KRIS NELSON COMMUNITY-BASED
RESEARCH PROGRAM

APPLICATION GUIDE

Kris Nelson
Community-
Based
Research
Program

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

CURA
Center for Urban & Regional Affairs

In this guide you will find:

UPDATED FOR FALL 2022

About CURA:

CURA is founded on the belief that partnership between the university and the community is mutually beneficial. CURA pursues our mission by supporting connections between state and local governments, communities, nonprofit organizations, and the University, including faculty and students from appropriate campuses, colleges, centers, or departments. We work to build an environment that links the skills and wisdom present within every community with the knowledge and academic discipline of a vital urban university.

Our center is home to a diverse array of community programs that provide a rich, and unique blend of leadership, resources, and technical assistance available to local communities at no cost. Through our research, community-focused programs, and collaborative partnerships, CURA's community programs create innovative solutions that promote equity and opportunity in communities throughout the state.

These community programs can be used to prepare, frame, or develop background to a Community Based Research project, supplement the research process, or follow up by doing further research or implementation.

Community Programs

The Kris Nelson Community Based Research Program connects the community to the University of Minnesota through community-driven applied research. It is a unique opportunity for community organizations to engage with the University to co-create research approaches.
Contact: C Terrence Anderson, canders@umn.edu

The Community Assistantship Program connects the University of Minnesota to community organizations and government agencies in Greater Minnesota through community-driven applied research. Also supports statewide research projects.
Contact: C Terrence Anderson, canders@umn.edu

The Community Geographic Information Systems (CGIS) Program provides GIS data access, analysis and mapping support and educational and training opportunities to neighborhood groups, community organizations, and local government agencies in Minnesota.
Contact: Jeff Matson, jmatson@umn.edu

The Neighborhood Partnership Initiative and Artist Neighborhood Partnership Initiative Small Grant Program makes technical assistance and small grants available to artists or community-based, neighborhood or other place-based organizations located in communities of color and low-income communities in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the surrounding suburbs.
Contact: C Terrence Anderson, canders@umn.edu

The Neighborhood Organizing & Leadership Program works to identify, train, and build power with a community of resident leaders working to address local and regional issues they identify as important. It provides formal trainings, 1:1 strategic coaching and campaign support.
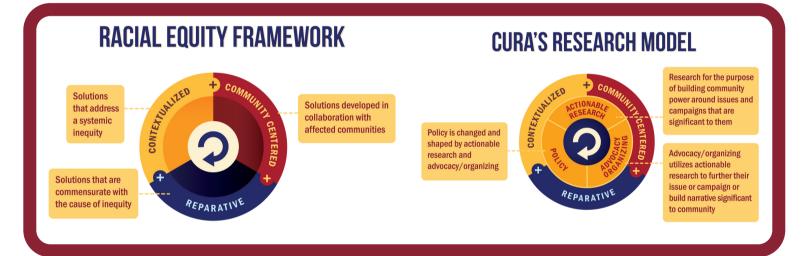*Contact: Ned Moore, moore178@umn.edu or Malik Holt-Shabazz, shabazmu@umn.edu*

The Public Policy Design Lab collaborates with designers, analysts, educators, advocates, students, technologists, artists, and communities to develop alternative practices which can make the work we do with data and images richer, smarter, less complicated, more relevant and more responsive to the needs and interests of citizens traditionally on the margins of policy development.
Contact: Kristen Murray, kmurray@umn.edu
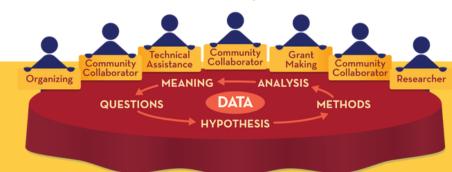
What is Community Based-Research? (CBR)

*There is power in defining research questions and in controlling the production of knowledge. When research is done in communities of color and low-wealth communities, a power imbalance often exists between researchers and community-based organizations. **CURA's community-based research model is aimed at reordering that power relationship.***

RACIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK

Solutions that address a systemic inequity

Solutions developed in collaboration with affected communities

Solutions that are commensurate with the cause of inequity

CONTEXTUALIZED • COMMUNITY CENTERED • REPARATIVE

CURA'S RESEARCH MODEL

Research for the purpose of building community power around issues and campaigns that are significant to them

