Integrating Community Based Research:

A Resource Guide For Bonner Programs

Introduction

Community-based research (CBR) is a collaboration between researchers and community members in the design and implementation of research projects aimed at addressing community-identified needs.

These collaborations are conducted in the context of partnerships that are mutually beneficial and aim to advance the education and learning of students, conduct research that both meshes with academic scholarship and improves an agency's capacity to meet its mission and goals, and addresses community needs. These projects can also mesh with the aims of faculty and higher education institutions as a form of scholarship and knowledge production.

Researchers can include students (Bonner Scholars/Leaders), faculty, and community members. In the community-based model, academic and community members work together to identify research issues, develop research designs, collect data, write up results, and work with policy makers and practitioners in designing and executing effective responses. This research is action-oriented.

CBR can result in tangible products that benefit the stakeholders involved in key ways.

- **Students involved in CBR projects can deepen their learning and scholarship** as well as use this work for academic credit
- **Faculty members involved in CBR can develop scholarship** that they can publish and utilize for their own scholarly, disciplinary, tenure, and other needs
- **Community organizations and groups can obtain information** (like data, reports, recommendations, and studies) that increases the effectiveness of their work, that builds capacity, and that assists with resource cultivation (such as grants and funding)
- **Community constituents can benefit from the learning, increased awareness, and increased focus and resources** on issues that often results from the successful sharing of CBR (such as through forums).

Typical Forms of CBR include:

- Needs assessments
- Program evaluations
- Studies (of a program model, of an approach)
- GIS mapping and community-asset mapping
- Oral histories
- and more

Community-Based Research's Connection with Capacity-Building Goals

Some of the Capacity Building focus areas connect directly to CBR; these include policy research. Beyond this, all of the five categories within the Capacity Building focus areas could have dimensions that include CBR. For instance:

- ***Volunteer Management:*** students and faculty have conducted studies and research about effective volunteer recruitment, retention, and support practices.
- ***Program Development:*** CBR research can include identifying model programs for an issue (like mentoring or out-of-school time). They can also include needs assessments or surveys of client populations used to develop new programs or improve existing ones.
- ***Fundraising:*** CBR projects have included identifying relevant grant and funding sources; they have also included analyzing issues such as gaps in funding cycles that affect programs (see example in this guide).
- ***Communications:*** CBR projects have even included studies of web-based platforms and tools to reach client populations, mobilize volunteers, address gaps in services (such as response time for EMT calls), and so on.
- ***Research:*** At times, the agency will have a clearly defined research need. For instance, perhaps research on the quality of water is needed for an environmental organization. Or perhaps, research on parental involvement is needed by a school-based program.

Hence, an important role of Centers and their staff is to **help translate the needs of partners and community constituents** into research projects and questions. **This guide addresses how.**

The Roles of Bonner Programs/Centers and Some Steps

These resources draw on the experience of programs and staff who have begun to more systematically **link CBR to the experience of Bonner Scholars and Leaders**. This also involves matching community partners with faculty and students to carry out these projects. Because of the student developmental model, there is great alignment between the roles that students can and should be playing as they become more experienced in their organizations, communities, and issue areas and CBR projects.

As a goal, Bonner Programs may wish to connect CBR to the roles of juniors and seniors. Some programs, like Washington & Lee University, have begun to make this a requirement. This resource guide draws on resources and experience from Washington & Lee University.

As part of this, your Center may want and need to **formalize its roles as a coordinator or broker for CBR.** Some call this **"establishing a CBR hub."** Academic departments can also serve this role. Regardless of the structure you pursue, the steps here may help you think through the process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CBR, visit this site to download (and purchase) an excellent handbook:

A Practical Handbook for Supporting Community-Based Research with Undergraduate Students

These materials are based on the whole implementation process, while in practice, staff may be in the middle of the process already. The detailed guide that follows includes more about these steps and the resources.

Summary of Implementation Steps and Resources

1. **Introduce CBR to partners and recruit and identify projects** from community partners or groups.
    - Resources include *presentations and handouts for partners* for you to customize for this step.
2. **Simultaneously recruit and identify faculty** (have them on deck) who are interested in CBR or research projects.
    - Resources include presentations and handouts for faculty for you to customize for this step.
3. **Turn the need into a tangible research question and project,** connecting the partner with students and/or faculty to carry it out**.** This involves working with partners, for example through meetings and discussions involving community partner staff member, student, and staff member (as broker).
    - Resources include a set of helpful questions to work through together.
4. **Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** for the project, especially so that the focus, scope, timeline, and deliverable for the project is clear.
    - Resources include a Sample MOU.
5. **Manage the project.** Once the project is underway, the roles of the staff and faculty member are dependent on the research project itself.
    - Resources include a simple template for sharing successes and challenges while projects are being carried out.
6. Assuming things are going fairly well as the team involved completes the work, **ensure that the deliverable (from MOU) is met** and project completed.

7. **Make sure to share and disseminate the results** in a way that is useful to the partner and to addressing the community need or concern.

