Successful Research Collaborations:
Rules of Engagement
For Community-Based Organizations

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Introduction

Community-based organizations are frequently asked to provide evidence of their organizational effectiveness. Both private and public funders increasingly want proof that their dollars are producing the desired outcomes. As such, many non-profits and community-based organizations have embraced this data-driven approach and are finding that it has broader uses as well: as they begin to understand "what works," they save time and money by choosing or keeping in place only the most effective and rigorously-evaluated strategies that produce the strongest outcomes.

This focus on evidence has also spawned new collaborations between academic research organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs). The CBO may lack the methodological and statistical expertise needed to conduct rigorous research on their own, having prioritized expertise in the subjects most crucial to service delivery. Or, they may have the expertise, but simply lack the dedicated funding. Many small non-profits scrape by without funding sources for research and evaluation, and produce only the data required by their funders. In such cases, the information gleaned from the process may not be used, or useful, in the end.

This paper aims to provide guidelines for CBOs, and in particular Promise Neighborhood lead organizations, to consider when working with external evaluators and researchers.[1] At the Harlem Children's Zone® (HCZ®), we have learned many lessons over more than 30 years of collaborating with researchers. In this paper, we offer our perspective to other CBOs, in an attempt to share the knowledge we have gathered with those newer to the process. Our recommendations here are in no way requirements, nor are they perfect for every research partnership. However, we offer them as a starting point from which other CBOs can develop their own policies and rules for engaging successfully in research collaborations.

Key Definitions

Research organization – An entity specifically focused on conducting traditional scientific research to inform practice or policy, usually within a particular field; this includes think-tanks, university research departments, and academic institutions associated with companies, foundations, or government. The research organization usually considers itself non-partisan. Research organizations may also engage in the process of program evaluation.

Research and Evaluation – According to the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (http://www.nigms.nih.gov/Research/Evaluation/evaluation_faqs.htm), "Research is scientific inquiry based on intellectual curiosity, and it produces generalizable knowledge that advances a field. In contrast, evaluation judges the worth or merit of a particular program. It focuses on information for decision-making, taking into account specific program goals and stakeholder interests."

Please Note: The purpose of the collaboration between a CBO and a research organization may vary. Nevertheless, we often use the terms research and evaluation loosely and interchangeably throughout this paper. CBOs should determine before collaborating with research organizations—based on their values and practical concerns—which of these processes they plan to engage in. More information is available on page 4 of this paper.

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[1] The Harlem Children's Zone ® (HCZ) is a partner in the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink (PNI). PNI, a nonprofit, independent organization, provides technical assistance to Promise Neighborhood communities around the country. As part of the technical assistance, HCZ is making these guidelines publically available to a broad community of practice—including both Federal grantees and non-grantees—as they enter into relationships with external evaluators and researchers. For more information on the Promise Neighborhoods Institute visit http://www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org. More information on the Harlem Children's Zone can be found at www.hcz.org.

Mutually-Beneficial Research

In research collaborations, conflicts arise when parties fail to effectively determine and communicate their needs, goals, and values in advance. At HCZ, we believe that the manner in which CBOs engage in preliminary discussions, grant writing or funding decisions, and research project implementation is crucial to overcoming the significant power imbalances inherent in these partnerships. Both the CBO and the research organization must commit substantial time and resources to the work. They must adhere to a carefully-crafted and mutually-agreed upon plan, value transparency and communication, and work to understand the perspectives, concerns, and priorities of each party involved.

Implicit in any research are issues of trust: in the researchers and their methodology, in the way data will be used and privacy will be protected, and in how the organization or community population will be portrayed to outsiders. Power imbalances occur in part due to a research tradition that favors ceding decision-making authority to the academic experts without recognizing the significant expertise of the CBO and its community. This is magnified by the fact that many disadvantaged communities have fraught histories with research organizations and universities. Communities have felt taken-advantage-of by those who came, studied, and left behind little or no direct return for the people studied. Underserved populations are justifiably concerned about being treated like experiments or data sources for the benefit of others.

Many CBOs have participated in research partnerships with great expectations, only to discover that the work will not actually help them *improve*. Important findings have been published in academic journals that typically provide little use to the field, if they are even accessible to non-subscribers. Researchers do not always set up evaluation questions that are directly relevant to the work or circle back to share results in ways that engage and educate their community partners. And, CBOs have found out too late that they no longer control their own data or retain the ability to determine how their work is presented to the outside world.

