

PATHS



TO RESEARCH COLLABORATION

A GUIDE TO WORKING WITH MCMASTER RESEARCHERS





Roadmap

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McMaster's Community Promise:

"McMaster University will value working with the community for mutual benefit and build relationships based on reciprocity, trust and respect."

(Network for Campus-Community Partnerships, 2012)



Welcome to the Journey!

Do you have a project you are interested in, but need more information before making up your mind?

Would you like to learn more about an issue affecting your community, but don't know where to start?

Have you been approached by a university researcher to participate in a project, but don't know if it's right for you?

If you are a community, a non-profit organization, or a public organization looking for assistance with research, or have been approached by McMaster researchers interested in conducting research with you, this guide is for you.

This document is a roadmap. It is designed to guide community organizations along the journey to collaborative research. While every project is different, we've tried to lay out some typical steps and tips to set up organizations for success. Throughout the document we've included Community Perspectives from members of communities and organizations who've travelled this road before.

While there can be challenges in any research collaboration, community-university research partnerships can result in positive outcomes for all parties involved. The experience and accumulated wisdom of communities and organizations, combined with the theoretical and research expertise of university researchers, can achieve significant, relevant, and meaningful results.

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

1

The Road Ahead

Is a Research Collaboration Right for You?

Before you start down the road to research collaboration,
you might consider these questions:

YES **NO** **MAYBE**



Is this research project in line with the mission and vision of your organization?



Do you have a question or puzzle you want research to help you answer?



If you've already spoken to a university researcher, is there a sense of shared vision or mutual benefit concerning the project?



Will your organization or community have the time and resources to put into a research project?



Is there a champion in your organization or community willing to lead your group's involvement?



Will the community members or organization staff be involved in making decisions about the research and/or in conducting the research?



Does your community or organization feel generally positive about being part of a research project (or a specific, identified project)?

If you've answered "no" or "maybe" to any of the above questions, use them to begin conversations with members of your community and the McMaster research group.

WHICH PATH DO YOU WANT TO TAKE?

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Choosing The Right Path

Models Of Community-Engaged Research

Below are some of the most common paths of research collaboration.* If you're not sure which path to choose, contact us at community@mcmaster.ca. We can help you figure it out.

WHAT DO YOU NEED?	TIMELINE	DESCRIPTION	PATH
ADVICE	Less than 1 month	University professors can answer specific questions that are relevant to their areas of expertise, or can help an organization figure out what questions to ask, or where to look for the answers.	CONSULTATION
BEST EVIDENCE	1 to 4 months	This type of research can provide organizations or communities with the research findings they need to help them make decisions. It usually involves evaluating and summarizing research that's already been done and may include interviews with people who have experience or expertise in the topic.	RESEARCH SHOP
COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RESEARCH	3 months to 1 year +	Research which is requested and managed by the organization or community might be suitable for student research projects or internships, with some academic oversight provided by a professor. These will require advance planning and consultation with a professor.	STUDENT PROJECT
CO-DRIVEN RESEARCH	3 months to 5+ years	These projects can emerge when a community's needs coincide with a university researcher's academic interest in the topic. Partners often contribute to and benefit from the research.	PARTNERSHIP

* If you are interested in collaborating with researchers to develop a commercial product, please contact McMaster Industry Liaison Office (MILO) 905-525-9140 ext.28646 milodsk@mcmaster.ca

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Consultation

Looking For Advice Or Direction

If you are looking for an expert opinion, then a one-time consultation with a professor or research team may be the right path for you.

University researchers are often happy to respond to community requests for consultation. **MacConnector** can help you find the **McMaster** expert you're looking for. Just email community@mcmaster.ca with the subject line: Request Consultation.

To make a request for consultation with a researcher, please provide the following information:

- a. The name of your organization
- b. The question or problem you'd like addressed
- c. How quickly you are hoping to find an answer



PLEASE KEEP IN MIND

MacConnector will do its best to put you in touch with the researchers you need to speak to. McMaster may not always have the expertise you seek, but we will reply to all requests.

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Research Shop

Surveying The Landscape

Sometimes, you just need to know what's out there. What is the best information on a particular problem or issue? What are other communities or organizations doing in response to similar situations? Who are the major players or competitors in the field? What are the most recent and promising innovations in Canada or internationally?