8. Remember, these projects are **part of a long-term, developmental, sustained partnership.**

Integrating Community Based Research:

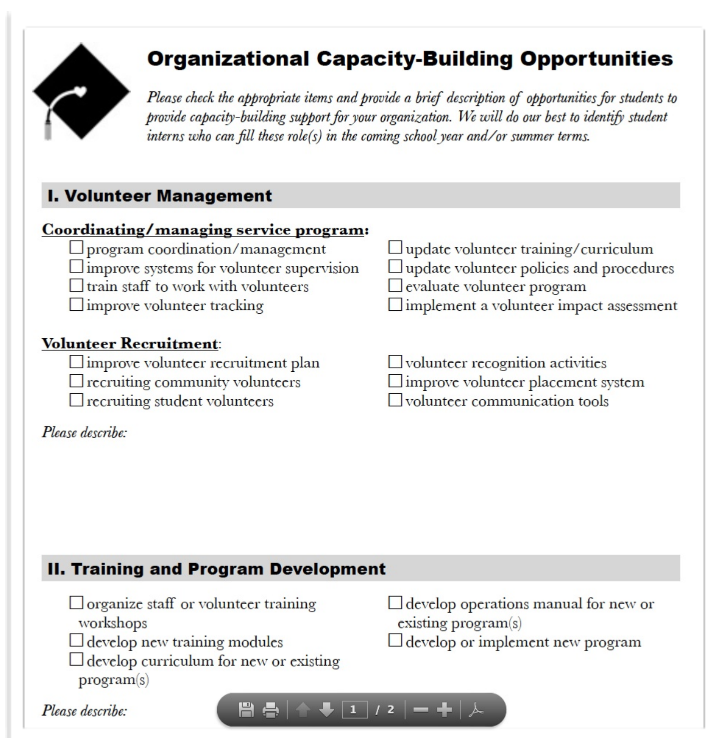
A Resource Guide For Bonner Programs

1 Introduce CBR to partners and recruit and identify projects from community partners or groups. This dovetails well with the Capacity Building Form.

As you're planning and carrying out meetings with partners related to their completed of the Capacity Building Form, this is a perfect opportunity to go into more depth about their needs for CBR.

Here are a few talking points to introduce CBR (for use in a meeting or email):

- Community-based research (CBR) is a collaborative project that can address your organization's or the community's needs.
- These needs can be connected to the direct service we already provide your agency through student volunteers (like Bonner Scholars or Leaders).
- These projects can involve students, faculty, and community members in designing and implementing research projects that strengthen's your program or agency capacity, resources, etc.
- Community-based research (CBR) is another form of the service that our institution and its members can provide your agency. It's an extension of the type of community/civic engagement we are already doing.
- The college and our center/program can help to identify where this need might be met through a project involving students and faculty. While we can't make a promise, we can do our best to find a match.
- Some projects can even involve agency staff and/or volunteers. This is often called **Community-Based Participatory Research.** This will depend on your agency's available time and resources.


Organizational Capacity-Building Opportunities

Please check the appropriate items and provide a brief description of opportunities for students to provide capacity-building support for your organization. We will do our best to identify student interns who can fill these role(s) in the coming school year and/or summer terms.

I. Volunteer Management

Coordinating/managing service program:
- ☐ program coordination/management
- ☐ improve systems for volunteer supervision
- ☐ train staff to work with volunteers
- ☐ improve volunteer tracking
- ☐ update volunteer training/curriculum
- ☐ update volunteer policies and procedures
- ☐ evaluate volunteer program
- ☐ implement a volunteer impact assessment

Volunteer Recruitment:
- ☐ improve volunteer recruitment plan
- ☐ recruiting community volunteers
- ☐ recruiting student volunteers
- ☐ volunteer recognition activities
- ☐ improve volunteer placement system
- ☐ volunteer communication tools

Please describe:

II. Training and Program Development

- ☐ organize staff or volunteer training workshops
- ☐ develop new training modules
- ☐ develop curriculum for new or existing program(s)
- ☐ develop operations manual for new or existing program(s)
- ☐ develop or implement new program

Please describe:

As you're planning and carrying out meetings with partners related to their completed of the Capacity Building Form, this is a perfect opportunity to go into more depth about their needs for CBR. Use the handout on the next page to introduce some questions for partner staff to work through.

Using a meeting to introduce CBR and generate ideas:

Many centers and programs have found that hosting a group meeting of community partners can be helpful to generate ideas for their research needs. For instance, at Washington & Lee University, they do this by issue-area, clustering partners that work on similar issues (like food security or the environment). This also allows for cross-fertilization of ideas. The staff (Coordinator and VISTA) essentially structure this as a focus group with partners. If you want to use this focus group approach, you then can facilitate the discussion.

The structure of the meeting is as follows:

1. Introduce participants to CBR if needed. Use the sample handouts and/or pieces of the power-points.

2. Ask non-profit staff to identify the main challenges they are facing in meeting their mission, delivering their programs, or being effective with the population served. Use the capacity building form and worksheet (attached). Give real examples if you can.

3. For instance, in a meeting with after-school programs, themes that were clear were transportation, parent involvement, and grant-making cycles.

4. Once these are identified (issue-wide and agency-specific), then the staff can help the partners see how these needs could be met through research projects

5. Staff take these ideas from the focus group and then start thinking about students and how they might be connected with these projects.

6. For Bonners, these needs are then brought to the juniors and seniors in class meetings. The Bonner Coordinator focuses on identifying connections for the Bonners to take on these CBR projects.

7. For other students, these needs are also posted on the website and managed by the center as a whole. The VISTA helps manage these broader connections (to students and faculty.

