

# FAQs Regarding Community Research and the Tisch College Community Research Center at Tufts (TCRC)

## **What is community based-participatory research (CBPR)?**

Community-based participatory research (CBPR; see <https://ccph.memberclicks.net/participatory-research>) is an approach to research in which community partners are involved in all aspects of the study including deciding on what research to do, being listed as investigators, being in the budget on grant proposals, serving on the study team during the research and helping to disseminate findings, including serving as co-authors on publications. CBPR is one form of community engaged in research (CEnR). Some other forms of community engagement might involve less intensive work by the community partner. TCRC supports community engagement in research along the spectrum from less to more involvement of community partners.

## **What types of research does TCRC support?**

TCRC is interested in research from any field of inquiry. We have supported projects in public health, social science and the humanities and would consider any other area. TCRC is also open to a wide range of research methodologies. The main consideration is that the methods are well aligned with the goals of the research partnership. For example, CEnR and CBPR studies often use interviews and focus groups (or other qualitative, or non-numerical approaches). Qualitative methods are often particularly useful for new areas of research that are still figuring out exactly what the issues are and how to study them. Other CBPR and CEnR project use quantitative methods (numerical data from surveys, analysis of data from existing studies, and collection of original objective data such as blood samples or measurements in the environment).

## **Who is qualified to apply for TCRC seed funding?**

Any community-based organization that is working with a Tufts researcher is of interest and qualified to engage with us or apply for the funding that we provide. Qualified Tufts researchers are usually faculty, but could include instructors, post docs or graduate students. If students are playing a leading role, however, they must be supervised by a faculty person. If the collaboration involves faculty from another institution than Tufts, there must be a Tufts faculty person leading the project. The community partner might be a 501c3 (non-profit), but it does not need to have that designation. TCRC would consider a range of types of community-based entities eligible, including municipal agencies and informal, unincorporated groups.

## **How does a community group connect with a faculty member?**

There is not a single way that community partners find faculty members and sometimes it is not easy to find someone who has both the expertise needed and is interested in working with community organizations. TCRC members and staff can help a community member who is interested look for a partnership at Tufts, but we cannot guarantee that we can find one. One possibility would be to become affiliated with the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life through which there are opportunities to attend events and have regular communications about community engagement activities at Tufts.

## **Why does a faculty member benefit from working with a community group?**

Faculty may have many reasons that they seek community partners. We hope most, if not all, of them are motivated by a genuine interest in helping the community. But they may also see such partnerships as beneficial to their research and progress of their academic career. Having a community partner might improve recruitment or deepen understanding of the community in terms of how to ask research questions. Some sources of research funding also require community partners.

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### **How does a community partner benefit from doing research with Tufts researchers?**

Community partners also have a lot of reasons for joining research collaborations. We hope that community partners also pursue such partnerships because they see genuine value in the research instead of simply bringing in funding support. Community partners can benefit from research if it provides evidence relevant to questions they have, if it helps them evaluate work they are doing, or if they think it could lead to beneficial changes in the populations they serve.

### **What does the money typically get spent on? Salaries? Equipment? Some examples?**

The biggest line item in large research grants is usually personnel – salaries for faculty, staff, students and community partners. In smaller grants, that can be different, with program expenses and research assistants taking up a larger percentage of the budget. Beyond salaries, grant funds can be spent on a wide range of research-related expenses such as stipends for participants, equipment, laboratory costs, travel, publications, etc.

### **Where can I find out about research projects that have been funded by TCRC in the past?**

<http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/research/tcrc/tcrc-research/>

### **Does Tufts have researchers in every area of potential interest?**

No, as mentioned above, we do not. Probably no university has faculty for every conceivable research project that a community might be interested in. But Tufts is a particularly small university, so there are areas – law or business, for example – in which we do not have much expertise.

### **What are the areas of research in which Tufts has a particular focus?**

Strengths at Tufts include civic engagement, medicine and public health, nutrition, child development, environment and engineering, international relations, dentistry, urban policy and planning and veterinary medicine.

### **Are there faculties in particular areas that are looking to work with community groups?**

Yes, there are many faculties at Tufts that are interested in or even deeply committed to doing research in collaboration with community partners. These faculty have been involved in dozens of CEnR and CBPR projects, some with large grants from, for example, NIH while others have had little or no funding.

### **Is there someone I can talk to if I'd like to discuss ideas or how to get connected with faculty?**

Good places to start are Doug Brugge, Founder and Director of TCRC ([dbrugge@aol.com](mailto:dbrugge@aol.com)), Shirley Mark at Tisch College ([Shirley.Mark@tufts.edu](mailto:Shirley.Mark@tufts.edu)) or Barbara Rubel, Community Relations at Tufts ([barbara.rubel@tufts.edu](mailto:barbara.rubel@tufts.edu)).

### **Why do I need a grant to work with faculty, can't they just work with whomever they want to?**

You do not necessarily need a grant to do a research project with faculty. There have been unfunded CEnR and CBPR projects at Tufts. But faculty have to justify their time and having salary support makes it easier to get time released from other responsibilities at Tufts. Also, depending on the research, it might require funding to collect and analyze high quality data.