



Guidelines for Evaluating Community-Engaged Research and Scholarship in Promotion and Tenure Review at WSU

Prepared by the Community-Engaged Research and Scholarship Working Group¹

A note on terminology: In the introductory pages of this document (pages 1-4) the terminology “community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity” is used to identify the breadth and diversity of work that can be considered “community-engaged.” Beginning with Section 1 of the document (page 5), the terminology “community-engaged research” will be used to maintain uniformity and conciseness but should be assumed to still be referring to all the areas, “research, scholarship, and creative activity.”

Community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity are central to the core values of Washington State University’s (WSU’s) Land-Grant mission, but within promotion processes, research universities traditionally place the highest value on grant funding and peer-reviewed publications. This practice ignores the fact that the expressions and forms of faculty members’ scholarly activities continue to evolve as technologies transform knowledge creation and dissemination and ways of knowing become more inclusive and complex. This practice of evaluation also puts community-engaged scholars at a distinct disadvantage because community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity value community partnerships and direct community benefit that cannot be quantified in the same way as grants and publications. This evaluation gap has meant that faculty doing community-engaged work can have difficulty negotiating both the demands required for promotion and tenure and the time and effort required for truly collaborative, long-term community partnerships. As the Social Sciences division at the University of California, Los Angeles has stated: “Because community engagement has not been valued in the past, scholars who have been doing this work have had to shoehorn it into their visible practice, in effect carry a double burden of ‘regular scholarship’ and community-engaged scholarship.” Most often, faculty doing community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity have categorized their work as ‘service’ because of the lack of value given to community-engaged scholarship in formal research evaluation criteria.

Community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity are explicitly recognized by the *WSU Faculty Manual* (Section II.C.4) as a criterion for faculty review. Our goal is to strengthen the support and recognition of community-engaged scholarship as one of many forms of scholarship to which scholars at WSU are committed. The guidelines that follow are presented to clarify central elements of community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity as a means of providing direction toward developing stronger and more equitable evaluation practices within departments, units, colleges, and disciplines at WSU. It is important to note that while the elements are presented as distinct stages in these guidelines, in any community-engaged research,

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that evaluation should consider the work elements comprehensively and not necessarily separate from one another.

WSU broadly defines community engagement as a relationship-based collaboration between WSU faculty, staff, and students and local, tribal, state, national, and global partners for the mutually beneficial, sustained exchange of knowledge and resources. Community engagement builds deep, trusted relationships with partners to collaboratively enrich scholarship and research, enhance curriculum and teaching, disseminate programs and practices, prepare engaged and educated citizens, and address critical societal issues to contribute to the public good.

Further, community-engaged work at WSU that engages in Tribal research activities is responsible for aligning with EP 41 – Policy on Tribal Engagement, Consultation, and Consent for Joint WSU-Tribal Research Activities and Projects: <https://policies.wsu.edu/prf/index/manuals/executive-policy-manual/ep41/> and reflecting the provisions outlined in our Memorandum of Understanding: <https://wpcdn.web.wsu.edu/wp-provost/uploads/sites/3277/2023/05/MOU-2023-Revised-signed.pdf>.

Building on these definitions and responsibilities, community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity employ a set of methodologies and practices that emphasize working *with* communities, not working *on* communities. Working *with* communities means that all facets of research and creative practice are driven by community needs, goals, and values. Community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity explicitly involve individuals and communities as partners whose active participation is central to the outcomes of the work. This is different from consultation and/or input from communities. *Community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity is driven by communities in partnership with faculty*, including the conception of research questions, the design of methodologies, determining the range and pace of outputs, defining measures for and evaluations of impacts, and determining authorship, attributions, and access to outputs and data. Community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity requires practices of mutual accountability, reciprocity, and engagement, and is grounded in the fundamental principle that the research is mutually beneficial to everyone involved in the relationship. Additionally, it generates products informed by (multi)disciplinary knowledge, including, but not limited to, publications, exhibitions, and programs that simultaneously meet university mission and goals as well as address issues of societal concern.