The best research is culturally-appropriate and academically rigorous, builds community capacity, is used to inform future work, and leaves everyone involved better off for having participated. In other words, from a CBO's perspective, research should not only "cause no harm"; it should actually improve the lives of those participating.

Understanding Community-Based Participatory Research

Our recommendations here are greatly influenced by the practice of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as it has developed in the field of public health. The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), a leader in the field of public health research and part of the National Institutes of Health, defines CBPR as a methodology that "promotes active community involvement in the processes that shape research and intervention strategies, as well as in the conduct of research studies."[2] This is not only a methodology, but a fundamental shift in orientation, changing the role of the "researcher" and the "researched."

The Institute outlines six core principles of CBPR, namely that it:

1. Promotes active collaboration and participation at every stage of research;
2. Fosters co-learning;
3. Ensures projects are community-driven;
4. Disseminates results in useful terms;
5. Ensures research and intervention strategies are culturally appropriate; and
6. Defines community as a unit of identity.[3]

At HCZ, we would also add that CBPR should also improve *outcomes* for the community.

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[2] See http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/dert/sphb/programs/justice/index.cfm.
[3] Liam R. O'Fallon and Allen Dearry. April 2002. "Community-Based Participatory Research as a Tool to Advance Environmental Health Sciences." Environmental Health Perspectives, Vol. 110, Supplement 2.

This work presents some obvious challenges. Building real relationships and collaboration takes time, which means that CBPR works best when all parties are committed for the long term. Successful collaboration also means taking the time learn about one another, so that practitioners understand the research and researchers understand the activities and culture of the CBO and local community. It's important that all involved understand the purpose of the work and share a desired outcome or set of outcomes. The more explicit these relationships and expectations are, the more productive the collaboration will be for everyone.

CBPR helps researchers to:

- Conduct research that can translate more easily into practical policies and that addresses real community needs
- Access hard to reach populations or places where little research has been conducted
- Design more culturally- and linguistically-appropriate surveys and interventions
- Increase participation in their research
- Interpret their results in context
- Better understand "real world" limitations of research
- Gain community buy-in and improve their organizations' reputations
- Use CBO expertise in the subject area as a resource
- Disseminate their research to a wider audience

CBPR helps CBOs to:

- Demonstrate the effectiveness of their work
- Create a stronger evaluation culture in their organizations
- Use data to improve their work
- Answer questions they have about their own programs or participants
- Influence policy in their fields
- Receive training in various data collection and analysis techniques
- Access additional funding and resources (libraries, materials, academic experts)
- Gain credibility by presenting and publishing with a prestigious research organization
- Educate researchers about issues facing their communities so that research becomes more relevant
- Benefit from outside perspectives that external researchers may bring

Both collaborators need each other to succeed.

Traditional Research vs. Evaluation vs. Performance Management

"Traditional research", "evaluation", and "performance management" are terms that are often used casually or interchangeably. The following table highlights key differences and similarities.

Traditional Research	Evaluation	Performance Management
Seeks to generate new knowledge for a field	Seeks to determine how effective a particular strategy is	Seeks to improve a particular program and the outcomes it generates
Ends in the sharing of findings, usually with a published paper or presentation at a conference	Ends with the determination of how well a strategy (i.e. program or intervention) works or does not work; results may or may not be published	Is a continuous cycle – Ends only when a program or strategy ends; results are not typically shared externally
Has broad application – the knowledge should be generalizable to an entire field	Has narrow application – judges the efficacy or worth of a particular program	Has narrow application – focuses on improving a particular program
Provides general information	Determines whether or not a program is effective	Ensures that program operates effectively
Scientific approach – to maintain impartiality	Scientific approach – to determine what outcomes are solely attributable to the strategy (in other words, to find a causal link between the strategy and the outcome)	Flexible and evolving approach – the approach can and should change as new information becomes available
Usually performed by external, impartial organizations	Performed externally or internally	Usually performed internally – often a CBO will create the capacity to conduct performance management in-house

As CBOs consider collaborations with research organizations, they will need to be intentional about which of these three processes they wish to pursue. This is to a great extent what we mean by determining the "purpose" of the research: will it be research for research's sake, that is, to increase knowledge without providing community benefits? Is this information that needs to be broadly generalizable and have external validity? Does the CBO hope to cite this as evidence of a particular program or strategy's effectiveness? Does the CBO plan to use information gained throughout the collaboration to change their programs mid-process?

