

Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council (SPAC) Regular Meeting

AGENDA

Friday, July 30, 2021
10:00 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

300 W. Adams, Suite 200
Chicago, IL

THIS MEETING IS IN-PERSON & ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING IS AVAILABLE

Join SPAC's Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85005010517?pwd=RUhtOGNIQ2NwK0xrNEpmdElWZkFBZz09>

Meeting ID: 850 0501 0517

Passcode: 204783

Call-in number: +1 312 626 6799

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Passcode: 204783

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|----------------------|---|
| 10:00 – 10:05 | Zoom Meeting Rules of the Road
<i>John Specker, SPAC Research Analyst</i> |
| 10:05 – 10:30 | Welcome, Agenda Overview and Approval of Minutes
<i>Kathy Saltmarsh, SPAC Executive Director</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approval of minutes• Introduction of new members• Vote on new Chairman |
| 10:30 – 11:30 | Bringing an Equity Perspective to SPAC's Research and Analysis – Process to Set Goals and Operationalize them
<i>Kathy Saltmarsh, SPAC Executive Director; Delrice Adams, ICJIA Executive Director</i>
Materials: Beyond Chicago Report: <i>Why Am I Being Researched?</i> |
| 11:30 – 12:30 | Resentencing Motions: HB3857 Task Force & SB2129 Motions to Resentence
<i>Kathy Saltmarsh, SPAC Executive Director</i>
<i>Representatives from Cook and Lake County State's Attorney's (Pending Confirmation)</i>
Materials: HB3857, SB2129 |
| 12:30 – 12:40 | Public Comment |
| 12:40 – 12:45 | New Business – Next meeting is September 17th |
| 12:45 | Adjourn |

Troubleshooting and Technical Difficulties: email John.Specker@Illinois.gov
Questions and Comments for those on phone: email Mark.Powers@Illinois.gov

Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 20th, 2020 10:00AM – 12:45PM

Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Members Present – Amy Campanelli, Gino DiVito (Chairperson), Marcus Evans, Craig Findley, Hanke Gratteau, Nathalina Hudson, Rob Jeffreys, Steve McClure, Margo McDermed, Marcia Meis, Shawn O’Toole, Stuart Palmer, James Piper, Elgie Sims, Alan Spellberg, Don Stemen, Stu Umholtz, Charisse Williams and Warren Wolfson (Vice-Chairperson).

Members Present by Phone – None.

Members Absent – Kristen Ziman.

Non-Members Present – Megan Archibald, Kathy Saltmarsh, John Specker, Mark Powers, Michael Elliott, Nate Inglis-Steinfeld, Ryan Kennedy, Tracy Buckley-Jones, Jason Sweat, Michael Lane, John Armdor, Laura Brookes, Katrina Burlet, Yaacov Delaney, Mary Ann Dyar, Garlen Gatewood, Rebecca Ginsburg, Lindsey Hammond, Rodger Heaton, Patrice James, Paul Jones, Alice Kim, Korynna Lopez, Michael Lynch, Dave Olson, James Pagano, Robert Peters, Kelly Presley, Laurie Jo Reynolds, Sarah Ross, Ben Ruddell, Chez Rumpf, Bria Scudder, Bill Schneider, Gail Smith, Gustavo Stewart, Alexis Sturm, Gwyn Troyer, Alyssa Williams and Paula Wolff.

Non-Members Present by Phone – None.

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman DiVito called the thirty-fifth regular meeting of the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council to order at 10:00 a.m. Chairman DiVito gave the opening remarks, including a summary of the agenda and purpose of the meeting.

Vote: Approval of the meeting minutes from the October 2, 2020 SPAC meeting

Margo McDermed moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Warren Wolfson. The minutes from the October 2, 2020 SPAC meeting were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Administrative Matters: (1) Initiative to Secure Access to Federal Criminal Justice Data for State Sentencing Commissions; (2) Posting Recordings of Our Meetings on Our Website; (3) 2021 Meeting Dates

Kathy Saltmarsh, SPAC Executive Director, gave a brief overview of three administrative matters that required the Council’s vote.

- **Access to federal criminal justice data for state sentencing commissions:**
The difficulty of accessing federal criminal justice data has become the focus of regular conference calls with our counterparts in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. Under federal law, state sentencing commissions can access state criminal history data if permitted under state law, but if combined with other states’ criminal history data the request must go to the FBI and their regulations governing access are narrow and result in denials more frequently than grants of access. To address this issue, an informal working group for the National Association of Sentencing Commissions is drafting language to amend the statute to clarify that state sentencing commissions are to be treated as agencies that administer the

criminal justice system, the key factor for getting requested data – similar to Illinois law. This change will trigger changes to the regulations.

