project that involves the creation of a database or web site), you must provide a project summary in lieu of a final report. A project summary should include a summary of your work on the project, outlining the goals and objectives of the project, the tasks and tools that were used, the research findings, and the project’s final outcome.

When sending the final report or project summary to CURA, you should be sure to include the following:

- A digital copy of the full report (including maps and appendices) saved as a single PDF document or Microsoft Word document.
- Original (native format) digital files for any maps, charts, diagrams, photos, or other graphics that appear in the report.

Send all final reports and project summaries to: curacbr@umn.edu. CURA will review the report, send a final version to the community partners on the project, and post a copy on the CURA website.

Please observe the following requirements for your report or project summary produced as part of a CURA-supported project:

1. **Use of CURA Report Cover and Copyright Page templates:** You must use the Report Cover and Copyright Page templates provided by CURA. There is a different version for each CURA program, available for download at www.cura.umn.edu/students/templates.
   - **Report Cover:** Use the provided Word document to create the cover for your report. **This is the only cover that should be used with any print or digital version of your report.** Be sure to enter information in the <REPORT TITLE>, <ORGANIZATION>, and <YOUR NAME> fields, then save the Word document with a new file name (e.g., “ReportCover_YourLastName.doc”) and e-mail it with the PDF of your final report to curacbr@umn.edu. CURA will add the correct report number and insert the cover page into your final report before distributing it.
   - **Copyright Page:** The University owns the copyright in works created by students as part of their employment by the University as research or teaching assistants. You must use the provided PDF file as the copyright page for your report, and it must accompany any print or digital version of your report that you distribute. CURA will insert the copyright page into your final report before distributing it.

2. **Table of Contents:** Include a table of contents at the beginning of the report. The table of contents should appear on page 3 (the cover and copyright page are pages 1–2).
3. **Executive Summary**: Include an executive summary that briefly summarizes the project’s goals, objectives, and findings.

4. **Report Content**: The following are helpful hints for creating a report that will be a useful resource to community organizations.
   - **Highlight key findings**—what is likely to be the most useful information for the community organization?
   - **Provide recommendations for next steps or further research** as appropriate.
   - **Recommendations for community action should not be just the author’s opinion, but rather should be presented as alternatives** that may be pursued, with an analysis of the pros, cons, and implications of each alternative.

5. **Section Headings**: Use section headings to distinguish parts of the report. Be sure they are clearly labeled and are used consistently throughout the report.

6. **Page Numbers**: Number pages consecutively throughout the report. Include page numbers on each page—including appendices—and center them at the bottom or top of the page.

7. **Page Size**: Pages size should be 8.5” by 11”. If you wish to include larger maps on 11” X 17” paper, these pages should be incorporated as foldouts.

8. **Appendices**: The following types of data should be included in appendices: maps, survey instruments, and aggregate data.

9. **Bibliography**: It is the author’s responsibility to properly cite the source of all materials referenced in the report, and to include a bibliography of such materials at the end of the report. Authors should follow source citation and bibliographic guidelines from a recognized reference manual, such as the *MLA Handbook*, *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, or *Chicago Manual of Style*.

10. **Using Copyrighted Material**: It is an author’s responsibility to follow fair use standards when citing or reproducing copyrighted materials (including figures, maps, and photographs obtained from other sources) and, where appropriate, to acquire permission to reproduce any such materials. When using photos, graphics, or when quoting another person’s work, always use an appropriate credit line or cite the source of the quotation. Those unfamiliar with copyright laws or fair use standards should consult the University of Minnesota Libraries’ Copyright Information and Resources website at www.lib.umn.edu/copyright/.

11. **Copyright Ownership**: Consistent with the University of Minnesota’s “Copyright Ownership” policy, “The University owns the copyright in works created by students as part of their employment by the University, for example as research or teaching assistants” (*policy.umn.edu/Policies/Research/COPYRIGHT.html*). To comply with University policy, all reports produced by student employees must be copyrighted by The Regents of the University of Minnesota. To ensure that the report is widely available for reproduction, distribution, and adaptation by other organizations and researchers, the reports will be licensed for use by others under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 license. This license allows others to reproduce, distribute, and adapt or build upon the work for non-commercial purposes, as long
as they credit CURA and the University, and license under the same terms any new creations that result.