Our aim for this document is to establish clear indicators that distinguish community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity so that 1. community-engaged scholars will know how their work will be evaluated, and 2. department chairs, colleagues, deans, and other evaluators will have a common frame of reference for rigorously and equitably evaluating community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity when it appears in faculty dossiers for academic personnel review. These indicators are intended to be expansive and inclusive so that faculty dossiers can be prepared and read with appropriate context.

Before presenting details of each of the features of community-engaged research and scholarship, we want to provide a few general key considerations regarding community-engaged research, scholarship, creative activity, and equitable evaluation.

What is community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity?

Not framed solely or even primarily as a particular type of activity that occurs in a particular type of place, community-engaged research, and scholarship involves mutually beneficial collaboration characterized by:

- Reciprocal processes, or recognizing, respecting, and valuing the knowledge, perspective, and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration among partners.
- Public purposes, or building the capacity of each of the individuals, groups, and organizations involved to understand and collaboratively address issues of public concern.
- Scholarly products often include multiple co-authors, including community partners who contribute to the work in significant ways.
- Categorizing the work is not about compartmentalizing it into one single category, as the work often integrates research, teaching, and service (and can be documented as such for the purpose of annual review, promotion, and tenure).

Continuum approach to scholarship

A continuum approach to scholarship expands who is a knowledge maker and what is a knowledge construct.

- It is **inclusive** of many types and conditions of knowledge.
- It resists embedded hierarchies by assigning **equal value** to inquiry of different kinds.
- It supports equity with work on the continuum, however various, being **judged by common principles** and standards to which all academic scholarly and creative work is held.

Common criteria for all forms of scholarship

- Clear goals
- Adequate preparation
- Appropriate methods
- Significant results
- Effective presentation
- Reflective critique

Recommendations for departmental review/evaluation of community-engaged research and scholarship

Ensure that faculty whose research and scholarship is community-engaged clarify their responsibilities and their individual scholarly goals to provide understanding and guidance to chairs, committees, and other evaluators, including:

- Clearly state the purpose of the work and its value for the discipline(s) and the public/community/communities good.
- Document the alignment between the scholarship/research and the scholar's role, departmental priorities, and institutional mission.
- Define goals and objectives that are realistic and achievable.

- Identify significant intellectual questions in the discipline(s) and for the community/external contributors with whom the scholar is partnered.
- Clearly describe how community engagement brings added value to the research, scholarship, or creative activity.

Chairs, committees, and other evaluators unfamiliar with evaluating community-engaged research and scholarship should practice review before attempting the real thing.

To view instructive examples of community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity, visit:

<https://orap.wsu.edu/research-initiatives/inspire-cer-program/seed-grants/awardees/>

Finally, an advisory for both faculty doing community-engaged work and departmental colleagues charged with evaluating them for tenure and promotion:

The immediate and continuous goal is always to support faculty success. The longer-term goal is to move all units and colleges in a more responsive and equity-minded direction when it comes to the way a diversity of scholarly work is valued and evaluated. With this longer-term goal in mind, it must be acknowledged that at this time, all units have different review models with different structures and priorities that make them more or less able to better evaluate a broader diversity of types of scholarly work in ways that are transparent, equitable, and impactful.

This reality necessitates an important reminder to all faculty that while community-engaged research, scholarship, and creative activity are embraced and valued by the institution, in principle, it is incumbent on all faculty to carefully review their unit and college guidelines, and discuss plans with their unit leaders to ensure that expectations are clearly articulated and mutually understood.

Section 1: Preparation

Introduction: Conducting community-engaged research and scholarship entails labor- and time-intensive preparation that often cannot be measured in quantitative terms. This preparation stage is fundamental to any community-engaged project, as the work cannot move forward in an impactful way without the creation of this foundation. The length and details of the preparation stage will vary from project to project and from community to community. Thus, evaluation cannot be “standardized” to compare different community-engaged projects or other forms of research. The preparation stage must be considered and evaluated on the unique merits of each individual project. Such evaluation needs to consider the following steps, and faculty engaging in this kind of work will benefit by clearly articulating their progress with these activities for their annual reviews.