Resources for you
Capacity Building Form: The 2-page form is a simple checklist. Get familiar with its contents.
Introducing CBR to Partners: A Handout
Worksheet for Identifying CBR Projects: Extending Your Thinking From the Capacity Building Form

Introduction to Community-Based Research (CBR)

Customize this handout to add details that are relevant to your institution, community, and center.

The **[insert name of center/office/department]** supports research partnerships between **[insert name of college/university]** and non-profits in the **[insert name of city/county/state]** area to address pressing community needs and issues. These partnerships aim simultaneously to mobilize the community for responsible, positive social change, provide an infrastructure and support for just, healthy communities, and advance the education and well-being of students, community members, organizations, and institutions.

What is Community-Based Research? How can it benefit a community agency?

Community-based research (CBR) is a collaboration between researchers and community members to design and implement research projects aimed at meeting community-identified needs. In the community-based model, academic and community members work together to identify research issues, develop research designs, collect data, write up results, and work with policy makers and practitioners in designing and executing effective responses. This research is action-oriented. It can involve students, faculty, residents or clients, and/or non-profit staff, depending on capacity and availability.

CBR can benefit a community agency, school, or non-profit organization in a number of ways, including:

- Providing the resources to conduct research that improves your agency's capacity to meet its mission and goals;
- Accessing the expertise of faculty and student researchers and the opportunity to learn about the latest research in your field or issue area;
- Creating new partnerships with the institution; and
- Playing a role in the education of students and their development as engaged citizens.

CBR can also benefit students in numerous ways like:

- Providing students with rich experiential learning as researchers, consultants, facilitators and leaders, strengthening their job skills;
- Allowing students the opportunity to apply their skills and academic knowledge to real situations, making a concrete impact in the community;
- Engaging students in research that leverages and deepens their disciplinary knowledge, challenging them to grasp the real world nuances and complexity of issues being studied;
- Playing a role in developing the knowledge and habits of engaged citizens.

Finally CBR can also benefit faculty and institutions involved as partners in many ways like:

- Providing faculty with an opportunity to engage in scholarship and to conduct work that benefits their own professions, knowledge, and disciplines;
- Provides them with additional rewards and opportunities to publish and share work;
- Enriches the classroom experience and the engagement of students as learners in ways that bring faculty roles as teachers and scholars to life
- Providing faculty and staff with ways to also be engaged citizens

What the Center Can Provide

Customize this handout to add details that are relevant to your institution, community, and center.

The **[insert name of center/office/department]** supports the creation and completion of research partnerships between **[insert name of college/university]** and non-profits in the **[insert name of city/county/state]** area to address pressing community needs and issues. These are some of the roles that the office plays:

For organizations:

- Helping community agencies to identify questions or projects that when answered will help them better accomplish their missions and improve service delivery;
- Connecting the research needs of the community with appropriate and effective University researchers;
- Assisting community partners to identify faculty to connect with to conduct this research and provide structure (including in classroom assignments, through advising, and mentoring) to students engaged;
- Providing resources, best and promising practices, and organizational structures that strengthens community-institution research partnerships (such as help arranging transportation, connections to the field, etc.)
- Documenting and maintaining a database of current research needs and past research projects;
- Advising students as they develop action-oriented activities based on their research, including policy briefs, service projects, programming, and awareness campaigns;
- Hosting and facilitating community forums to communicate research findings.

For faculty:

- Assisting faculty to connect with community partners and their research needs to benefit the education of students;
- Helping community agencies to identify questions or projects that when answered will help them better accomplish their missions and improve service delivery;
- Facilitating the IRB approval process (which may be required depending on the project);
- Offering an orientation or training to place and the community
- Offering training on research ethics and professionalism to students researchers
- Helping to coordinate project logistics, like identifying whom to contact at a given agency, organizing a meeting time that works with faculty, student and partner agency schedule, and identifying a space for meetings to be held;
- Providing resources, promising practices, and organizational structures that strengthens community-University research partnerships;
- Allowing students access to transportation to and from project site, when necessary and feasible;
- Documenting and maintaining a database of current research needs and past research projects;
- Advising students as they develop action-oriented activities based on their research, including policy briefs, service projects, programming, and awareness campaigns;
- Hosting and facilitating community forums to communicate research findings.

Understanding an Organization’s Research Needs

Customize this handout to add details that are relevant to your institution, community, and center. This part of the handout is especially geared for organizational staff.

Our community-based research program is interested in meeting with your community agency to document your research needs and to connect you with interested and capable student and faculty researchers. These could be questions or projects that when answered will help your agency better accomplish its mission and improve service delivery. In order to kick-start this process, we suggest that you and other key members of your organization utilize the brainstorming questions below to begin to identify possible research needs. When we meet we can discuss how faculty and students researchers may help to meet organizational or program goals.

What do we as an agency, school, or organization need to know?

- What are your dreams for this group/agency in the future?
- What is your biggest concern/need for the next month? Next year? Next five years? Next ten years?
- What changes may your organization see in the future? How will your agency need to adapt? What do you need to know to more about in order to make these changes effective?
- What is it that you might want to know about your clients’ needs or your work that you don’t have the time and resources to find out?
- What do you wish you knew about the outcomes, results or effects of your work?
- What items, materials, or information do grant funders demand of you?
- What types of best practices would you like to know more about?