Policy is changed and shaped by actionable research and advocacy/organizing

Advocacy/organizing utilizes actionable research to further their issue or campaign or build narrative significant to community

CONTEXTUALIZED • COMMUNITY CENTERED • ACTIONABLE RESEARCH • POLICY • ADVOCACY ORGANIZING • REPARATIVE

Community-based research values community knowledge and people's lived experiences. It reflects meaningful collaboration between academics, advocates, service providers, and impacted communities. It leads to more robust and holistic data, more effective policy solutions, and stronger community action. When we use a community-based research model, community members are not the subjects of research—they are the co-producers of knowledge

SHARED EXPERTISE

Live-in Model of Research

Organizing • Community Collaborator • Technical Assistance • Community Collaborator • Grant Making • Community Collaborator • Researcher

MEANING ← ANALYSIS

QUESTIONS — DATA — METHODS

HYPOTHESIS

What is Community Based-Research? (CBR)

CURA works with community partners to conduct large-scale, comprehensive community-based research projects. Key elements of our model include:

Deep partnership and open process: Research ideas come from deep relationships with community partners. We work together for as long as needed to shape a project, including its key questions and goals.

Shared expertise: Community members and CURA researchers provide important expertise and unique perspectives.

Racial equity framework: Projects align with CURA's racial equity framework. They are contextualized, community-centered, and reparative.

Actionable: The purpose of research is to build community power, further campaigns or build narratives, and change policies.

DEEP PARTNERSHIPS

Artist Neighborhood Partnership Initiative

Community Based Research

Actionable Research Project

Neighborhood Partnership Initiative

Neighborhood Leadership and Organizing

Community GIS

OPEN PROCESS

What Makes a Good Research Question?

Keep in mind that research cannot tell people what to do, but it can gather information about the present that helps people make decisions about the future. To gather information about the present, focus your research questions on studying facts and conditions, not on what "should" be. Frame them as "what is" or "what are" questions; stay away from "what should" or "how do we" questions.

Why do this? Because until you know what is happening now, you can't say what should happen in the future.

> *Instead of asking, "How do we improve our community's housing stock?" ask questions like*:
>
> - *What is the neighborhood's housing stock?*
> - *What are the demographics of people living in the community?*
> - *What housing (re)development has occurred in the last 5 years?*
> - *What government programs are available for housing (re)development?*
> - *What are similar communities doing to improve their housing stock?*

Define your key terms: Research questions often use words like "neighborhood improvement," "equity," or "underserved populations." But those words could mean a variety of things, each of which would completely change the meaning of your research. You must define these terms in your application.

For example, "equitable park use" could mean a variety of things, including:
- all people in the area are using the park with the same frequency
- all people in the area are using the park exactly as often as they want to
- all people can access the park and its amenities, regardless of their economic status
- all people can access the park and its amenities, regardless of ability/disability
- all people are satisfied with the park and its amenities

Research Methods and Tools:

Survey:

When would you use it? When you want to gather information from a large number of people. Surveys can be used to identify issues or build support for your work.

What would you get out of it? Short, one-time qualitative/quantitative data from many people

Benefits? It can be relatively cheap and straightforward once you identify the right questions.

Drawbacks? It is a one-time interaction, so you can't get any contextual information or follow-up clarification. Response rates are often very low. Designing questions that make sense to all types of people can be difficult. Language and translation can be an issue. Depending on how the survey is administered it can take a lot of time and people power.

Keep in mind:
- Surveys can be done in person or online.
- Writing good surveys is hard, so make sure to pilot your survey before distributing it.
  - Get help thinking about the order and wording or questions and answers.
  - Only ask questions that are absolutely necessary, especially if they're personal.
- Online surveys tend to have very low response rates, so try to take advantage of situations where people are already gathered and create a quick one-page paper survey to collect the data you need. Incentives help as well!