As with all forms of research, there is an initial “pre-work” stage with community-engaged research. In addition to any disciplinary pre-work that happens before a research project is initiated, central to the pre-work stage in community-engaged research is “knowing your why.” As explained by Dr. Eber Hampton, the pre-work of community-engaged research involves the researcher committing to exploring their own relationship to the research or project and finding and making sense of their connections that inform their motivation for the work.

Establish relationships – Identifying the community and community needs.

- Understanding the history, social, and economic makeup of the community.
- Identifying potential partners.
- Understanding the norms and expectations of high-quality collaboration and partnership.

Build community trust. Trust can only be built over time.

- Listening to communities’ needs, goals, and priorities. Listen, acknowledge, and work to find ways to incorporate community issues, concerns, and priorities into the project design.
- Acknowledging and/or addressing any negative/traumatic past experiences the community has had with past research/researchers.
- Engaging in dialogue on the deeper history of a site/community/issue to arrive at an equitable path forward.
- Addressing language barriers – both technical jargon and translation/interpretation needs. Dedicate funds for interpretation services.
- Continuing to prioritize input from the groups/communities with whom you are engaging throughout the life of the project.
- Plan for sustained engagement after the specific project ends if desired by the community/communities.
- Provide payment for community knowledge holders’ expertise.
- Define a clear plan for how any projects (e.g., articles, websites, data, etc.) will be disseminated and how authorship will be defined.

Manage expectations.

- Clearly define the level of engagement so that everyone involved has a mutual understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

- Be transparent and clear about non-negotiable details.
- Establish shared expectations.
- Establish clear details around accountability.
- Potentially formalize research partnerships through an MOU or develop a collaboration policy.

Identify research objective.

- Identify developments in the field of study.
- Engage in discussions and gather input from community to identify issues and shape the research objective.
- Define how data will be gathered, disseminated, and maintained by all parties.

Identify funding resources.

Section 2: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction: Community-engaged research is an approach to research that prioritizes reciprocity and community agency. Community-engaged researchers work with community partners to define, develop, conduct, and analyze research.

Community engagement within the design of the study requires:

Development of a community-engaged researcher stance, which includes:

- Beginning with a critical epistemological stance that deeply values the expertise, knowledge, and ways of knowing of community partners. This is particularly important when working with communities who experience intersecting forms of oppression, marginalization, or systemic inequities. It is important to understand that while faculty are experts, their expertise is but one kind of expertise. Community-engaged research emphasizes that there is a myriad of knowledge, knowledge keepers, and experts within non-academic communities and systems that the academy may not adequately or equitably recognize.
- Engaging with potential community partners well before developing your research study questions and methodological approach. This engagement requires substantial time and trust-building. (See **Section 1: Preparation**)
- Demonstrating commitment to developing mutual relationships of respect and responsibility with the community partner(s).
- Securing a letter-of-commitment/support from community partner(s) to a study rather than letters-of-interest. This is critical because letters-of-interest intended solely for purposes of securing grants can be exploitative and are not grounded in deep commitment to the communities who are asked to sign these letters. Seeking letters solely for grant applications can also cause the tokenization and cultural taxation of minoritized faculty.², who are asked to join a study and tasked with bridging relationship deficits that exist between PI's and minoritized communities. This further exacerbates unequal power relationships between the university and communities and between senior and junior scholars.
- Opportunity costs stemming from cultural taxation noted in the literature may include:
 - Loss of traditional metrics of academic productivity due to work displaced by such activities
 - The emotional labor of such work stemming from disparate workloads afforded to people from the minoritized communities tasked with cultural taxation-related activities in comparison to faculty from non-minoritized communities
 - Sacrifice of personal leisure
 - Unrecouped clinical income

² Cultural taxation: "The obligation to sow good citizenship towards the institution by serving its needs for ethnic representation on committees, or to demonstrate knowledge and commitment to a cultural group, which, though it may bring accolades to the institution, is not usually rewarded by the institution on whose behalf the service was performed." (Padilla, 1994)

Development of research questions and data collection approach with community partners.