How do we get there?

- How could researchers help answer or meet these questions, needs, or goals you have detailed above? Consider the following types of research tools. (See the next page for more details on these tools):

    - Surveys
    - Interviews
    - Business Plans
    - Marketing Work (such as brochures, websites, etc.)
    - Information Analysis
    - Assessment/Evaluation
    - Best Practices
    - Strategic Planning
    - Board Development strategies
    - Oral Histories

Types of Research Projects to Consider

Customize this handout to add details that are relevant to your institution, community, and center. You may want to include specific examples from prior CBR work and projects conducted by students and faculty working in partnership with your community constituents.

Examples – some projects may be a combination of two or more types

1. **Small scale surveys:** for example, of clients' needs, or their evaluation of services; of residents of a small community or particular location to assess needs or interests
2. **Focus groups:** with clients or targeted populations to determine needs or interests; or to assess a program's operations
3. **Program evaluation:** participant observations to assess the program's operations; reviewing client records to report program activities; interviewing clients and/or staff to attain their evaluations; quasi-experiments to test for fairness and equity of services
4. **Oral histories:** undertake interviews to collect oral histories around a specific location, organization, or particular issue or topic
5. **Data analysis:** collect and systematize data from client records or other sources, compile and tabulate, produce reports of interest, analyze Census data or other primary data sources related to your agency's work
6. **Community asset mapping:** street-level collection of data regarding assets and liabilities of a community, entering data into a database, produce mapping
7. **Policy research:** examine and analyze policies in a particular issue area; explore policy options and alternatives; review pros and cons of alternative policy options
8. **Best practices:** examine similar programs to explore best practices from other programs, to review their program evaluation methods, devise program innovations.
9. **Business planning:** work with staff to undertake strategic planning, outreach plans, marketing plans, devise training, and assess innovation implementation
10. **Website construction:** work with staff to collect materials for website, design site map, construct organizational website
11. **Popular education and outreach:** organize and/or create materials for outreach or population education forums, organize event, facilitate event, document and assess effectiveness of event
12. **Grant writing:** undertake organizational research on program effectiveness, community needs, and funding possibilities; write draft proposal.

Note: these examples draw on the resources from the CoRAL Network.

Frequently Asked Questions

Customize this handout to add details that are relevant to your institution, community, and center. You may want to include specific details from institution's staff, center, or calendar.

What is the timeline for projects?

The timeline for projects will depend on the size and the researchers that are connected with the project. Most projects will need to be developed around the institution's academic calendar. (Fall semester typically begins **[ADD DATES].** Winter semester begins **[ADD DATES].**

Some projects – depending on their size – may stretch over multiple semesters. Occasionally, projects might be picked up by students and faculty outside of a class. This model may lend more flexibility for scheduling. The program is also looking to introduce a summer internship model. The **[ADD NAME]** will be happy to discuss with you timeline options for your research projects.

What happens after we meet?

After we meet to discuss research needs, the **[ADD NAME]** will work to connect your project(s) with interested faculty and/or student researchers. We will also add your research project to our Research Needs Database, which is accessible to institutional researchers. This is a great chance to connect with talented students and faculty who are looking to do research in the community for their honors theses, capstone for their majors, or their classes. The **[ADD NAME]** will schedule a meeting with your agency each spring or summer to update or add to your research needs. Your agency can also contact the **[ADD NAME]** at any point to discuss new research projects/needs.

How does CBR differ from traditional academic research?

There are several ways that CBR can differ from traditional academic research, including:

- The research need for a CBR project is identified by or developed around a community need.
- The primary goal of a CBR project is to create positive change in the community, not to advance knowledge within a discipline.
- Community members are seen as valuable and equal participants in the research process.
- The value of a CBR project is measured by the usefulness of the results to the community, not measured by the acceptance of academic peers.
- Both researchers and community participants benefit from the process.

What are partner's obligations when it comes to the research partnership?

The role of the community partner will vary from project to project. Community participation is an important element of the community-based research model. We encourage our community partners to play as large of a role as they are able and would like during the research process. This could include helping to design the research model, participating in data collection, assisting in analysis of information, helping draft up the final product and/or participating in the presentation of findings. At the start of each research project, **[ADD NAME]** will assist the community partners and institutional researchers in defining the roles that each partner will play in the research process. As a community partner, you also have an opportunity to serve as a co-educator for our student researchers, helping them to develop as engaged citizens and scholars.

Worksheet for Identifying CBR Projects:
Extending Your Thinking From the Capacity Building Form

As you consider your organization and its program's needs using the Opportunities for Capacity Building Form, think beyond direct service roles to include research projects. This worksheet can help guide you.

Volunteer Recruitment and Management:

- What research or data about volunteers or staff is needed by your organization?
- How well is your organization performing with volunteer recruitment and management? How do you know?

Training and Program Development:

- Are there training or curriculum needs that your organization has for which research could be beneficial (i.e., if your organization works on violence prevention techniques, is its curriculum using the best models?)
- How effective and efficiently delivered are your programs? How do you know?

Fundraising and Resource Development:

- What are your organization's biggest challenges when it comes to fundraising and a sustainable set of revenue sources?
- What research and data might be helpful for resource development and revenue generation?