The answers may not be clear; or it may be the case that more than one of these processes is appealing; or may be that the answers are different for the research organization and the CBO to answer mutually. If

HCZ's Approach: A Hybrid of Internal and External Performance Management, Research, and Evaluation

HCZ's internal data and evaluation team was launched in 2002 after considerable work with outside organizations and consultants. The organization wished to provide evidence in support of its programs, but also to create an internal feed-back loop that would cycle data between management and programs and help improve the work in real time. With a firm belief that data are only useful in-so-much as is the information is *used*, HCZ developed a skilled in-house team responsible for collecting, cleaning, analyzing, and disseminating data for learning, continuous program improvement, and accountability.

The many tasks of the members of HCZ's evaluation team include:

- Preparing reports and presentations for both internal and external use;
- Making complex topics, data, and analysis understandable to a variety of audiences;
- Supporting our database team in training program staff to enter data; conducting literature reviews, internet research, interviews, surveys, and focus groups;
- Ensuring that human subjects regulations and health information privacy laws are followed properly; and
- Monitoring an individual-level longitudinal database.

Some advantages to having this capacity in-house include:

- Improving effective program management
- Increasing managers' and staff-members' levels of trust related to the evaluation of their work
- Guaranteeing that the organization's values and ethics around research are upheld
- Providing staff who talk the lingo and can support any work with external evaluators

HCZ continues to work with external researchers and evaluators as well.

the intent of the work is not agreed upon in advance, it may place the two organizations at odds during the collaboration.

Developing Your "Rules of Engagement"

Before bringing in outside researchers and evaluators, it is important to think carefully about developing an organizational research policy for your work. Ultimately, discussing these questions will lead the CBO to develop a list of policies and rules to share with any researchers or evaluators with whom it chooses to engage. These policies are what we refer to as the CBO's "rules of engagement."

This is not simply about finding a way to hold the researchers' feet to the fire. Instead, developing rules of engagement should hold *both* parties accountable to each other and the community for the work and should ensure a fair and mutually-beneficial process.[4]

Questions to discuss amongst senior staff and program leadership within your CBO include:

- Who is this research for? How will it be helpful to our work?
- How do we expect the research to be conducted? What methodologies are we open to using? Will we permit random assignment or comparison groups? Will we need an Institutional Review Board (IRB)?
- How will we establish trust between the researchers and our community? Is there any existing relationship or history to consider?
- How long of a process will this be?
- What individual(s) or party(s) will be in charge of the process? Will it be co-managed?

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[4] See also Northridge, M., Shoemaker, K., Jean-Louis, B., Ortiz, B., Swaner, R., Vaughan, R., Cushman, L., Hutchinson, V., & Nicholas, S. (2005). *What Matters to Communities? Using Community-Based Participatory Research to Ask and Answer Questions Regarding the Environment and Health.* Environ Health Perspective 113, Supplement 1, p 34-41.

- Will the person/people leading the process from our CBO have sufficient authority to recommend or directly implement changes to the program or strategy based on what we learn from the research? Do they have any training, prior experience or education in research or evaluation?
- What processes can we put in place to maximize the functioning of a data feedback loop?
- What are our organizational ethics relative to the collected data?
- How will we ensure that we improve outcomes for the community as a result of this research?

Questions to ask any external researchers before beginning the collaboration include:

- Why are you interested in conducting this research?
- Does this fit into a broader body of research for you or your organization, and if so, how?
- What is your timeline for completing this research? Do you plan ongoing work in this area?
- Will all collaborators co-own the intellectual property created by this project?
- Will all collaborators retain access to the raw data?
- What prior connections do you have to our organization and our community?
- Do you hope to publish this research? If so, where and when? Will you be amenable to joint authorship and approval authority over anything you write?
- How will the CBO's work be impacted during this research process?
- What kind of research design do you recommend or plan to use? Will we need an Institutional Review Board?
- How do you plan to staff this research project? Who reports to whom? How can we ensure good communication?
- Is there an opportunity for residents of this community to be hired to work on this project?
- How will we fund this research and who is responsible for the fundraising?
- Who will be the Principal Investigator (PI)? If feasible, are you open to a joint or Co-PI with one of our staff serving as the other PI?
- Does your organization or institution have an overhead rate that it expects to apply to grants? If so and we feel it's too high, is there a precedent for reducing that rate for projects such as this?
- Are there funding- or publication-related restrictions or requirements we should keep in mind as we plan?
- What resources, both in-kind and financial, including staff time, are we expected to contribute?
- What will be the products of the research for our community and our work?