- After establishing relationships of trust and mutual respect, work with community partners to refine your research questions and confirm validity through collaboration and co-design with community partners (UCLA, 2023).
- As you engage in developing the partnership, engage in critical self-reflection and reflexivity in thinking about how you, your presence, and your epistemologies impact the approaches and priorities in the work. Consider how community partners can voice their ideas, concerns, and priorities in the development of research questions and study plans.

Engagement in methodologies that are grounded in continued communication and work with community partners.

- Research questions and data collection methodologies and modalities should be decided with the community/communities. It is encouraged that **before any data is collected**, further discussion takes place to establish a **well-defined plan** for how those data should be accessed, by whom, and in what contexts, etc.
- It is important to mutually define how data will or won't be maintained. That is, will all data be maintained in a repository with community access? Will the community be able to define how long the data will be maintained? There should be a robust discussion about when or if data should not be maintained. (Above bullets from "Indigenous Dignity and the Right to be Forgotten," Brigham Young University Law Review, vol. 46, no. 4 (2021))
- Refining research questions, or confirming their validity, through collaboration or co-generation with community/external partner(s) emphasizes the relationship as one between equal knowledge-creators.
- Identify and select methods appropriate to the goals, questions, and context of the work and provide a rationale for the election of methods.
- Remain aware of the need to modify procedures in response to changing circumstances.
- It is important to engage the community/external partner as a partner/collaborator(s) in developing and/or improving the study design, the collection/analysis/interpretation of data, and/or the recruitment and retention of study participants. (UCLA, 2023).

Finally, a note on avoiding "post-hoc" community engagement.

Post-hoc community engagement occurs when the study has already been developed and grant funding has been secured, and only then do researchers choose to include community perspective or participation (Dellinger, 2023).

Projects that use a post-hoc community engagement approach undermine true community engagement and authentic collaboration. It is often done in ways that can harm minoritized communities who may feel undue influence to engage in the study in a compromised way (to not lose out on financial or institutional support).

Post-hoc community engagement frequently requires faculty who have a prior connection or relationship with a respective community or are, themselves, members of a respective community to leverage their connections for the primary benefit of the research and not necessarily for the benefit of the community. Furthermore, this approach ultimately may not benefit the researcher

tasked with implementing the post-hoc community engagement approach to bridge the relationship-deficit that exists between the academic institution and the community whose participation is sought in a project (University Innovation Alliance, n.d.). Academic institutions are often working from deficits stemming from long-standing inequities and problems when it comes to minoritized community relationships. Faculty from these communities are often bridging the divide in the community and building credibility for the institution. A post-hoc community engagement approach can, therefore, create negative impacts that disproportionately affect faculty from minoritized communities.

Relationship deficit happens in community-engaged research when there is a lack of strong, trusting, and mutually beneficial partnerships between researchers and community members, often stemming from power imbalances, inadequate communication, or a failure to prioritize community needs and perspectives throughout the research process. Post-hoc community engagement can potentially undermine the researcher's and the research's credibility and impact in negative ways.

Section 3: Outcomes/Benefits to Community

Introduction: Assessing outcomes of community-engaged research requires a broad consideration of social impacts, benefits to community, and other direct outcomes. With community-engaged research, outcome measures should largely evaluate systems and capacity changes produced by the engaged research. This can include increased information and resource exchange among contributors and other interested groups, ongoing or new funding for partnered work, improvements to services and programs, improved community capacity for research, policy revision, and sustainability of partnership.

Outcomes of community-engaged research include:

Integrating community standards into research processes.

- Maintain the standards set by community for human subjects (Institutional Review Board), including review of dissemination of materials if appropriate/required.
- Observe community or culturally appropriate process for conflict resolution.
- Document process of reflexivity within partnership.
- Integrating community protocols for data collection and dissemination.

Building capacity of community/benefits to community.