At the request of the community, a report may be jointly copyrighted with the community partner(s) involved in the project under the same Creative Commons license. Under certain circumstances, the community partner(s) may also request that the report be licensed under a more restrictive Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License. This would allow others to reproduce or distribute the report for non-commercial purposes as long as they credit CURA and the community partner(s), but they cannot adapt, change, or build upon the report (except as allowed under Fair Use exceptions to federal copyright law). To discuss either of these options, please contact the CURA program staff for your project.

Questions?

Contact Jeff Corn, 612-625-0744 or jcorn@umn.edu
Publicizing Your CURA Project

**WHY should I publicize the project?**

When your project receives public notice in a newspaper, magazine, newsletter or other media outlet, it gets visibility that gives a boost to all the project partners:

- As a community organization, you draw attention to your work and can thus increase community support and involvement.
- As a student or faculty member, you get a nice record of your work to add to your professional portfolio.
- As the umbrella organization sponsoring and facilitating the project, CURA gets an illustration of the impact our programs have on communities, which helps us raise the funds and increase the goodwill we need to continue our work.

**HOW should I acknowledge CURA’s support for the project?**

To properly acknowledge the support CURA is providing for your project, we ask that the following statement appear in all published reports, web pages, press releases, or other publicity pertaining to this project:

“This project was supported [in part] through student research assistance provided by___________ [specify the CURA program that supported your project—the Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program or the Community Assistantship Program], a program of the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA).”

**WHEN should I seek publicity for the project?**

At several points during the course of a project, events will likely occur that are especially “newsworthy” or notable. These may include:

- The project’s kickoff (example headline: “Community Group to Study Important Issue with U of M Assistance”)
- When you’re seeking input from the community, through surveys, town meetings, focus groups, etc.
- When a major event related to the project is about to occur (either an event you’re planning, or another community event that relates to the issue you’re working on)
- When the research findings are to be presented to the community
- When the issue your project addresses is especially timely or “hot” and is already getting media coverage
- After the project is complete, when it results in significant outcomes such as additional funds being raised for ongoing work, a shift in public policy on the issue, the development of a new program, etc.
HOW should I publicize the project?

A wide variety of communication tools and strategies exist for getting the story of your work out to audiences that matter to you. Some of these include:

- Stories in a community newsletter, or those of your partners and supporters
- Press releases and articles in local, community, or neighborhood newspapers (don’t forget PICTURES—see below)
- Frequent updates on your website, and those of your partners and supporters
- Articles in various University of Minnesota publications
- Local radio or television coverage
- Promotional or educational videos about the project

WHAT if I need help with my publicity efforts?

CURA staff can help you in your efforts to publicize your project, and welcome the opportunity to work with you to develop materials, coordinate releases, and think creatively about public relations. Some of the ways we can help include:

- Drafting press releases or articles based on information you provide about the project and, where appropriate, interviews of key people involved or interested in the project
- Identifying media outlets that might have a special interest in your project and a willingness to publish a story about it
- Connecting you with resources to help you in your own public relations efforts
- Helping you select and format photographs you have taken that illustrate your project and will be powerful accompaniments to your stories, or, in some cases, arranging for a photographer to come to your community and document your work
- Coordinating our publicity efforts with yours for maximum impact

To discuss these or any other ideas related to publicizing your project, please contact Jeff Corn, at jcorn@umn.edu or 612-625-0744.
Tips from Previous Project Supervisors

“The student selection process can easily turn out to be more time-consuming than expected. Don’t let this surprise you. Finding the right student for the project is worth a little extra time. For example, asking applicants for writing samples or other relevant materials can often be helpful when you have doubts or questions.”

“Student research assistants are expected to work independently, and most of them find this to be rewarding; however, there are limits to their independence. Even the best students cannot meet the needs of the neighborhood organization without being given clear objectives at the beginning and constructive feedback throughout the project.”

“Projects with realistic expectations as well as clearly defined parameters and goals are the most successful.”

“Be clear about the role and what is expected of the student research from the start.”

“Make sure both you and the student agree that the desired outcome can be achieved in the time available.”

“Do your best to anticipate supports the project will need (computer access, printed materials, mailing lists, etc.). Having them ready can prevent the project from getting slowed down.”

“The students are better able to stay focused on the objective if they understand the context of the research and the intended use of their results. Fill them in on the relevant background as much as you can, and share the organization’s vision with them. If they know why they are working on a project it will result in a better product.”

“If the project needs to be adjusted, always remember to layout clear guidelines for your researcher.”