This data is important to our work because it allows us to analyze how many people may have convictions in other states or the federal system that could impact their sentencing outcomes here as well as improving the accuracy of our recidivism analyses. The Center for State Governments is working with us, and the National Association of Sentencing Commissions is expected to fully support this effort. SPAC's tasks would be outreach to our federal representatives and the Governor's office to educate them about the need for this data and secure their support. I am requesting that SPAC members vote to approve our active participation in this initiative.

Craig Findley moved to approve SPAC's active participation in this proposed initiative, seconded by Hanke Gratteau. The active participation in joining SPAC's counterparts in accessing federal criminal justice data were approved by unanimous voice vote.

- **Posting recordings of SPAC meetings on our website:**

After last meeting we received several requests for the recording of the meeting, one from Dave Olson for educational purposes and one from the John Howard Association. While our meetings are subject to the Open Meetings Act and SPAC is committed to transparency, we were not comfortable providing access to the recordings without approval from SPAC members. Staff also felt that if they were provided to anyone, they should be provided to everyone. If posting the recordings is approved, we will ask for guidance from the Attorney General's office on disclaimer language that prohibits the use of our meeting content in any political or advocacy campaign, as well as what if any action could be taken to address the misuse of recordings. Encouraging open and honest dialogue is the priority for SPAC and there is some potential that posting recordings will have a chilling effect on that priority, however recordings are the best record of the meeting and can add context to abbreviated meeting minutes.

Craig Findley moved to table the vote of posting SPAC meeting recordings on the SPAC website, seconded by Nathalina Hudson. Tabling this vote until more information about what other state agencies policies are surrounding this issue, were approved by unanimous voice vote.

- **Proposed 2021 SPAC Regular Meeting Dates**

The Proposed Meeting Dates for 2021: June 18, September 17 and November 19.

Warren Wolfson moved to approve SPAC's 2021 regular meeting dates, seconded by Margo McDermid. The 2021 SPAC regular meeting dates, were approved by unanimous voice vote.

The Prison Population Now and in the Future: What Has COVID Wrought?

Less than a year after his appointment to head IDOC, *Rob Jeffreys, Acting Director*, was responding to a public health crisis that spread through jails and prisons at a furious rate. He spoke about the lessons learned, and what changes he implemented to handle the demands of the pandemic that may remain in place after the virus is controlled.

Jeffreys began with an overview of the goals he established for IDOC when he came on board:

1. Continue to Reduce Recidivism
2. Reduce the prison population by 6% by 2021
3. Improve the quality and availability of healthcare and mental health services across the Department
4. Improve the program quality in female facilities by January 1, 2022
5. Improve the quality and responsiveness of community supervision by 2021

6. Improve the safety of prisons for staff and incarcerated individuals
7. Improve operational efficiency
8. Modernize the hardware and software systems used across IDOC
9. Better plan, monitor, and implement capital and facility improvement projects
10. IDOC will get accredited based on national standards and best practices of the American Corrections Association
11. Improve the quality of IDOC trainings by updating and revising training practices and introducing more certifications and quality checks

Director Jeffreys provided a current status report of what IDOC is doing to manage the COVID-19 crisis and where they stand now, as correctional centers present unique infection control challenges:

- Provide for the safety of staff, offenders and the public.
- Collect daily information to create a common operating picture of the agency.
- Control guidance for prevention, mitigation, and response to the COVID-19 and implement as needed.
- Maintain IDOC COVID-19 Critical Incident Command Post.
- Communicate timely and accurate information to staff, offenders and stakeholders.
- Universal Source Control (Everyone in a face covering-based on exposure risk).
- Front Entrance Integrity (Screening for symptoms).
- Targeted deep cleaning in high volume areas and surfaces to aide in reducing the potential spread.
- Administrative and medical quarantine protocols (isolation, quarantine, to controlled movement).
- Contact Tracing (investigation of other potential infected individuals) in facilities.
- Communication Plans (for staff and offenders).
- Key messages (for staff and offenders)
 - Remain calm, ensure staff, offenders, volunteers and families feel safe.
 - If you are ill, stay home. Work with your supervisor if telework is an option.
 - Use normal hygiene techniques to prevent illness – handwashing, coughing into elbow, etc.
 - Visit the IDPH, IDOC and CDD websites for up-to-date information or call the IDPH hotline: 800-889-3931.