The best research not only "causes no harm"; it improves the lives of those participating.

HCZ's Key Recommendations for CBOs

Your own rules will need to be based on your organizational priorities and values. We offer these recommendations in several key areas—based on our own experience—for CBOs to consider and adapt. The policies recommended below are those used in research collaborations at the Harlem Children's Zone.

Purpose

- **Only participate in research that directly informs a service or program.** This will ensure that the research will ultimately be useful to the CBO and the children and families it serves.

- **Determine how the research will affect ongoing work.** Academic research grants carry stipulations, perhaps requiring interventions to be standardized and delivered consistently over long periods of time, without consideration for individual needs, cultural sensitivity, or changes in circumstances within programs.[5] HCZ wants to continue providing services across the board and consistently, without imposing delays or restricting access. We often also wish to adapt and improve an intervention based on new information gained mid-process. HCZ's longitudinal study,

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[5] Eckhart-Queenan, J. & Forti, M. (April 25, 2011). *Measurement as Learning: What Nonprofit CEOs, Board Members, and Philanthropists Need to Know to Keep Improving.* Copyright © 2011 The Bridgespan Group, Inc.

undertaken with Mathematica Policy Research, regularly provides implementation and individual-level data used to pinpoint areas of weakness, permitting better mobilization of resources to improve processes and supports for children.

- **Identify the goals of the collaboration before beginning.** Understanding the difference between traditional "research," "evaluation," and "performance management" is key to this (see page 4).

Roles

- **Clearly define the roles and chain of command.** It is not enough to designate a Principal Investigator (PI) without also outlining exactly what the person(s) will be responsible for. Traditionally, the PI is the individual who bears the ultimate responsibility to complete the project and report back to the funders of the research, the one who directs the research and acts as team leader, or the person who designs the research or evaluation process. At HCZ, on some occasions, we have explicitly shared the role of Principal Investigator with the researchers by formally creating co-Principal Investigators, one of whom works for HCZ. This equalizes the distribution of power and ensures that both parties have significant control over the work. Because different people and organizations bring different values, professional codes, institutional policies, or personal convictions, the project is more likely to fairly represent all those involved with co-principal investigators.

- **Decide who can and cannot make significant changes.** Include language in your MOU clarifying who can make significant changes to the research process and what joint approval is needed.

- **Include program leaders in decisions.** Ensure cross-pollination between program leaders and researchers. The person who designs and runs an obesity-reduction intervention will certainly have a valuable perspective on how the intervention can be best evaluated. He or she will have suggestions about what indicators best reflect the work or how to communicate with participants. The program leader will also know which data the program already collects or can obtain easily.

- **Don't allow the researchers to guide implementation of the work.** The researchers are there to evaluate programs or observe outcomes, not to redesign existing programs within the CBO.

Budget

- **Agree on a reasonable overhead fee.** Many academic institutions take a standard administrative overhead from research grants of as much as 70%. For government grants such as those funded by the National Institutes of Health, these "indirect costs" are taken upfront and the budget discussed with the CBO may not include them. CBOS should be made aware of the full extent of the indirect costs by their research partners (whether or not they are explicitly presented in shared documents). The overhead fee usually does not typically include the costs for any evaluators working for the academic institution on this project. Rather it is used by the academic institution to cover expenses such as rent, computers, software, libraries, etc. Instead of assuming that such costs are fixed, CBOs should negotiate overhead rates. Many foundations require lower overhead rates, so there are precedents for such negotiations. Different centers within a university may have different guidelines about overhead, a fact that can be taken into account by CBOs as they broker relationships. This is sometimes a deal breaker for the Harlem Children's Zone. We negotiate with academic institutions on this point, bringing overhead costs down to a more reasonable 20–30%.

- **Establish a budget in advance, making sure that everyone involved understands the costs.** The more detailed the budget is, the more transparent it will be to all parties exactly how the money is to be spent.

Timeline

- **Create a timeline for project completion**. This should include when the work will commence, on what key dates deliverables will be completed, when publication may occur, and even when the research collaboration is expected to come to an end or if it is open-ended.

Data collection and storage

- **Don't allow data collection to impede the work.** Data collection requires compromise and flexibility, but this cannot come at the expense of the organization's core mission. CBOs should anticipate this issue and ask the research team to discuss possible issues with service interruption before they arise.

- **Educate CBO staff members on how to accurately collect the data.** If the CBO's staff members are responsible for collecting the data, it is important that they fully understand how and when to collect the data and how to enter it accurately into the data platform. The CBO may also wish to ensure compensation for this work or treat it as an in-kind donation.

