

**Report 63:** Integrating community outreach and translation into research

**Convener:** Daniel Madrigal

**Brief History:** There are several permutations of the community outreach, engagement, and translation cores that are attached to NIEHS projects. For simplicity, they will be referred to as engagement cores. Across these engagement cores there are variable levels of prioritization/ importance placed on the communication and outreach work done. Some NIEHS projects highly value community engagement, others do not.

**Discussion Highlights:**

Importance

- NIEHS is at a place where it can move forward community outreach efforts. In the past community outreach had been deprioritized (defunded).
- Opportunity to demonstrate relevance.
  - To public health.
  - Especially important in the current fiscal environment
- Moral imperative.
- Growing uncertainty of the public of the impact of environmental health exposures.
- NIEHS needs visibility.
- There are many grantees, now is the moment to build the network. Let's not reinvent the wheel.

Other highlights

- Encourage current efforts of community engagement that are successful.
- Important to differentiate between engagement, education and partnerships. All have a specific role. Partnerships should be encouraged.
- Discussion as to what level of community engagement is needs to be a part of every project. It was agreed that a plan for communication should be included for every project, as long as "community" can be broadly defined. For bench science, the relevant community may be restricted to other researchers.
- There is a lack of clarity as to the distinction between the different engagement cores. A discussion was had as to whether a future recommendation would be to have these cores work together more effectively. It was noted that historical structure of these various cores may present an obstacle to working together across engagement cores. Currently PEPH is one effort

to build a network between these groups of engagement cores (community outreach and translation core vs. community outreach and engagement, and others).

- Another need is for the grantees of engagement cores to have a better understanding of the network of engagement cores funded by NIEHS. Who is doing what, where?
- Link March meetings of the PEPH to hill visits (to educate congress members of environmental health research).

**Recommendations:**

- Find ways to elevate dissemination of research in the NIEHS mission statement.
  - There should not be “token” dissemination, sending something out just to check off the dissemination box.
- Increase public health relevance and communication in the grant scoring process.
- All NIEHS funded projects should consider public health relevance. It should be written into the grants.
- All NIEHS should include a communication plan. Communication to the relevant stakeholders.
  - All “center-like” programs should have a community engagement component.
- Simplify engagement cores. Phase out distinctions between the different types of engagement cores. One name so that the general public can have a better understanding as to what these cores do.
  - This could be done through the PEPH meetings, if the grantee community engagement meetings (such as COTC or COE) occurred at the same time as the larger PEPH meeting.
- If the several engagement cores remains, there should be a clear explanation as to how they are different.
- Support PEPH goals of building network of engagement cores
  - A section of contacts of coordinators/directors of engagement cores across NIEHS so there may be more instances of collaboration/ center-to-center communication.
  - Success stories.
  - Lessons learned (what didn’t work out so well, sharing these stories so others may learn). This may be more effective in a space that is only open to grantees.
- Support formal training of community outreach and engagement skills.

- A place to do this is at grantee meetings or the PEPH conference. There could be a training at the beginning or at the end of these meetings that can build the skill sets of those doing community engagement work.

**Discussion Participants:** Jose Cordero, Kathleen Gray, Erin Haynes, Liam O’Fallon, Banalata Sen, Carol Stroebel