Status of the IDOC population:

- Currently the overall IDOC population is down 19.9% (30,651 on 10/31/20) since December 31, 2019 (38,259). The decreases remain consistent across race categories and the female population has decreased 0.9%, from 2,264 on 12/31/19 to 1,543 on 10/31/20.
- The population decrease is attributed to a few factors: The percent of all crime classes with the exception of Class 4s has remained consistent in the last 18 months. The percentages of average monthly admissions have also remained unchanged; Murder – 1.1%, Class X – 10.5%, Class 1 – 12.5%, Class 2 – 27.2% and Class 3 – 21.6%. Class 4 admissions which used to represent 30% of monthly admissions have been downward trending for the last year and continued throughout the shutdown and now hover around 25% of monthly admissions. These admissions include people who remain in county jails following a sentence to IDOC – so some offenders with shorter sentences can potentially spend their DOC time in county jail and release to MSR from jail, never entering a DOC R&C.
- The percent of the population from Cook County has also been reduced by 1% showing IDOC was able to release slightly more offenders to Cook, proportionally than in other parts of the state and/or, Cook has reduced admissions overall more than the rest of the state as a whole.
- Higher crime classes (M and X) represent an increased portion of the prison population although those numbers have also reduced in the last 10 months (48.5% in Dec vs. 56.3% in Oct).
- Person and sex crime categories as well as life sentence offenders now represent a higher percentage of the population when compared to 2019.

- Specific violent offense categories are also represented at a higher rate (homicide, sex assault, armed robbery) while all other categories remained the same or decreased.

Who and how offenders were released during the past year:

- Incident Command Center structure: Population Management Task Force to reduce the size of the prison population.
- Governor's executive order to expanded award of Earned Discretionary Sentence Credit or EDSC.
- Director can award 180 days of good conduct credit to certain individuals inside of IDOC.
- IDOC released more than 2,500 people out of prison through population management efforts;
 - EDSC awards
 - Eliminate hundreds of "turn arounds,"
 - 150 people onto home confinement
 - Limited number of medical furloughs under emergency authority from the Governor's Office.
- Centralized and streamlined reviews for EDSC and electronic detention.
 - For example, an EDSC reward previously required 7 approvals
 - Reduced to three and put that authority in the Programs Office
 - Tie awards to case planning and re-entry functions
 - Working on policy changes that will permanently tie the award of EDSC into programming and case planning and make it more attainable for more people
- Legislation is limited. It rules out people with certain offenses and offense types, regardless of behavior or risk to public safety.
- New policies will be built around evidence-based practices, so the reliance on committing offense to determine eligibility will no longer be standard practice
- What IDOC needs:
 - Increase eligible candidates and reward credits based on program completion and positive behavior.
 - Change the department philosophy from punitive to incentive based
 - Truth in Sentencing commitments to IDOC are not eligible for EDSC's. They account for roughly 45% of the population, they should be considered for credit.
 - Ability to release people who are elderly and more susceptible to COVID.

IDOC's challenges and opportunities (Consent Decrees – Rasho and Murphy):

- Consent Decrees provide mandates for enhanced care of individuals in custody.
- The Department's limited resources inhibit compliance
- With respect to Rasho and Lippert, a decreased population helps the strain on the medical and mental health system.
- Staffing in these departments is lower than IDOC would like.

Rasho

- *Rasho* requires confidential meetings with mental health staff outside of the cell.
- Initial COVID response restrictions created challenges for offender out of cell activity
- Movement restrictions and no family visitation have raised concerns of the mental health for offenders not normally on the caseload.
- As a result of COVID a normalcy task force was created to strategize programming, activities and additional amenities to assist with the population stress and anxieties.
- Increased rounds by mental health staff – at least weekly or daily in some facilities – which has had a positive impact on all offenders.
- Backlogs of MH evaluations, MH plans, and with psychiatric services must be reduced.

Murphy – Release of Sex Offenders

- Since the entry of the court's preliminary injunction order in January of this year, IDOC has seen more than 100 sex offenders, serving 3 year-life MSR terms, who have been released into the community.
- Need to change how the public views people with sex offense convictions, as these individuals tend to be very successful in the community.
- A large number of sex offenders have been released since the inception of this lawsuit and the recidivism rate is miniscule.
- The one sex-offender per address rule is a real barrier and is not supported by the data in the field.
- *Barnes v. Jeffreys*, pending before Judge Kendall in the Northern District.
 - The case is very similar to *Murphy*, but applies to sex offenders more generally, not just those who have a MSR term of 3 years-life.
 - Judge Kendall has ordered on seven separate occasions that the Department place otherwise eligible sex offenders together.
 - This single move has resulted in the release of well over 100 sex offenders, who remained incarcerated after the completion of their sentence.
 - If IDOC could place these individuals together, without the need for a court order, it would do wonders to improve the population.
- Relaxing housing restrictions for sex offenders could have a real, immediate impact on the population.