Capacity-Building Research Projects

As you consider your organization and its program's needs using the Opportunities for Capacity Building Form, think beyond direct service roles to include research projects. This worksheet can help guide you.

Communications and Technology:

- How effective and aligned with your mission and program are your communications, marketing, and technology use? How do you know?
- What data and information could better communications and technology use allow your organization to access and/or track?

Research:

This list of possible types of projects might jog your thinking:

- [ ] Community/neighborhood or client surveys
- [ ] GIS/Mapping projects
- [ ] Databases or data needed
- [ ] Program or organizational evaluations
- [ ] Policy research or issue briefs
- [ ] Funding opportunity research
- [ ] Regulations or policies
- [ ] Evidence-based practices
- [ ] Oral histories
- [ ] Business planning

2

Simultaneously recruit and identify faculty (have them on deck) who are interested in CBR or research projects.

While you are finding out from your partners and community constituents about their needs, you'll also want to find faculty members who may be interested in these service-learning and CBR projects.

This connects, also, to a later step, where the Coordinator can lead a training session on positions with the students (i.e., the sophomore class). Here are some helpful strategies to consider in outreach to faculty:

Offer an Orientation to new faculty. This can be a great way to connect faculty to your center and the Bonner Program.

Meet with faculty chairs. Many institutions, including Washington & Lee, have found this the most useful way to identify faculty from departments.

Engage students (like Bonner Congress Reps or Interns) in meeting with faculty. They can take enthusiastically and in real ways about their community engagement. Some Bonner Programs have made this outreach with faculty a "Big Idea" project.

Do a formal survey or inventory of what faculty are doing (or want to do). You can get sample surveys from Campus Compact (www.compact.org) or modify Bonner resources for this purpose. It's a great way to also find out what language faculty members on your campus use or prefer for their work (i.e., community engaged learning, public scholarship, service learning, academic community engagement, etc.).

Keep track of all this, building an inventory of existing courses and engaged faculty. You may also want to pursue something like a course designator.

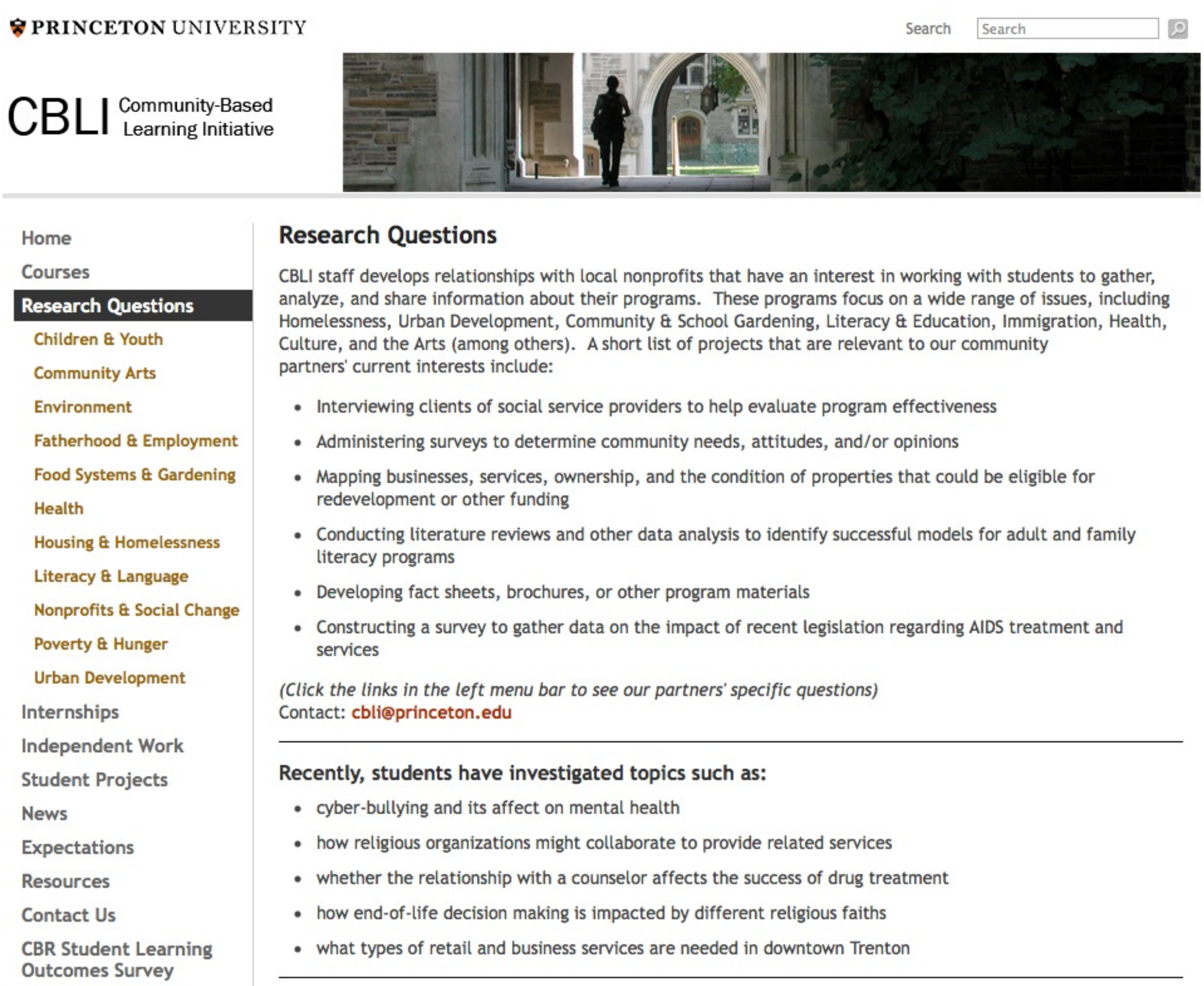
Recommendations for you
• Use the same set of resources like: 1) Meeting 2) Handouts 3) Power-Points 4) Emails with links to helpful websites (like www.compact.org) where faculty can also look up other resources and examples • Document partners needs online or in a format that faculty members can access. See the example from Princeton University's Community-Based Learning Initiative office, which lists the research questions of partners by issue area for faculty and students to find.