“Continue to make sure the purpose of the project is understood by everyone. Regular meetings allow the research assistant to ask questions. You will also have the chance to evaluate together the work your researcher is doing and the progress of the project. If you sense confusion - talk about it.”

“Encourage the students to make use of their community and faculty mentors. These advisors are intended to be resource people for the project; consulting with them is part of the student’s job and an important part of the project.”
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.”
Forms
Student Recommendation Form

E-mail (preferred) to: curacbr@umn.edu
Fax to 612-626-0273

DATE: ____________________________________________

TO: Jeff Corn, CURA

FROM: ____________________________________________

RE: Student Hiring Recommendation

I have decided to hire the following person to work on the CAP/Nelson Program project:
(please complete all fields)

Name: ________________________________________________________________________________

U of M Student ID #: ____________________________________________________________________

Phone Number: ____________________________ Cell Phone: ________________________________

U of M College/School or Other Institution: _______________________________________________

Degree Program: ______________________________________________________________________

School E-mail Address: __________________________________________________________________

Permanent E-mail Address: ______________________________________________________________

Local Mailing Address: __________________________________________________________________

City/State/Zip: ________________________________________________________________________

Approximate Start Date: ________________________________________________________________

I understand that:

1. CURA will verify that the person indicated above is a student.
2. CURA will contact the student directly to schedule an appointment to process his/her hiring paperwork.
3. The student cannot begin working until he/she has completed the hiring/payroll paperwork at CURA.
4. CURA will send me a copy of the student’s signed offer letter.
5. I will notify all other job candidates that they were not selected for this job.
6. I am responsible for monitoring the student’s work and approving the time sheets before he/she submits them to CURA.
7. If the research assistant works more hours than the approved appointment, CURA will bill the agency for the cost of those hours.
**Project Work Plan**

Once a student has been hired, the project supervisor, CURA Program Director, and student research assistant will meet to complete a work plan. The purpose of the work plan is to detail steps needed to complete the project within the hours awarded. The work plan should be mutually developed and accepted by both the student and supervisor. Any revisions made to this plan should be made by the student and supervisor together.

**Project Name:**

**Supervisor Name:**

**Research Assistant Name:**

**Number of Hours Awarded:**

**PROJECT GOALS**

1. What are the goals of the project?

**TIMEFRAME & TASKS**

2. Target date for project completion:

3. What will be the final product(s) of the project? How will the product(s) be used by the organization?

(continued on next page)
4. What tasks are necessary to meet project goals? (Be as specific as possible.)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
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**Example: Develop Workplan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 1:</th>
<th>start/finish</th>
<th>9/10</th>
<th>9/17</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Task 2:</td>
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<td>Task 3:</td>
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<td>Task 9:</td>
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**TOTAL HOURS (maximum 195 hrs. for Spring/Fall, 260 hrs. for Summer)**

(continued on next page)
5. Please list the roles of everyone involved with the project.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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6. How can CURA further assist with the project?

___________________________________________________________ ____________________
Supervisor's signature         date

___________________________________________________________ ____________________
Research assistant's signature       date

Thank you for completing the Project Work Plan! Please return a copy of this form and any pertinent attachments to Jeff Corn, e-mail: curacbr@umn.edu, fax: 612-626-0273.
Project Mid-Point Assessment

At the project’s mid-point, the project supervisor and student research assistant(s) will meet and assess the development, progression, and final product(s) of the project.

Project Name:

Supervisor Name:

Research Assistant Name:

Number of Hours Awarded:

PROJECT GOALS

1. What are the goals of the project? If they have changed since your initial work plan meeting, have they been discussed? (Briefly list the project goals and any changes in the project’s focus.)

TASKS & TIMEFRAME

2. What tasks have been completed up to this point and what tasks are remaining?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks Completed</th>
<th>Tasks Remaining</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
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Hours Spent: Hours Remaining:

3. Target Date for Project Completion

(continued on next page)
4. What will be the final product(s) of the project?

BARRIERS & SOLUTIONS

5. What barriers, if any, have affected the project’s development and progression? What actions can the supervisor and research assistant take to reduce these barriers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Actions/Solutions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
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<td>b.</td>
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<td>c.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How can CURA assist?

___________________________________________________________ ____________________
Supervisor’s signature         date

___________________________________________________________ ____________________
Research assistant’s signature       date

Thank you for completing the Project Mid-Point Assessment! Please return a copy of this form and any pertinent attachments to Jeff Corn, e-mail: curacbr@umn.edu, fax: 612-626-0273.