To answer these types of questions, the McMaster Research Shop can create rapid research reviews: short plain-language reports (10-20 pages) in response to your research question.* Reports can include a review of academic publications, a survey of existing practices, and interviews with a small number of identified stakeholders or experts. They can include recommendations based on findings, if requested. Turn-around for these types of products is 6 to 8 weeks.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

"For a small organization with a limited budget, the Research Shop is an extremely useful program. Typically organizations and non-profits do not have the time or money to conduct research with this academic rigour."

To make a request for a rapid research review, please email the Research Shop at **community@mcmaster.ca** with the subject line: Research Shop.

Please provide the following information:

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. What research question(s) does the report need to answer?
3. What is the purpose of the product? (For example, will the information be used in funding applications, or to inform program development, or to raise awareness?)
4. Are interviews required, or only reviews of existing practices or literature?
5. What is your timeline?

See a sample Research Shop product here:

[https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/research/
MentoringYouthTowardEmployment_Aug282015.pdf](https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/research/MentoringYouthTowardEmployment_Aug282015.pdf)



PLEASE KEEP IN MIND

Ability to respond to requests depends on the expertise and number of research shop consultants available.

*Note: A separate unit, the Health Forum provides rapid reviews on health systems policy. <https://www.mcmasterhealthforum.org/stakeholders/rapid-response-program>

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Student Projects

Travelling Together, Learning Together

Some community-driven research projects can provide McMaster students with excellent learning opportunities.

Community-driven research projects teach students about the needs that exist in the community, while providing them with an opportunity to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life experiences. Products may include: enhanced training programs, a film or music production, an archive or a data collection, an improved process, a policy brief.

Here are some different ways that student teams can conduct research with organizations outside the university.

Academic placements engage individuals or groups of students in unpaid community-based/volunteer experiences that directly relate to a specific academic course. These placements are negotiated between the host organization and one of McMaster's Experiential Education offices or directly with the academic program.

Activities/projects may be completed by either individuals or groups of students. Placements normally occur in the fall or winter terms, beginning in either September or January. However, some programs run placements through the summer.

The Experiential Education offices or the departmental offices of McMaster can help develop opportunities and projects that are mutually beneficial in fulfilling the needs of the organization and the course objectives. See next page for contact information.

Co-ops or co-curricular learning placements engage individual undergraduate students in work/learning experiences.

Internships engage individual undergraduate or graduate students in paid work for an organization. The work needs to relate directly to the student's field of study. Some internships can be paid, in part, by external funders. For more information on these opportunities, contact McMaster Industry Liaison Office (milodsk@mcmaster.ca).

Student Projects (con't)

Travelling Together, Learning Together

Some questions to think about as you consider including students in your community-driven research project:

1. Does your organization have the capacity to guide an individual student or a student team?

While students will bring a set of interests, talents enthusiasm, and expertise, this is a learning experience for them in a fixed period of time. They will need training and/or mentoring to ensure that their activities result in value for your organization.

2. How independent do you expect students to be and what types of knowledge or expertise do you expect them to have?

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

"I believe the most important thing is managing expectations [regarding students]: the work completed by doctoral students will be different from that of undergraduates."

3. Do you have the space, tools, and resources students will need in order to complete the activities?

4. Will the project require an application to be submitted to the Research Ethics Board?

If the project involves interviews, surveys, or focus groups, it may need approval from our Research Ethics Board. This may or may not have been completed by the course instructor prior to the course beginning. Ask the course instructor or the Experiential Education officer if you're uncertain.

If you'd like to talk to someone about a possible student project you can email **community@mcmaster.ca** or, please contact one of our Experiential Education Offices:

Social Science: Ruthanne Talbot **talbotr@mcmaster.ca**

Science: **scce@mcmaster.ca**

Health Sciences: Health Research Services: **hsresadm@mcmaster.ca**

Health Science: Sarah Glen **Sarah.Glen@learnlink.mcmaster.ca**

Engineering: Lynn Stewart **lstewar@mcmaster.ca**

Humanities: Grace Pollock **humrsch@mcmaster.ca**

Business: Greg Rombough **rombough@mcmaster.ca**

Or, if you are interested in a student from a particular academic program, contact the department directly.