- **Keep both the CBO and research organization involved in data collection.** If the research organization is primarily responsible for data collection, the CBO should also stay involved in this process. The CBO naturally knows the community best, and can advise on how to reach certain populations or how to increase response rates. This is one of the many places where specific local and contextual knowledge is key to the success of the research.

- **Maintain honesty, accuracy, efficiency, and transparency.** Information gathered is often personal and sensitive, and participants may engage only after assurances are made that their responses will be carefully guarded and not attributed directly to them. Make sure that both organizations are comfortable with the consent forms being used and that they are easily understood by people without scientific expertise. Allow everyone involved the chance to review any surveys being administered, and make sure everyone understands the obligations that collecting this data imposes.

- **Determine how data will be stored and who will have access to it.** Consider issues of protection to maintain the strict confidentiality of your participants.

Data sharing

- **Establish guidelines for the use of data.** Begin with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) establishing guidelines for both data use and ownership. The MOU should specifically state that the CBO's data cannot be used or shared with others without written permission and should be signed by everyone with access to the data. The CBO should share (or own) proprietary rights to the data. If only the research organization controls the data and its use, then the CBO may lack the necessary information and legitimacy to speak about their own work and experiences, even when they are ultimately the ones most familiar with the people and actions behind the data. Laws and institutional policies that are meant to protect the individuals behind the data can limit how it is used. This may lead to profound misunderstandings on both sides. One example of this at HCZ occurred with a collaboration between the Harlem Children's Zone and a New York City agency. We collected data ourselves, turned it over for data entry, and then were told we could no longer have access to the confidential data.

- **Ensure the data are accessible to the CBO.** Ownership of data can be overwhelming for small CBOs, and may require some education and training, but is ultimately well worth the additional effort. It is preferable to have the ability and understanding to access and analyze your own data without working through external researchers as intermediaries. At a minimum, the CBO should be able to maintain up-to-date copies of stored data—whether in an Excel file or in a more sophisticated data platform—and exercise the right to request any analyses and interpretations of the data they need.

- **State that data cannot be made available to external parties without written consent and approval.**

- **Understand the privacy laws both parties are subject to, both locally and nationally.** Discuss the privacy policies of the research organization (HIPAA,[6] FERPA,[7] Institutional Review Board protocols, university guidelines, etc.). Ensure that both organizations will work to determine means to share data at a level needed within the boundaries of the laws and regulations. For example, certain requests may require the signed consent of participants to share the data.

- **Include a clause about unethical behavior.** If any research misconduct occurs and data are inaccurately represented, falsified, or unethically used by either organization, this should be grounds for termination of the work and potentially more serious penalties imposed by the funding agencies and involved institutions.

Methodology

- **Create a policy around the use of strict randomized clinical trials (RCTs) or community trials.** A control group or comparison group by definition does not receive the same services or interventions provided by the test group. The individuals in the control group instead serve as the comparison or baseline against which the impact of any intervention is measured. At HCZ we are extremely reluctant to deny or delay receipt of services that we believe to be effective. Thus far, we have only engaged in a control group experiment in relation to our charter schools, as an outgrowth of New York State's requirement that we hold lotteries for entrance to our charter schools. Soon we intend to engage in an RCT in relation to our healthy living initiative, a rare occasion where demand for our service exceeds capacity. An RCT is a particular challenge in neighborhood-wide work such as Promise Neighborhoods where the goal is to serve the entire neighborhood and to recognize everyone as a valued member of the community. This issue should be discussed up front before the research study is designed, so that the process is not derailed by disagreements down the line.

Communication

- **Stipulate who is allowed to speak publicly about the research or on behalf of the collaboration**.

- **Keep communication constant, mutual, and open.** Neither the CBO nor the research team wants to find out after the fact that partners felt they did not appropriately support the work. Both sides bear responsibility—and have the right—to provide feedback.

- **Establish a schedule of regular meetings**. Arrive with a clear agenda of what to discuss. Groups should avoid holding meetings when key staff from either the CBO and research team cannot be present.