Where is IDOC going? Does IDOC expect policies, admissions, and releases to return to 2019 levels as the COVID-19 crisis eases in the future?:

- COVID has forced us to closely examine those individuals who are in custody but qualified for early release and did not pose a risk to the community.
- Successful in reducing population
- Developed policies to consistently review the population for individuals who are appropriate for release.
- Track the number of people who are in county jails awaiting transfer to IDOC.
- Processing of Transfer Orders (TO).
 - During the spring and summer, IDOC has diverted more than 200 TO's.
 - People who never have to come into a DOC facility but go through reception and then get turned around.
 - Legal team work with Cook County.

What tools Jeffrey's and IDOC would like to have in their toolbox for the next public health crisis?

- Illinois has many complicated sentencing laws.
- Truth-in-Sentencing (TIS) people miss out on incentives because they're required to serve some pre-determined portion of their sentence.
 - 45% of the population is under a TIS sentence.
 - Age of TIS population.
- No compassionate release authority.
- Need updated technology at IDOC.
 - Quality of life issues and programming interruptions could have been mitigated if IDOC had much better technology.
 - Requires a significant financial investment.
- MSR – The statute again relies on offenses to determine length and level of supervision.

- The statute should be modernized to reflect current thinking around risk levels and the appropriate role of supervision.
- Lack of electronic medical records was a big challenge.
- Identifying the vulnerable populations difficult
- Communication and intake with county jails very complex.
- NEED more qualified medical staff.
- Class 4 individuals should not come to prison.

New Business

Our next meeting date is scheduled for Friday, June 18 via Zoom. SPAC's other 2021 meetings will be held on, Friday, September 17 and Friday, November 19. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we will reevaluate whether to hold our meetings via zoom or in person, closer to the meeting dates.

Adjournment

Elgie Sims, moved to adjourn the thirty-fifth regular meeting of the Sentencing Policy Advisory Council, seconded by Craig Findley. The thirty-fifth regular meeting of the Sentencing Policy Advisory Council was adjourned at 12:00 p.m. by unanimous voice vote.



ILLINOIS SENTENCING POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL

2018 & 2019 Combined ANNUAL REPORT

Hon. Gino DiVito, Chairman

Hon. Warren Wolfson, Vice Chair

Senator Kwame Raoul, Vice Chair (2018)

<http://spac.illinois.gov/>

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2019 Council Members

<p>Hon. Gino DiVito, Chairperson Tabet DiVito & Rothstein, Chicago</p> <p>Hon. Warren Wolfson, Vice-Chairperson DePaul School of Law</p> <p>Rep. Margo McDermed Illinois House of Representatives</p> <p>Amy Campanelli Office of the Cook County Public Defender</p> <p>Kathryn Bocanegra Institute for Nonviolence Chicago</p> <p>James Chadd Office of the State Appellate Defender</p> <p>Rep. Marcus Evans Illinois House of Representatives</p> <p>Craig Findley Illinois Prisoner Review Board</p> <p>Henriette Grateau Office of the Cook County Sheriff</p> <p>Nathalina Hudson Office of the Illinois Attorney General</p> <p>Rob Jeffreys Illinois Department of Corrections</p>	<p>Sen. Steve McClure Illinois State Senate</p> <p>Marcia Meis Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts</p> <p>James Piper Illinois State Police</p> <p>Sen. Elgie Sims Illinois State Senate</p> <p>Alan Spellberg Cook County State's Attorney's Office</p> <p>Jason Stamps Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority</p> <p>Hon. Stuart Palmer (Ret.) JAMS Mediator and Arbitrator</p> <p>Julian Thompson Violent Crime Victim Representative</p> <p>Stewart Umholtz Tazewell County State's Attorney</p> <p>Don Stemen Loyola University Chicago</p> <p>Kristen Ziman City of Aurora Police Department</p>
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2018 and 2019 SPAC Staff

Kathy Saltmarsh

Executive Director
401 S. Spring, Room 617
Springfield, IL 62706
217-558-4749
Kathy.Saltmarsh@illinois.gov

Nathaniel Inglis Steinfeld

Research Director
300 West Adams, Ste. 200
Chicago, IL 60606
312-814-5964
Nate.Steinfeld@illinois.gov

Michael R. Elliott

Intergovernmental Affairs
401 S. Spring, Room 617
Springfield, IL 62706
217-558-4748
Michael.Elliott@illinois.gov