- Build capacity of community members and organizations to address topics most important to them and advocate for themselves.
- Enhance a community-based program, initiative, or effort (e.g., demonstrated effectiveness, increased legitimacy).
- Translate research to meet the needs and context of the community.
- Support a form of community or partner oversight (e.g., stakeholder engagement, community advisory board).
- Improve a partnership area of focus as defined by the community (e.g., intervention does not have to be “effective” in academic terms, but success defined by the community is demonstrated around health outcomes, process outcomes, or partnership outcomes).

Strengthening community partners’ roles as researchers.

- Community partners co-developed the research question, design, outcomes (See **Section 2: Research Design and Methodology**).
- Community partners identify disseminated materials not usually considered “academic” (e.g. digital success stories/photovoice, infographics, etc.).
- Community partners are co-presenters of and co-authors on scholarly products.
- Community partners are co-presenters of and co-authors on other publications and disseminated materials as appropriate.
- Community partners are introduced to additional researchers, partners, or resources that continue to build their education and research infrastructure.

Disciplinary/public interventions.

- Making progress towards social equity and/or systemic change that promote the public good.
- Adding consequentially to the discipline on issues that matter to the external partners and the community.
- Ability of the work, in various venues or formats, to stimulate intellectual conversation that advances the discipline or field.
- Ability of the work, in various venues and formats relevant for the community partners, to stimulate conversations within a community or the general public.

Funding/program sustainment.

- Community researchers included as PIs, MPI, Co-Is, etc.
- Funding from sources that required community engagement components (e.g., community advisory boards, contributor engagement plans).
- Sustained funding for/in partnering community (i.e. community is the awardee/subawards to communities from university researcher or vice versa).
- Partnership leads to additional funding or long-term sustainability.

Relationship development.

- Advancing knowledge and understanding of community-university partnership.
- Developing new or nurturing existing relationships between the university and community.
- Building long-term collaborations between community and university researchers (e.g., demonstrated in number of years partnering together, number of projects/collaborations together).
- Alternatively, project goals may be finite and when met completion/outcome can be demonstrated by documented satisfaction by the community/partner.

Section 4: Circulation and Dissemination of Community-Engaged Research

Introduction: When considering how and where community-engaged research is circulated and disseminated, it is important that a goal is clearly defined by contributors and partners for what they hope to achieve by sharing the research. Goals may include raising awareness, educating communities or the general public, promoting change in systems or organizations, advocating and supporting community action, or influencing policy. Other questions to consider include: Who are your various audiences? What research outcomes are most important for audiences to know? And what is the best way to share the research with respective audiences? Taking these considerations into account, it is important for the institution to advocate for and support the value of community-engaged scholarship that is openly disseminated to the community through outlets such as podcasts, popular press, zines, and public presentations. Often the most prestigious peer-reviewed journals are also the most expensive with content blocked behind pay walls. At the heart of community-engaged research is the shared exchange of experience to provide more impactful knowledge structures. As such, we value and support broad and open access to research findings in consultation with communities to determine where and if broad access to findings should happen.

Examples of circulation and dissemination of community-engaged research:

Disseminating research to academic audiences.

- Publishing research in peer-reviewed journals, including those that may be outside of one's academic discipline, or with journals that do not always align with "high valued" metrics if doing so increases public access.
- Publishing with community partners (e.g., including community partners as co-authors on manuscripts).
- Valuing co-authored research equally as sole-authored.
- Sharing research findings at academic and practitioner-based conferences.
- Writing op-eds and brief reports.
- Articulating impact to both one's discipline and the community.
- Creating and inspiring new conversations (e.g., write-ups, references) in both public and academic spheres.

Disseminating research to community audiences and external partners.

- Sharing outcomes at local, community-based conferences.
- Collaborating with external partners to present findings at community-led forums, panels, and other non-traditional, accessible venues.
- Publishing outcomes in creative formats such as booklets, brochures, policy briefs, newsletters, podcast episodes, radio, community newspapers, and social media. Focus on disseminating information through media used/read by community members.
- Describing the benefits of scholarship to the community.

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