

Assessing Organizational Capacity Needs to Promote Partnership Readiness for Community-Engaged Research

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**Objective:** Describe methods used to conduct an organizational capacity needs assessment with community-based organizations (CBOs) in the St. Louis region.

**Background:** For community-engaged research to be equitable, effective and sustainable, all partners must be ready for collaboration and shared leadership responsibilities. Thus, a core value of community-engaged research is the opportunity for partners to build capacity<sup>1</sup>. A better understanding is needed of CBOs' current capacity and needs in order to frame efforts and catalyze partnership readiness.

**Approach:** Through a collaborative process, we: 1) met with stakeholders to finalize the initiative purpose and approach; 2) developed an assessment tool and interview guide based on existing tools and stakeholder feedback; 3) conducted the assessment and interviews with a sample of CBOs; and 4) provided an aggregate and individualized reports to participants.

**Results:** Stakeholders identified 6 capacity areas as essential for partnership readiness. Ninety-four participants representing 49 organizations (83% response rate) completed the assessment, and 20 participants completed a qualitative interview. Priority training needs identified include: 1) program evaluation; 2) data management; 3) leadership development; 4) communication strategy development; and 5) human resources management. The report frames best ways to address capacity needs, and development of capacity building funding opportunities.

**Conclusion:** Assessing capacity is critical in promoting balanced partnerships. CBOs identified needs in areas that university partners can support. Ultimately, this builds relationships, enhances research effectiveness, and supports sustainability of promising interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmed SM, Palermo A-GS. Community Engagement in Research: Frameworks for Education and Peer Review. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2010;100(8):1380-1387.