



ETHICS IN RESEARCH - POLICY STATEMENT

Introduction

This policy is to clarify the obligations on Bridging Change staff and volunteers who undertake research activities.

Bridging Change CIC's mission is to serve our learning communities by delivering sector recognised and professionally relevant learning and research.

All research is subject to ethical considerations concerning purpose, source of funding, methods to be deployed and wider value and impact. It is important that risks in carrying out a piece of research are clearly articulated and weighed against the potential value of it so that all those involved proceed with informed consent.

The policy is built upon ethical and good practice guidelines issued by Research Councils, professional bodies, subject associations and external ethics committees.

Ethical Principles

This policy is put in place to set out Bridging Change's ethical principles to bear in mind for those conducting or supporting community-based participatory research as Bridging Change.

Mutual respect: developing research relationships based on mutual respect, including a commitment to:

- Work towards building authentic and fair relationships
- agreeing what counts as mutual respect in particular contexts
- Ensure that framing of minoritised groups is not problematic
- Acknowledge community connectors and develop relationships with community connectors
- everyone involved being prepared to listen to the voices of others
- accepting that there are diverse perspectives
- Ensure research is culturally competent

Equality, diversity and inclusion: encouraging and enabling people from a range of backgrounds and identities (such as: age, disability, ethnicity, faith and belief, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic disadvantage, etc.) to lead, design and take part in the research, including a commitment to:

- ensure that research is inclusive
- create relationships with community groups and individuals

- seeking actively to include people whose voices are often ignored
- challenge discriminatory and oppressive attitudes and behaviours
- ensuring information, venues and formats for meetings are accessible to all

Enabling participation: encouraging and enabling all participants to contribute meaningfully to decision-making and other aspects of the research process according to skill, interest and collective need, including a commitment to:

- acknowledging and discussing differences in the status and power of research participants, and working towards sharing power more equally
- communicating clearly using language everyone can understand
- using participatory research methods that build on, share and develop different skills and expertise

Active learning: viewing research collaboration and the process of research as an opportunity to learn from each other, including a commitment to:

- ensuring there is time to identify and reflect on learning during the research, and the on ways people learn, both together and individually
- Identifying resources for participants and for community connectors
- offering all participants the chance to learn from each other and share their learning with wider audiences
- sharing responsibility for interpreting the research findings and their implications for practice

Being responsive to community needs: promoting research that creates positive changes for communities of place, interest or identity, including:

- engaging in debates which are responsive to community needs and creating 'positive' change
- valuing the learning and other benefits for individuals and groups from the research process as well as the outputs and outcomes of the research
- building the goal of positive change into every stage of the research

Collective action: individuals and groups working together to achieve change, including a commitment to:

- identifying common and complementary goals that meet partners' differing needs for the research
- working for agreed visions of how to share knowledge and power more equitably and promote social change and social justice
- recognising and working with conflicting rights and interests expressed by different sections of communities or by different communities

Personal integrity: researcher to behave reliably and honestly with a commitment to:

- working within the principles of community-based participatory research
 - ensuring accurate and honest analysis and reporting of research
- Being flexible in approaches

Research

Informed consent:

Ensuring as far as possible that people who provide information as part of the research are given information about the purpose and uses of the research data (or for their parent/guardian/ consultee to agree).

Personal information:

In all research, it is important to ensure that identifying information (e.g. names and addresses) is stored separately from other personal information collected as part of the research (e.g. interview transcripts, questionnaire responses) and securely (e.g. in a locked filing cabinet, password protected computer)

Confidentiality:

When collecting data from and about people they know, or live near, it is advisable to be very careful about confidentiality.

Anonymity:

Identifying advantages and disadvantages of identifying people, places and organisations (by their real names, appearances or voices in written, visual or audio records or social media). If research relates to sensitive topics or contexts, it will be important not to name or give identifying features of individuals.

Ownership, control and use of the research data and findings:

When research is a collaboration between several people or partner organisations it is important to be clear who 'owns' any data, new knowledge or collaborative outputs that have been produced. 'Ownership' in this context means the right to use it and pass it on. If it is jointly owned, then it is important to decide what rights each partner has to use the data to inform their work or produce publications and whether the permission of all partners is required.

Authorship and credits:

It is a good idea to discuss in advance who will be responsible for compiling or writing the outputs, when decisions will be made about the nature and formats of outputs and how the responsibility can be shared and skills developed by those who are not used to doing this. Although it may be time-consuming, holding writing, editing, film or photography workshops, where people work and learn together, can be an empowering and satisfying process for all concerned. Agreeing who will be credited and how is also important – ensuring that the variety of contributions is recognised.

Producing useful outputs:

Consideration should be given to ensuring that any reports or other products of the research are made accessible to other researchers, policy-makers, service providers, community members and organisations for future use. Additionally it is important to ensure that the skills and knowledge gained by all of the partners is capitalised upon in further research or action projects.

Learning from the research:

It can be very productive for the research partners to reflect on what they have learnt. Not just from the research findings, but also from the process of doing the research and working together. If the relationship has gone well, or has potential to go well, then a longer term research partnership may develop.

Review: May 2022