For an example of a research project conducted with and by students, see: **<http://www.thesil.ca/field-course-explores-fishing-community>**



PLEASE KEEP IN MIND

The research project needs to fit with the course learning outcomes or a graduate student's program of study. Courses are typically 3 months long, but longer projects can sometimes be coordinated with the professor. Internships can be 4 months to a year.

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Partnerships

Sharing the Driver's Seat

Partnered research projects can emerge when a community's needs coincide with a professor's or doctoral student's academic interest in the topic. Before starting down this path, the first step is to talk, frankly and fully, about how the journey together will go.

Here are some questions that you can use as the basis for discussion with a university research team.

1. What are the aims of each partner organization involved? Do they overlap enough to justify working together? Are the benefits clear?

In a research partnership, all partners should expect to both contribute to and benefit from the research. Work toward clarifying how this research project suits your organization's or community's goals, and identify ways that the research could help you achieve those goals.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

"In the beginning stages of partnership, it should be made clear what each group is able or not able to contribute. This helps prevent unreasonable requests or expectations."

In Partnered Research, even before the project starts, expectations are documented in two forms:

- A Letter of Support from each partner organization will document what the organization will contribute to the partnership, and how the organization will benefit from the partnership. The letter is a result of negotiation and conversation with the academic research team. Questions below should be covered before, or as part of, that process of negotiation.

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is developed to confirm that all participants share expectations about how the project will be managed and how decisions will be made. See sample MOU here: <http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca/macconnect/resources/home/capacity-building>

2. How will disagreements that arise be resolved? How will conflict be handled? Does one party have final decision-making authority?

Decision-making in a partnered research project will be shared. Work with the university researcher to figure out and document what that will look like.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

"We devoted a lot of time to discuss the research itself, going over details and getting input about representation, measurement, and process to keep it as "community-driven" as possible. We discussed primary documents and collaboratively drew up a Terms of Reference. We kept in contact about the project as we applied for grant funding, ensuring everyone reviewed and provided comment on all documents."

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

"90% of the time, conflict is caused by miscommunication or misunderstanding; pre-empt this by establishing trust, transparency, role clarity, and respectful dialogue from the beginning. When conflict does emerge, listen to understand the emotion and the issues; often the former intensifies the latter."

Partnerships (con't)

Sharing the Driver's Seat

3. How will the community be engaged in a way that's respectful and culturally appropriate?

You can ask these question of the researcher, or you can tell the researcher what you mean by respectful and culturally appropriate engagement. Make your expectations clear.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

"The research motivation and agenda needs to be driven by the needs and desires identified by the communities... It is not enough for university researchers to simply arrive with a research plan in mind that they believe will benefit the community and hope that the community will get behind."

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

"In our research project it was important for the researcher to build rapport with the community before conducting interviews. Our researcher spent a few weeks volunteering in the soup kitchen in order to be a familiar face before the research began."

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

"Make sure that community recruitment for the research uses plain terms and speech."

4. What research products will be of most use to you?

In partnered research, all partners need to be clear about how the research can be made useful to their organization or community. It is important for partners to work together on the development of multiple research products which are a direct result of the partnership.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

"Organizations should ask for the research to be made available in a format that's helpful and beneficial to your organization or community. This could include, for example, a well-designed and easy to read report, a series of training sessions, a presentation, a play, a video, or a story."

5. What are resources (human and financial) required for this project? Who will pay?

The time that members of your organization puts into the project can be significant, and it should also be considered a research project expense. Other common research project expenses include honoraria for research participants, AV equipment, supplies, rental of meeting space, hospitality for meetings. These expenses are sometimes covered by the funding agency, and sometimes by partner organizations. This can be negotiated.

Partnerships (con't)

Sharing the Driver's Seat

6. Timeline and Project Management

Partnered research projects are long-term projects, requiring long-term commitments. It can take months from the first meeting of the team to submission of a full application for funding. After funding is granted, a partnered research project itself will usually take a minimum of two years to complete.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE: We had to build in flexibility and patience because different places work at different paces. No matter how many meetings we had, and how many brainstorming sessions we conducted, unanticipated events would happen - staffing changes, delays in getting approval, delays in connecting and responding, and other "realities" of day-to-day practice that increase with the number of participants involved.