Great resource: University of Wisconsin Extension, Collecting Evaluation Data: Surveys
http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/G3658-10.PDF

Great resource: DataCenter, Participatory research Kit: Creating Surveys
http://www.datacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/creatingsurveys.pdf

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Research Methods and Tools:

Interviews and Focus Groups:

When would you use it? When you want more in-depth information

What would you get out of it? In-depth, two-way qualitative information from a small number of people

Benefits? It allows you to get more rich contextual information from respondents, and allows for follow-up questions and clarification. It also allows for non-native English speakers to fully express themselves if you use a translator.

Drawbacks? It can be hard to get people to come to an interview or focus group. It is also time consuming and expensive, especially if you are transcribing and/or coding all of the interviews. It also requires building good relationships with interviewees.

Keep in mind:
- Interviews can be done with individuals or with groups of people.
- Focus groups are a unique type of group interview where six to eight people from similar backgrounds are interviewed about a specific topic. Themes from each focus group are later compared to find overlap and differences.
- Group interviewing may be particularly important for learning about attitudes, outcomes or impacts from non-native English speakers in the community.

Great resource: Better Evaluation website, http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/interviews

Research Methods and Tools:

Observation:

When would you use it? When you want to observe people's behavior, or how a program or activity works

What would you get out of it? Information about people's behavior or the context of an activity

Benefits? It is easy to do and doesn't require you to directly interact with many people.

Drawbacks? People may act differently if someone is watching them, so you may not get an accurate picture. You also have to make sure you are interpreting what you see correctly, and not misinterpreting things because you are an outsider.

Keep in mind:
- Plan carefully what needs to be observed, how you would document the observations, and who from your community should do the observation.
- Collect your data consistently.
- Counting is an important type of observation!
- Making observations during regular time intervals (like monthly or quarterly) can produce powerful data on outcomes or impacts over time.

Great resource: University of Wisconsin Extension,
http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/g3658-5.pdf

Research Methods and Tools:

Investigating Secondary Sources:

When would you use it? When it is available

What would you get out of it? Information about your research topic or community

Benefits? It is easy to do and doesn't require you to directly interact with many people.

Drawbacks? Secondary sources don't always exist, or aren't always available.

Keep in mind:
- Secondary data sources include information that has already been collected for a different and/or broader purpose.
  - Examples: information from administrative records, vital records, and surveys that are conducted for purposes other than program evaluation.
- For example, data on recycling in a neighborhood might be available from Eureka Recycling. Data on the percentage of children who live in the neighborhood and attend neighborhood schools may be available from the school district. You wouldn't need to collect this data yourself, so it is called a secondary source

Research Methods and Tools:

Literature Review and Best Practice Study:

When would you use it? When you want other-thinking, research, programming or activities to inform your research

What would you get out of it? Data and ideas about your research subject and/or similar organizations, programs, or environments where work has been successful.

Benefits? Can prevent you from 're-inventing the wheel' and be an actionable source of ideas and approaches.

Drawbacks? Can be time consuming and difficult to focus if you don't have a clear idea of what you are looking for. Figuring out how to apply what's worked in other places to your situation is challenging.

Keep in mind:

- The purpose of a literature review is to analyze a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of research studies, reviews of literature, and theoretical articles.
  - The clearer your research question is the more relevant your literature review.
- The purpose of a best practice study is to look at a technique, methodology, behavior or idea that has been confirmed to reliably lead to a desired or optimum result.
  - The term "best" is problematic. Who defines best? Is "good" good enough? How do you know that the positive impact had anything to do with the best/good practice?
  - It's often also helpful to learn from what doesn't work, so if your research turns those examples up don't ignore them.
  - The context of a best practice is critical to thinking about if it can work for you.

Program Eligibility and Guidelines:

The Nelson Program provides approximately 200 hours of student time to work on a project in the spring and fall semesters, or 260 hours during the summer. The goals of the program are to support place-based and community-based organizations to create impact in the following areas:

People and Places - Builds the leadership and power of low income communities, communities of color, immigrant communities, seniors, people with disabilities, youth, renters or other historically excluded communities in a neighborhood or specific geographic area. Addresses a community issue, need or opportunity.

Organizations - Supports the capacity of community-based, neighborhood or other place-based organizations to more effectively and equitably engage and involve the diversity of their community in the leadership of their organization. Makes neighborhood or other place-based organizations more representative of the communities in which they work.

Collaborations - Builds strong networks and relationships within and/or among diverse cultural or geographic communities.

