

## The Benefits of Community Outreach & Engagement (COE)

### Relationship Building

Through COE activities, we build relationships that create opportunities for mutually beneficial alliances, collaborations and partnerships between researchers and communities of all kinds.

For example, COE allows researchers greater access to community groups (e.g., people at risk, patients living with illness, caregivers and families who have lost a loved one, under served groups, etc.). Simultaneously, COE increases community members' access to education, prevention, screenings and opportunities to test interventions that may reduce their disease risk, reduce their mortality, increase their survival, and improve their overall quality of life.

Further, research and research protocols can be improved by engagement. For example, by tailoring materials to the specific needs of underrepresented research participants and patients, researchers can increase the diversity of their participant population. Increasing diversity of the patients who participate in clinical trials is a high priority. Greater diversity in research participation is critical to ensuring health equity for all.

### WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

Community is defined as a group of people living in the same place or having one or more characteristics in common.

Examples of community include:

- People living in Lower Price Hill
- The LGBTQI+ community
- People fighting colon cancer
- Students attending the University of Cincinnati
- Public health researchers

## ALL RESEARCHERS CAN PARTICIPATE IN COE ACTIVITIES!

### Community Outreach Discussions

Community Outreach Discussions are great opportunities for basic, clinical and population level researchers to introduce their topic to community members. If you are purposeful, your presentation can invite attendees to take part in meaningful discussions and help them to consider ways your research impact their own health or the health of other members in their communities. Discussions have the potential to build trust in, encourage support of, and advocate for our institution's research enterprise. Researchers, too, can be inspired by hearing directly from people their research has helped.

### Event Attendance



By attending and supporting health fairs, volunteer dinners, road races and rides, and participating in fundraisers for our institution as well as other organizations, we show our support for the larger community. Indeed, our presence impacts how we are viewed by our partners, supporters, business owners and philanthropists.



## Levels of Community Partners

Depending on your needs and desire for a sustainable partnership (or not), you may choose to target a different level of community partner as a starting point.

### Community Leaders

Community Leaders such as Health Commissioners, Superintendents, Police and Fire Chiefs may be willing to support your research efforts and sponsor your presence in their community. Similarly, clinical providers in the community may know their community in a unique way and give you access to your target population using their practice as a platform. Leaders of community organizations such as non-profits, schools, and advocacy groups may have even greater partnership power and be willing not only to open doors for you, but also do some of the work related to your efforts. Still, they are often speaking on behalf of their clients, students, families etc. and many not represent their individual voices.



### Grassroots Community Members

Grassroots Community Members are those individuals in the community that volunteer to represent the interests of people like them. While engaging this group is possibly the most challenging at the start, over time, there are also many tangible benefits including new opportunities for sustainable community collaboration if your efforts are mutually beneficial.

### COE PROGRAMS

Our COE programs seek to support and encourage faculty, staff, and student COE activities by:

- Engaging with key stakeholders for input, advice, and guidance
- Supporting and encouraging Community-Academic Partnerships through community-engaged research
- Disseminating evidence-based interventions and programs that promote healthy lifestyles, increase prevention, screening and early detection, or improve access to clinical trials
- Advocating for public policies that promotes systemic changes that advance healthy equity

## Levels of Community Engagement

**Inform:** Researchers can ask community members to inform a process by completing interviews or surveys

**Consult:** They can be invited to consult on your studies and you can leverage their expertise or experiences to guide your approaches

**Involve:** You might involve them in collection of feedback surveys or you might ask them to collaborate or even co-design materials or protocols WITH you.

**Empower:** Over time, they might have ideas that you want to explore and you might want to empower them to take the lead and drive the process!



## Ways to Engage the Community

### Focus Groups & Interviews

Focus group and interviews are tools used to obtain and understand people's lived experiences with a disease, treatment, or even with your research study. These are often considered exempt or non human subjects research. If you are not trained in qualitative approaches, ask other scientists with experience using such approaches to support your work.



### Advisory Boards

Advisory boards leverage established community relationships to support your research. Boards can advise you on multiple topics including how to best reach your target population, identifying study participants, consent materials and surveys. Importantly, Board members often have experience giving feedback from their own perspectives while considering the needs of your research at the same time.

The Cancer Center plans to create cancer-specific advisory boards over the next year. Learn about advisory boards available through the CCTST at [cctst.org/partners/research-participants-advisory-group](http://cctst.org/partners/research-participants-advisory-group)



### Community Research Advocates Program

The Community Research Advocates Program trains community members to hold discussions with fellow community members and community groups to help them become "Research Ready". There is an opportunity to engage this advocate in individual research studies. Many advocates can be included in co-design of your research materials. Learn more at [weengage4health.life/cra/](http://weengage4health.life/cra/)

### WHAT IS CO-DESIGN?

Co-Design is an iterative process to create meaningful materials with community members to support research and clinical practice.

#### Co-Design Process Tips

- Invite community members to be co-designers from the start
- Provide training to your co-designers so that you can best leverage their insights
- Include them in the development process so as not to bias your materials with your own perspectives
- Expect to use an iterative process, going back to them multiple times for feedback and getting their approval on the finalized materials
- Highlight their contributions and acknowledge or even include them as authors when it comes time to publish

### WHAT IS RESEARCH READY?

Research Ready is an outreach program that helps community members become "Research Ready" by understanding the 3 P's.

**Purpose:** What is the purpose of health research?

**Protection:** How are people kept safe when they participate in health research?

**Participation:** Why should people participate in health research?



**Don't go at it alone! Leverage institutional resources that support COE activities.**