Tracking Partners Needs for Research

Keeping track of the research interests and needs of partners and community groups can help you foster connections with faculty. See this example below from Princeton University's Community-Based Learning Initiative. This helps faculty members to connect their course objectives and intended learning outcomes with community partners and projects that are actually available.

The next section of this resource will provide some additional guidelines on **translating partners' needs into research questions and projects.**

View more by issue area at: http://www.princeton.edu/cbli/researchquestions/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CBLI Community-Based Learning Initiative

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Research Questions

CBLI staff develops relationships with local nonprofits that have an interest in working with students to gather, analyze, and share information about their programs. These programs focus on a wide range of issues, including Homelessness, Urban Development, Community & School Gardening, Literacy & Education, Immigration, Health, Culture, and the Arts (among others). A short list of projects that are relevant to our community partners' current interests include:

- Interviewing clients of social service providers to help evaluate program effectiveness
- Administering surveys to determine community needs, attitudes, and/or opinions
- Mapping businesses, services, ownership, and the condition of properties that could be eligible for redevelopment or other funding
- Conducting literature reviews and other data analysis to identify successful models for adult and family literacy programs
- Developing fact sheets, brochures, or other program materials
- Constructing a survey to gather data on the impact of recent legislation regarding AIDS treatment and services

(Click the links in the left menu bar to see our partners' specific questions)
Contact: **cbli@princeton.edu**

Recently, students have investigated topics such as:

- cyber-bullying and its affect on mental health
- how religious organizations might collaborate to provide related services
- whether the relationship with a counselor affects the success of drug treatment
- how end-of-life decision making is impacted by different religious faiths
- what types of retail and business services are needed in downtown Trenton

3 Work with partners, for example through meetings involving community partner staff member, student, and staff member (as broker) to turn the need into a research question and project.

The purpose of these meetings is to talk through the research project with those who may be involved.

It's like the first step in developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This involves the staff member, you, taking an active role in helping to identify a tangible strategy for the project and turning the need into a research question.

The questions below may help this process:

1. What information is needed by the agency, school, or program?

2. What is there time to do (i.e., is this a semester-long project, a year-long project, etc. and how many hours will be involved)?

3. What resources are available (i.e., consider other resources that the Center, Bonner Program, or institution might be able to help the partner identify)?

4. What skills are at the table (from students and/or faculty involved)?

5. What resources are needed? This then generates a discussion of identifying a faculty partner, other community agencies with similar issues, etc.

For help turning this into an academic research question, then, a faculty member can also be consulted and very helpful. The faculty member takes the lens of their discipline and turns the partner need into a question that is relevant to their work.

Resources for you

- **Handout on Making the Connection: A Community Partner's Needs and a Tangible Community-Based Research Project**

  - This handout has the same questions but also some other examples and help for you, including sample projects.

Making the Connection: A Community Partner's Needs and a Tangible Community-Based Research Project

How do you turn a partner's need for information into a "research question"? This handout will provide some additional guidelines on **translating partners' needs into research questions and projects.**

The questions below may help this process:

1. What information is needed by the agency, school, or program?

2. What is there time to do (i.e., is this a semester-long project, a year-long project, etc. and how many hours will be involved)?

3. What resources are available (i.e., consider other resources that the Center, Bonner Program, or institution might be able to help the partner identify)?

4. What skills are at the table (from students and/or faculty involved)?

5. What resources are needed? This then generates a discussion of identifying a faculty partner, other community agencies with similar issues, etc.

Example:

For example, the center at one college (Washington & Lee University) had identified from a focus group with partners offering after-school programming that there was a gap in the funding cycle affecting a program. Here's how the questions applied:

1. **What information is needed?** Some of this input came from focus group. The partners needed to know how to address this gap in funding so that they could have year-round programming and deal with their organizational resource needs.

2. **What is there time to do?** The student only had a winter term and a 4-week spring term, with about 6 hours per week, to devote to the project. The student also served directly in the program, so she understood it.

3. **What resources are available?** W&L knew there was a lot of existing research about effective after-school programming. Locally, other agencies had structured their programs differently to avoid this gap and could be seen as models. Specifically, they had tactics for their budgets and infrastructure to fund the programs around the gaps.

4. **What skills are at the table (from students involved)?** The student already had three years of experience working with the program. The student had already taken a Research Methods class in Sociology. She was passionate about the youth in the program and wanted to increase the capacity of the agency to meet their needs. She had seen the results of the gaps.