John Specker

Research Analyst
300 West Adams, Ste. 200
Chicago, IL 60606
312-793-4341
John.Specker@illinois.gov

Mark Powers

Senior Research Analyst
300 West Adams, Ste. 200
Chicago, IL 60606
312-793-0472
Mark.Powers@illinois.gov

Roger Franklin

Data Manager
300 West Adams, Ste. 200
Chicago, IL 60606
312-814-5964
Roger.Franklin@illinois.gov

Message from the Executive Director

SPAC is ten years old. When the authorizing statute went into effect in August of 2009, SPAC's supporters pressed Governor Quinn to put some resources behind it. In 2010, he directed the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) to provide basic administrative support to SPAC and I was hired in July of 2010. With technical support from Alison Shames from the Vera Institute of Justice and two ICJIA researchers, Mark Powers, who is now on SPAC's staff, and Lindsay Bostwick, who recently completed her Ph.D. at Carnegie-Mellon, the work of building a sentencing commission began.

If the value of collaboration could be readily measured, SPAC would be a textbook case study on the importance of the relationships that collaboration builds. The first SPAC report was done before I joined the SPAC team and was a collaborative effort to assess data gaps written by ICJIA, IDOC, the Illinois State Police and the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts. Dr. Dave Olson from the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department at Loyola University Chicago wrote the first three research reports on the drivers of the sentenced population, which not only described the drivers but also the three legislative actions that contribute to driving up the prison population. These reports became foundational documents for our work. Recently, the voices of those who have been in prison and those of victims have come to this collaborative table in new and powerful ways that will help produce better outcomes. SPAC was the first sentencing commission in the nation to add a returned citizen to its membership and will continue to include people with that experience in the future.

SPAC's mandate to produce system-wide fiscal impact analyses produced another long-term collaboration with the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, which brought a cost-benefit analysis model developed and tested in the Washington State legislative arena to a number of states that were trying to objectively assess programs being funded by tax dollars and prioritize funding to programs that produce measurable outcomes. SPAC was a non-traditional user of the model. Our experience with the model led to the innovative solution of adding victim impacts to our fiscal impact analyses and then also led to the cost-benefit tool's adoption by the Illinois Budgeting for Results Commission. At the Budgeting for Results Commission, the model is now being used in domains beyond criminal justice and has had an impact on state budget decisions across many agencies.

SPAC has grown and developed over the past ten years in ways that were predictable and in ways that were not. We had a three-year sunset provision when I became Executive Director, which made it necessary for us to prove our value quickly. The sunset was extended twice, and finally eliminated in 2018. Most importantly, SPAC has a well-developed, highly qualified team of researchers in Nate Inglis-Steinfeld, Mark Powers and John Specker who work out of our Chicago office. Michael Elliott and I are in Springfield where Michael brings his experience on House Democratic staff to bear on our interactions with legislators and staff. He and I push into the stream of policy discussions the research and analysis done by the research team. Our work is guided by the three 'U's: understandable, useable, and user friendly. Analysis that cannot be understood and easily used will not improve policy.

My primary goal as Executive Director is to continue bringing innovative, creative and experienced people onto the SPAC team and making sure they have the resources they need to do their best work, and making sure that work gets utilized as new policies are developed and old ones evaluated.

To all those who have served on SPAC, I hope you are proud of the work you did and of what SPAC has become. Our original members were wise to reject the notion that SPAC should make recommendations or take official positions on legislative proposals. I remain convinced that to do so would harm our credibility. To those who use our work, thank you for seeing its relevance and utility. And to those in the research community whom we call upon to review and vet drafts and brainstorm methodology, we are deeply grateful for the many new things we have learned from all of you. And to those on the administrative staff at IDOC

and in Public Safety Shared Services, who continue to help with the daily operational functions of a small state commission, we owe our deepest thanks. Without you we would not have desks, computers or paychecks.

This report is a combined annual report for 2018 and 2019 and diverges from past formats to provide a more substantive overview of criminal justice and sentencing policy in Illinois. I hope this approach provides a useful road map of how policy and research have developed since SPAC's formation, what we now can assess from Illinois data, and highlights data gaps and issues that require attention. In this report, we incorporate snapshots of various populations of people who are involved in the criminal justice system as a quick reference for future discussions.