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[6] The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy and Security Rules
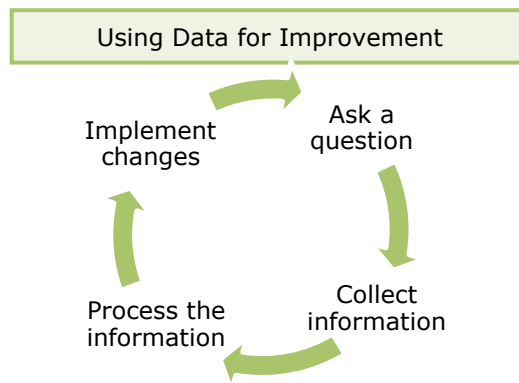[7] The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974

Performance Management

Child Trends, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center focused on research and evaluation, offers these useful distinctions between performance management and traditional evaluation:

Performance management aims to ensure that social programs operate as intended. It requires ongoing, internal data collection and analysis, flexibility to ask a variety of questions, and the capacity to use experience and the literature to set program standards and benchmarks. Evaluation is intended to provide information to a broad set of stakeholders—funders, other practitioners, and policy makers—to advance knowledge in the field. It requires a clear set of research questions … [and] the most rigorous design possible given programmatic constraints.

(See Walker, K. & Moore, K. (January 2011). Performance Management and Evaluation: What's the Difference? A Research-To-Results Brief, from Child Trends.)

- **Understand when the data collected will be reviewed.** Many CBOs eagerly anticipate using research and data for program or performance management and to ultimately improve their work. One clear advantage of creating an internal evaluation and performance management capacity within a CBO is that the organization can then be completely free to cycle their program data in an iterative process, for constant improvement and on their own timeline. If it will not be processed or shared until after the project is over, then performance management cannot take place.

Using Data for Improvement

Ask a question → Collect information → Process the information → Implement changes → (back to Ask a question)

- **State upfront if your intention is to use the data to improve programs *during* the process.** The researchers will need to know if there will not be a "pure" research design or if changes will be made to programs during the research period. It is best to state this clearly in the earliest stages of the collaboration. Many researchers are eager to publish in journals as that is part of the mission and goals of their profession, and required by many funding agencies. Prestigious journals subject their submissions to rigorous research requirements and strict regulations for all aspects of a study's design and implementation. The CBO should be clear if peer-reviewed publication is not compatible with their aims. This will ensure that the end goal of the research is program improvement, not publication as an end in and of itself.

Publication

- **Establish guidelines around the publishing of the resulting work.** At HCZ, we co-author almost all publications and jointly present results at most conferences or other settings. This gives the CBO and community appropriate credit for their effort and institutional knowledge. There are exceptions to these rules, but we intentionally make those exceptions based upon our values.

    No one who is external to the intervention or research should publish the findings or share any data. The practice of "honorary authorship" is unethical; unless individuals contribute to the

conceptualization and writing and accept public responsibility for the work, they should not be named as authors.

- **Specify that the interventions or programs should begin before any baseline data are published.** Caution against premature public statements or interpretation of the data, and determine an approximate timeline for publication once the research is completed. For example, HCZ and its asthma partners surveyed children 12 years old and under in the community to determine the percentage of children with asthma. Ultimately, the shockingly high rate was published in an academic journal and became front page news in *The New York Times*. However, the asthma partners had launched their intervention and began serving the children who they discovered had asthma prior to the publication of the article.

- **Require that any publications written are in language that is accessible to a wide audience.** This will ensure that CBOs and policy makers seeking to replicate the work have access to the knowledge as well.

- **Set aside the financial and in-kind resources for making genuine contributions.** If CBO staff is expected to co-author the work, it is imperative that they contribute in more than a superficial way.

Conclusions

These are just some of the many issues that we have found important to discuss in order to achieve successful and balanced research partnerships. CBOs may approach these partnerships hastily, without realizing that, even though interests may align, the paths and processes often diverge. Instead, CBOs have the opportunity to reshape the traditional research paradigm by asserting their priorities. At first it may seem like potential collaborators could be chased away by CBOs with strong policies, but we have found with experience that ultimately the rewards that come from true collaboration are greater: the chance to create meaningful, usable, non-exploitative research to impact policy.

Finally, we reiterate that it is important not to underestimate the value that either contributor in the collaboration can bring. Traditional academic researchers and evaluators bring a high level of skill and expertise that many CBOs do not possess internally—they are indeed experts at using and understanding data. And CBOs bring the value of experience in the field, knowledge gained from real-life interventions, and a wealth of existing participants and data—and often community trust. Both collaborators need each other to succeed.

For More Information

If you have questions or comments, please contact Dr. Betina Jean-Louis, Director of Evaluation at the Harlem Children's Zone, at bjeanlouis@hcz.org.

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