5. **What resources are needed?** This then generates a discussion of identifying a faculty partner, other community agencies with similar issues, etc. W&L thought they needed a faculty member with knowledge of student development (in the elementary level). They identified an Elementary Education professor. This became an independent study. Yet, the professor was able to adapt some of her course materials to supplement the project.

6. **For help turning this into an academic research question, then, a faculty member can also be consulted.** The faculty member takes the lens of their discipline and turns the partner need into a question that is relevant to their work. For instance, in this project, the professor supervised the project and gave the student a grade. She also helped the student edit and turn the research into the best product for partners. In the end, the research was turned into an Executive Summary and a list of Ten Suggestions for addressing the gap.

Again, thinking about a broad range of products and information that can be produced from a project may help. Here is a list:

1. **Small scale surveys or focus groups:** for example, of clients' or residents' needs
2. **Program evaluation:** participant observations to assess the program's operations; reviewing client records to report program activities; interviewing clients and/or staff
3. **Oral histories:** undertake interviews to collect oral histories around a specific location, organization, or particular issue or topic
4. **Data analysis:** collect and systematize data from client records or other sources, compile and tabulate, produce reports of interest, analyze Census data or other primary data
5. **Community asset mapping:** street-level collection of data regarding assets and liabilities of a community, entering data into a database, produce mapping
6. **Policy research:** examine and analyze policies in a particular issue area; explore policy options and alternatives; review pros and cons of alternative policy options
7. **Best practices:** examine similar programs to explore best practices from other programs, to review their program evaluation methods, devise program innovations.
8. **Business planning:** work with staff to undertake strategic planning, outreach plans, marketing plans, devise training, and assess innovation implementation
9. **Website construction:** work with staff to collect materials for website, design site map, construct organizational website
10. **Popular education and outreach:** organize and/or create materials for outreach or population education forums, organize event, facilitate event, document and assess effectiveness of event
11. **Grant writing:** undertake organizational research on program effectiveness, community needs, and funding possibilities; write draft proposal.

4 Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the project, especially so that the focus, scope, timeline, and deliverable for the project is clear.

A Memorandum of Understanding is a formal document that captures critical information about the project and its intended aims.

This is very important because it helps the roles, scope of the project, financial and time commitment, confidentiality issues, and dissemination plans. The MOU clarifies what is the expectation of the deliverable. It becomes a roadmap for the student, faculty member, and partner on the project.

Here is a sample, and on the next page you will find a **MOU template.**

It lays out:

- **Responsibilities of center**
- **Responsibilities of student researchers**
- **Responsibilities of faculty or program staff**
- **Timelines**

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Study of Parent Involvement with NEXT Program at Maury River Middle School

This is a Memorandum of Understanding between the *Community-Academic Research Alliance at Washington and Lee University, Student Researcher* and *the NEXT Program at Maury River Middle School.* This Memorandum of Understanding sets forth the roles and responsibilities of each of the above parties in organizing and carrying out a research project on parent involvement in the NEXT afterschool program.

The results of this study will remain confidential. The only individuals who will be allowed to see these results are: Mr. Thompson (Principal of Maury River Middle School), the CARA Director (Marisa Frey), the Director of the Shepherd Program (Dr. Harlan Beckley) and the Director of the NEXT Program (Paige Crawford). No other individuals will be allowed to see the results *unless they receive the consent of both Mr. Thompson and Ms. Crawford.*

Research Project Goal: Produce a list of suggested improvements around parental involvement in the NEXT Program, in part to meet the requirements of the 21st Century Grant.

Research will be conducted between the period of June 1st and August 1st.

Responsibilities of CARA Director:

- Meet with student researcher three times per week.
- Provide supervision through the Institutional Review Process.
- Providing support in connecting the Student Researcher to community resources as needed.
- Supervising focus groups and interviews as needed.
- Providing funding ($800) for incentives and ($250) for other researcher expenses.

Responsibilities of Student Researcher:

- Meet with CARA Director three times per week.
- Meet with NEXT Director via phone or Skype or in person one time per week.
- Commit approximately 17 to 19 hours per week to research.
- Conduct research on national best practices around parent and family involvement in similar programming.
- Obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for project.
- Develop and distribute surveys to appropriate parents and stakeholders.
- Conduct interviews with appropriate parents and stakeholders.
- Conduct focus groups with appropriate parents and stakeholders.
- Provide a report to the NEXT Director containing suggestions for improvements on programming.

Responsibilities of NEXT Director:

- Meet with Student Researcher via phone or Skype or in person one time per week.
- Connect researchers with appropriate parents and stakeholders.
- Provide resources and guidance to the Student Researcher as needed.

______________________________ CARA Director (Marisa Frey)

______________________________ Student Researcher (Angelica Tillander)

______________________________ NEXT Director (Paige Crawford)

Resources for you
• **Memorandum of Understanding Template:** See the next page!

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Template

[Study name]

This is a Memorandum of Understanding between the [ADD CENTER/PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT] at [ADD INSTITUTION NAME] _____ and [ADD PARTNER NAME} _____. This Memorandum of Understanding sets forth the roles and responsibilities of each of the above parties in organizing and carrying out a research project on [ADD BRIEF SUMMARY OF TOPIC AND FOCUS].