Any research conducted by academic researchers involving human participants requires ethics review and approval to ensure the protection of those participants.

7. How will a partnered research project conclude?

Working closely and collaboratively means that it may, at times, be difficult for members to conclude the project. Effective and practiced reflection assists with the conclusion or adjournment phase and ensures the needs of all partners are met throughout the research journey and at its end.

If you'd like to talk to someone about a possible partnership, please contact any of our knowledge brokers:

Business: Pina Del Monte, delmonp@mcmaster.ca
Health Sciences: Health Research Services: hsresadm@mcmaster.ca
Engineering: Lynn Stewart lstewar@mcmaster.ca
Humanities: Grace Pollock, humrsch@mcmaster.ca
Science: Seanna-Lin Brodie-Keys brodies@mcmaster.ca
Social Sciences: Ailsa Fullwood, fullwood@mcmaster.ca
Industry Liaison Office: milodsk@mcmaster.ca

If you're not sure who from this list would be best to speak to, please email community@mcmaster.ca and we'll help you figure it out.

Here are just a few examples of partnered research:

Virtual Hamilton: <http://virtualhamilton.ca/>

The Impact of Digital Technology on First Nations Participation and Governance: <http://www.digitalimpactfn.com/>

Health in the Hubs: http://nursing.mcmaster.ca/community_neighbourhood.html

REMEMBER:

If you're signing on to be a research partner, you have the right to a research process that is ethical and mutually beneficial. Learn more at the McMaster Research Ethics Board: <https://reo.mcmaster.ca/>

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Tools for the Road Ahead

MacConnector

MacConnector is a one-stop website for community wishing to connect with McMaster

<http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca>

Sample Memorandum of Understanding

<http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca/macconnect/resources/home/capacity-building>

Sample Tools for Engaging Students in Research

<http://gsfr.humanities.mcmaster.ca/community-engaged-learning-resources/>

McMaster Research Ethics Board

is the primary body that reviews (non-health) projects by McMaster researchers involving humans

<https://reo.mcmaster.ca>

Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board (HIREB)

reviews health research projects by McMaster researchers involving humans

<http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/healthresearch/hireb.html>

Other resources:

Community-Based Research Canada

<http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca>

Community-Research Ethics Office (CREO)

<http://www.communityresearchethics.com>

We hope that this toolkit provides you with the tools you need to take the journey together.

The next page provides contact information. If there is any way we can assist you on your journey, please be in touch.



Acknowledgements

This guide was created by:

- **Working Group:** Andrea Cole (McMaster School of Graduate Studies), Ailsa Fullwood (McMaster Social Sciences), Cindy Cindy Sue Montana McCormack (Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton), Sandy Preston (McMaster Social Sciences), Karen Szala-Meneok (McMaster Research Ethics Board)
- **Authors:** Steve Dykstra (Keith Neighbourhood), Ailsa Fullwood, Romita Sur (McMaster)
- **Community Perspectives:** Shar Cranston-Reimer (McMaster), Salomeh Mohajer (M.S.W., R.S.W.), Vanessa Parlette (Public Health Hamilton), Jocelyn Strutt (City of Hamilton) Serguei Tchertok (Grand & Toy), Judy Travis (Workforce Planning Hamilton), Ashley Ward (Mission Services), Dean Waterfield (Wesley Urban Ministries)

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Contacts:

General Guidance and Information: community@mcmaster.ca

Research Shop: community@mcmaster.ca

Student Projects:

Social Science: Ruthanne Talbot talbotr@mcmaster.ca

Science: scce@mcmaster.ca

Health Science: Sarah Glen Sarah.Glen@learnlink.mcmaster.ca

Engineering: Lynn Stewart Istewar@mcmaster.ca

Humanities: Grace Pollock humrsch@mcmaster.ca

Business: Greg Rombough rombough@mcmaster.ca

Research Partnerships:

Business: Pina Del Monte, delmonp@mcmaster.ca

Engineering: Lynn Stewart Istewar@mcmaster.ca

Humanities: Grace Pollock, humrsch@mcmaster.ca

Science: Seanna-Lin Brodie-Keys brodies@mcmaster.ca

Social Sciences: Ailsa Fullwood, fullwood@mcmaster.ca

McMaster Industry Liaison Office: milodsk@mcmaster.ca