We know so much more than we did ten years ago. Referencing ten years of meetings and SPAC research, we used the November 2018 meeting to give SPAC members an opportunity to brainstorm the criminal justice system they would design now, if the Criminal Code and Code of Corrections were repealed. The overriding themes were that the system should be holistic, focused on accountability and changing behavior rather than prioritizing punishment; should address the underlying reasons for criminal behavior while the individual is under state supervision whether in prison, on probation, or on mandatory supervised release (MSR); and effectively address the severe impacts that system involvement produces for the individuals as victims and perpetrators, including for their families and their communities. There was also concern about the loss of sentencing's legitimacy caused by sentences so harsh that they are divorced from reality. When the system is perceived as unfair and biased, it is no longer perceived as just. That is where Illinois stands today, after ten years of concerted reform efforts.

It is time to focus more clearly on the outcomes we want the system to produce beyond reducing the number of people in prison. That requires courage. We must understand the story the numbers tell while hearing the stories of the people who have experienced the system with all of its flaws. I hope for the coming decade that we are able to focus on reducing the victimization of individuals and whole communities that over-incarceration has produced; prioritize resources to support the social determinants of health that are required for families and communities to thrive; and strike a more productive balance between accountability and punishment to reduce crime.

The next wave is waiting in the wings – restorative justice, public health approaches to criminal conduct based on addiction and mental health, and collecting, analyzing and making accessible the right kind of data to assess the outcomes produced by this system. Different choices can allow healing to begin, so that ten years from now the data will tell the story of how we succeeded in transforming a system that is omnipresent in the lives of our citizens.

Kathy Saltmarsh
Executive Director

Purpose – The Sentencing Policy Advisory Council’s purpose is to provide policymakers with sound data and analysis to inform evidence-based public safety policy decisions. To reflect on the past two years, we continued to have robust conversations during meetings along with a change in membership and staff. Below are some highlights:

- **Meetings** – SPAC held 2 Meetings in 2018 and 3 meetings in 2019.

In 2018, SPAC’s June meeting focused on misdemeanors, the class of crimes that comprises the majority of arrests and convictions but is rarely researched. SPAC staff presented the findings from its misdemeanor report, which was published in the Fall of 2018. The key findings included:

- In 2017, misdemeanor arrests accounted for 71% of all arrests and 59% of all dispositions reported into CHRI.
- 90% of convictions are for Class A misdemeanors, and driving under the influence was the most common offense.
- The average age at arrest was 32 years old.
- 78% of people with reported misdemeanor dispositions never get convicted of a felony, but 52% of convicted felons have prior misdemeanor dispositions.
- 47% of guilty dispositions are pleas to a withheld judgment with supervision. This results in charges being dismissed and no record of conviction.
- Criminal history was the most significant factor in the type of sentence imposed and the term of the sentence.
- Controlling for criminal histories, the differences between black and non-black case outcomes were not statistically significant.
- Gender was statistically significant after controlling for other demographic factors and criminal history. Men were 27% less likely than women to receive withheld judgments.
- Almost two thirds (62%) of those sentenced to jail time serve their sentence term in pretrial detention.
- 45% of misdemeanants in our sample were rearrested and 24% are reconvicted within three years of the first disposition.

SPAC’s September meeting was cancelled to allow SPAC Staff and Council Members to attend a Summit on Probation in Illinois held by Loyola University of Chicago’s Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy and Practice. The final meeting of 2018 was focused on asking SPAC members to reimagine Illinois’ Criminal Justice System. See pages (16-18) for a detailed discussion of the meeting and the topics covered.

In 2019, SPAC’s June meeting focused on the new perspectives on criminal justice brought by the new administration’s appointees to head the Department of Corrections, the Illinois State Police, and the perspectives former SPAC co-chair Kwame Raoul brought to the Attorney General’s office. SPAC’s September meeting centered on the research conducted by SPAC Board member Kathryn Bocanegra for her Ph.D. dissertation. The topic of her dissertation was a Geo-Spatial analysis of probationers and resources available in Cook County. SPAC members also benefitted from a moderated discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of SPAC’s procedures and approach to legislation from several panel members who use our work, including Adam Groner from the Budgeting for Results Commission,

legislative members Margo McDermid and Marcus Evans, and Attorney General Kwame Raoul. The final SPAC meeting of 2019, which took place in November, focused on the Illinois Supreme Court's Strategic Plan. The plan was developed over two years of meetings by the Judicial Conference, and Kathy Saltmarsh served on the conference. Marcia Meis, Executive Director of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) and Alison Spanner, the point person for the Conference at the AOIC explained the process and the goals of the Conference in pursuing this project.

- **Membership** – SPAC membership changed over 2018 and 2019 as the executive branch changed administrations and several members left the Council.