Research Project Goal:

[Describe goal of the project.]

Project data and study results:

[Specify how project data will be handled.]

Are data and study results confidential?

Who can have access to them?

If data need to be secured in a special manner and location, specify this.

Can faculty/students use data for publication?]

Research will be conducted between the period of _____________________.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Template (continued)

Responsibilities of [ADD STAFF/FACULTY SUPERVISOR]

• Meet with student researchers XX per week.
• Provide supervision through the Institutional Review Process.
• Provide support in connecting the Student Researcher to community resources as needed.
• Supervising focus groups and interviews as needed.
• Providing funding for incentives and for other researcher expenses.

Responsibilities of Student Researchers:

• Meet with [ADD STAFF/FACULTY SUPERVISOR] once a week [OR HOW OFTEN].
• Meet with ___________ director one time per week.
• Commit approximately _____ hours per week to research.
• Obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for project.
• Conduct research on national best practices around ________________ (if this applies)
• Develop and distribute surveys to ________________. (if this applies)
• Conduct interviews with _____________________. (if this applies)
• Conduct focus groups with appropriate __________________. (if this applies)
• DESCRIBE FINAL PRODUCTS/DELIVERABLES

Responsibilities of _______[community partner]_______________:

• Meet with Student Researcher in person one time per week.
• Connect researchers with appropriate stakeholders.
• Provide resources and guidance to the Student Researcher as needed.

SIGNATURES:

____ [STAFF/FACULTY NAME]

____ [STUDENT RESEARCHER NAMES]

____ [PARTNER NAME]

5

Manage the project. Once the project is underway, the roles of the staff and faculty member are dependent on the research project itself.

Some projects may involve more ongoing management and communication by the center staff. Others might be managed more by the faculty member or even the partner.

A good rule of thumb, however, is for the center staff to check in with the partner, faculty member, and student at least once every two weeks. Hence, having student interns or VISTAs also working to cultivate and manage CBR projects is a good idea. The process can be labor intensive.

Having a simple strategy for checking in to share successes and challenges on research and projects can help. It often happens with CBR or service-learning that the project's implementation can be different than anticipated. These ongoing conversations and the MOU can help to stay on track and make adjustments.

This framework below can help. This same template can be used for other purposes, like meeting with the Bonner Leadership Team.

Check-In Strategy:
Pro / Con / Pro

As we check in, a goal is to hear the perspectives of those involved in the research project.

Pro: What's working?

Con: What have been the challenges? What's not working?

Pro: So, what can we do about this? Generate ways to address the issues and make adjustments.

Resources for you
Check In Strategy: Pro / Con / Pro. During the meeting, share and discuss a pro (what's working?), con (what's not working?), and generate another pro (what can we do?).

6 Assuming things are going fairly well as the team involved completes the work, ensure that the deliverable (from MOU) is met and project completed.

In many cases, the projects can transcend one term (be year-long) or even involve multiple students (in different classes). Here are a few challenges that arise in CBR and service-learning projects:

Common Challenge	What This Means	How to Handle
• The research is difficult and the researchers don't get very far.	• This could be an issue of complexity. It also can be an issue of management; you still want to set goals and milestones for what gets done.	• Create a tangible timeline that inclues steps in the research project, reviewing written and verbal reports of learning, and even stages of a final product.
• The quality or direction of the material (research) that is produced is not what was expected.	• At times, what gets produced may not match the expectations of what is needed by the agency (or even by a faculty member).	• Make sure to break the process and product down into pieces, with time for review and editing. Build this into final timline.
• The work at the site is too busy or not organized in a way that facilitates the research's completion.	• Student researchers, the partner supervisors, and even the faculty member may be pulled in different directions that affect the project.	• You may need to manage and intervene in the process (for instance with communication and meetings) or adjust expectations.

7 Make sure to share and disseminate the results in a way that is useful to the partner and to addressing the community needs or concerns. But, it's okay for the project to help in other ways too.

Remember that what is learned or done can and should be applied to address the initial partner or community need. How that is done may involve generating new projects (i.e., for student volunteers, faculty, community forums, related agencies, etc.). For example, one project that analyzed predatory lending practices resulted in information that needed to be shared with key stakeholders and consumers (those seeking loans) and changes in the awareness of clients.

Understand that the faculty member may also have a dissemination strategy that involves research or publishing for one's own disciplinary needs.

Sometimes a student is also involved in the follow-up work on the dissemination or even in a project (like a community forum) that is needed. For example, with the credit study, a follow-up study for identifying the consumers who were using the predatory lenders and how to reach them was pursued.

8

Remember, these projects are part of a long-term, developmental, sustained partnership.

This is important for a number of reasons:

Acknowledging the generative and cyclical nature of this work helps to deal with factors about the research needing follow-up. It helps to address when students with other skills or interests are needed.
It provides a cushion for taking the next step, which is especially important for partners (when the product doesn't quite address the need or when other work is needed to build their capacity). It allows for the faculty and the institution to maintain a long-term partnership and vision. This can be new for faculty.

Evaluate the project.

A sample form (which is completed by partner, student, and faculty member) includes the following dimensions:

- development of project
- development of MOU
- execution of project
- dissemination

This triangulation allows for discussion and problem-solving, as well as continual improvement.

Resources for you
Project Evaluation Form.