Systems - Expands the influence of community members on neighborhood systems, practices, initiatives and policies that lead to greater racial, social and economic equity.

The Nelson program gives priority to communities of color and disadvantaged communities.

Selection Criteria:

We select grantees for the Nelson program based on the following criteria:

- Clear problem or opportunity statement
- Clear definition of who the research benefits and how. Projects benefiting low-wealth communities and communities of color receive priority.
- Clear description of how affected people will be involved in the process.
- Clear description of how will the results be used and what will their impact be.
- Other partners and context

Application Process:

1. Complete a CURA **Community-Based Research Programs Application Form** for each research project you would like assistance with.
2. Your application will be reviewed and you will be notified within 3-4 weeks of the committee's decision regarding your application.
3. If approved, a job description is developed by CURA, approved by the community organization, and posted online for students to see.
4. Students apply on the University of Minnesota's online job application website and the community organization reviews those applications.
5. The community organization chooses interview candidates, schedules the interviews, and selects the student.

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Application Tips:

When we review your application, we look at three areas:

The Community:
- Clear problem or opportunity statement
- Who does the research benefit and how?
- How will the people it benefits be involved in the process?
- How will the results be used? What will their impact be?
- Other partners and context
- Projects that benefit low wealth communities and communities of color get priority

The Student:
- Is the student's role clear and doable?
- What will the student gain from the experience?
- What skills/background/experience do they need?

The Research:
- Addresses a specific research question
- Fit between research question and student activities
- Doable with the time and resources available
- Availability of data
- General applicability
- Keep to 3-5 pages not including cover page

Research Resources:

Places to Download Data
- **American FactFinder** FactFinder is the main place to find census data (including ACS data) in tabular form. You can download summary files or download individual tables for different census themes. Download TIGER/Line shapefiles (census tract and blockgroup boundaries) for specific years here.
- **Minnesota Geospatial Commons** multiple data sets for different organizations around the State of Minnesota. Find the data sorted by source or by category.
- **IPUMS** This data resource, hosted at the University of Minnesota's Minnesota Population Center, allows access to microdata, which is data collected on households and individuals. Access is free, but you need to register for an account before beginning.

Online Mapping Tools
- **Social Explorer** Social Explorer's Demographic Maps give you online access to 2010 U.S. Census data and 2005-2009 American Community Survey data by census block group, census tract, and county. Data can be viewed in maps and a variety of reports can be downloaded in several formats, including Excel tables. Data from earlier years of the Census and ACS are also available.
- **OnTheMap** This tool provides data on jobs and workers, including wages, job sector, distance and direction traveled to work, and demographics of workers. Geographic areas can be analyzed based on where workers live (home, or commutershed) or where they work (work, or laborshed). Maps can be exported as PDFs or images, and data can be downloaded in several formats, including Excel tables and shapefiles.
- **Minnesota Geographic Data Clearinghouse** MCDC is a portal to a variety on state-wide mapping services and data.
- **Ramsey County Online Maps and Data** Ramsey County makes a variety of data about physical features in the county available online, including depth to groundwater, parcel boundaries, and schools. Historic aerial images are also available.
- **Hennepin County GIS** Hennepin County hosts several interactive maps including a Park Locator, Road Construction Locator, a Property Map, and an Election Results map.
- **City of St. Paul GISmo** St. Paul hosts several online mapping tools that allow you to map information about heritage preservation districts, canopy (tree) cover, public art, and many other things.

Research Resources:

Other Mapping and Data Resources
- **Borchert Map** Library UMN's map library is located in the lower level of Wilson Library and maintains a large collection of print maps. In addition to this collection, the library also hosts the Automated Cartographic Information Center, which includes several computers with ArcGIS software available for patron use.
- **Minnesota Compass Neighborhood Profiles** Minnesota Compass compiles Census data into reports for Twin Cities neighborhoods, as well as metropolitan area cities, Minnesota counties, and the state as a whole. Data files can also be downloaded.

GIS Software
- ArcExplorer Free GIS software!

Dates and Deadlines:

Updated information on application dates and deadlines can be found <u>here</u>

Questions?

Questions or comments can be directed to Lee Guekguezian at Guekguel@umn.edu

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