SPAC saw the following members leave the Council during 2018 and 2019: Anne Fitzgerald, John Maki, Gladys Taylor, Nicholas Kondelis, Michael M. Glick, Kwame Raoul, Jason Barickman, Michael Tardy, and Michael Pelletier. And SPAC welcomed the following new members: Jason Stamps, Henriette Grateau, Nathalina Hudson, Rob Jeffreys, Marcia Meis, James Piper, Elgie Sims, and Steve McClure.

- **Staffing and Budget** – In 2018 and 2019, SPAC was staffed by Kathy Saltmarsh, Executive Director; Michael Elliott, Intergovernmental Affairs and Communications Advisor; Nathaniel Inglis Steinfeld, Research Director; Mark Powers, Senior Research Analyst; Roger Franklin, Data Manager; and John Specker, Research Analyst. Staffing changes included hiring John Specker in February of 2018, as a research analyst to replace Yasmine El-Gohary, who left in late 2017. Roger Franklin left the agency in August 2019.

SPAC's budget remained stable for the years 2018 and 2019.

Policies & Practices: A Decade of Change

If there is one strong take away from looking at the past ten years, it is that passing a bill is far easier than implementing the change it requires. In fact, many legislative proposals were restatements of existing laws that are simply no longer enforced. There were also meaningful substantive reforms, but no new resources for implementing the changes. Cases in point:

1. Statutory preference for probation
2. Statutory preference for recognizance bond (I-bonds) without cash requirements
3. Authorizing sentencing credits and encouraging credits for programming
4. Requiring risk assessment implementation, especially important in the age of “evidence-based” practices
5. Budgeting for Results without any cost-benefit or evaluation tools for its first ten years
6. SPAC without resources – money or people vs. SPAC with resources
7. Drug courts in jurisdictions without drug treatment

On the flip side are significant changes that are unrelated to policy but directly related to actions taken or foregone by stakeholders. Cases in point:

1. Historic reduction in prison population due to consistent downward trend in arrests all over the state
2. Historic reduction in number of people incarcerated for retail theft due to State’s Attorney Kim Foxx’s decision to exercise prosecutorial discretion
3. Historic destruction of capacity for behavioral health treatment and interventions that lead to poor criminal justice outcomes either in terms of accessing continued care upon release from prison or being able to get treatment attendant to probation conditions.

And one constant theme is that the flow of people and money into the system seem unrelated. The historic reduction in the prison population is not accompanied by any change in the IDOC budget for a variety of reasons that are unrelated to public safety or criminal justice. On the other hand, in many jurisdictions the criminal justice system’s willingness to fund treatment for those incarcerated or on probation kept some vendors afloat during a three-year budget impasse, but left people not involved in the system with less access to treatment, a topsy-turvy outcome by any measure.

Next Decade: Trends Toward Less Punitive Responses to Crime

In the political arena the pendulum always swings back and the trend away from tough-on-crime policies towards more individualistic and rehabilitative approaches has been ongoing since before SPAC’s inception. In 2011 SPAC produced its first fiscal impact statement on a bill that was the trifecta of tough-on-crime policies aimed at gun crime. The bill prohibited probation for some offenses, increased minimum sentences, and subjected all gun crimes to 85% truth in sentencing. Ten years later, bills like this are generally consigned to subcommittees or tough questions in committee that result in the bills not passing. On the other hand, bills that reduce drug penalties, mitigate the impact of truth in sentencing, allow for early release based on age, medical condition, or youth, and expand eligibility for diversion programs are more prevalent than ever before but also fail to pass. All of these approaches leave the current sentencing structure in place; however, bills suggesting retroactive early release for certain segments of the prison population suggest that indeterminant sentencing is, in a sense, re-emerging as an option. These proposals allow for an additional exit avenue not available under the current determinate sentencing approach. The proposals place the responsibility on the Prisoner Review Board to use its judgment to determine if IDOC has effectively rehabilitated prison inmates and if they can be released safely into the community.

2018 Legislative Session Fiscal Impact Analyses -

During the 2018 legislative session, SPAC produced fiscal impact analyses of the following bills, none of which passed. All fiscal impact analyses can be found at: <https://spac.illinois.gov/publications/fiscal-impact-analysis>.

SB 3257 & HB 5060 – Changes to Felony Dollar Values of Theft and Retail Theft

Senate Bill 3257 and House Bill 5060. These proposals increased the dollar value threshold for felony theft from \$500 to \$2,000 and retail theft from \$300 to \$2,000. They also limited application of theft sentencing enhancements to individuals with prior felony theft convictions rather than any prior theft or retail theft offense. This proposal would have resulted in fewer felony cases eligible for a sentence to IDOC. **Because Illinois does not report the dollar value of the property stolen, the data was not sufficient to do a full fiscal impact analysis.**

HB 531 SA1 – Parole for Offenders Under 21 Years of Age

Senate Amendment 1 to House Bill 531 proposed amending the Unified Code of Corrections to adjust length of stay by allowing people who were under 21 years old at the time of their offense to apply for early release. Under the bill, people who were serving non-homicide and non-aggravated sexual assault offenses were eligible to apply for early release after serving 10 years. Those who were serving sentences for homicide or aggravated sexual assault would be eligible to apply for early release after 20 years. **Because SPAC had to estimate the age at offense based on the age at sentence and the length of pretrial detention, the data was not sufficient to do a full fiscal impact analysis.**

HB 4173 – Elderly Sentence Modifications

House Bill 4173 proposed the Pathway to Community Program for older inmates in IDOC by permitting early release for those who serve at least 25 consecutive years in prison and reach certain age criteria. SPAC analyzed the most recent IDOC data to determine the number of inmates in IDOC who might be eligible. The data show that on June 30, 2017, IDOC held 945 inmates over the age of 50 who have served at least 25 consecutive years in IDOC. **The data was not sufficient to do a full fiscal impact analysis as it was not possible to determine who might get early release.**

HB 5061 – Limits Habitual Criminal Sentencing Penalty Limited to Adults Convicted of Forcible Felonies

House Bill 5061 proposed amending the three-strikes sentencing provision in the Unified Code of Corrections. The proposal limited the eligibility for the habitual criminal mandatory life sentence and the Class X enhancement to those who commit three or more serious crimes. For the mandatory life sentence, HB 5061 increased the age at the time of the first of the three offenses to 21, up from 18 or older. For the Class X sentence enhancement, HB 5061 required that the qualifying predicate offenses be Class 1 or Class 2 *forcible* felonies rather than any Class 1 or Class 2 felony. This proposal would have limited the number of people who are eligible for the more serious sentences. **Due to current data limitations, which prevent reliable identification of individuals actually sentenced as habitual criminals, SPAC could not do a full fiscal impact analysis.**

HB 5532 – Removes Mandatory Supervised Release Requirement for Class 4 Non-Domestic Violence offenses

House Bill 5532 proposed removing Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR) for Class 4 felonies where the offense does not involve domestic violence. Currently, the law requires one year of MSR for Class 4 felonies before the person is officially discharged from IDOC. This proposal would have decreased the number of technical violators returning to prison but might have increased the number of new court admissions to prison. Due to data limitations, SPAC was unable to estimate the fiscal impact of this change on IDOC. **However,**

there was sufficient data to determine which offenders would have been impacted had this bill been in effect over the past three years.

HB 4351 – Changes to Truth-in-Sentencing for Certain Offenses Involving Minors

House Bill 4351 proposed to change the truth-in-sentencing (TIS) good-time credit restrictions for four crimes, aggravated battery, aggravated kidnapping, luring, and predatory criminal sexual assault, when the victims are minors. The bill would change the required length of stay from 85% of the sentence imposed to 100% of the sentence imposed. This proposal would have resulted in a longer length of stay in IDOC.

IDOC POPULATION INCREASE: 125 additional inmates by 2028

TOTAL COSTS INCREASED OVER THREE YEARS: **-\$20,047,306**

TOTAL VICTIMIZATION BENEFITS RANGE OVER THREE YEARS: \$169,136

NET BENEFITS (BENEFITS MINUS COSTS): **-\$19.9MILLION** (A negative benefit indicates that costs are greater than benefits)

HB 4948 – Sentence Enhancements for Stalking When Victim is Under 18

House Bill 4948 proposed increasing the felony class by one level for stalking, aggravated stalking, and cyberstalking when the victim is under the age of 18. The bill increased the felony class for these offenses and thus increased the probability of a longer prison term and a longer length of stay in IDOC.

Illinois does not report the age of stalking or cyberstalking victims into any statewide database. Therefore, SPAC uses the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) to provide some perspective on the age of these victims. The national data report the age of victims of “intimidation” crimes, which include stalking, cyberstalking, and other crimes that place a victim in reasonable fear of bodily harm without the use of any weapon or actual physical attack. NIBRS includes data reported from Rockford, Illinois, the only Illinois jurisdiction that reported detailed NIBRS data in 2015.

According to NIBRS 2015 data, approximately 13% of national intimidation incidents are of victims under 18 years old. The Rockford Police Department reported a slightly lower rate of 9% of intimidation incidents. Because the offense definition differs from HB4948, the data are not sufficient to support a fiscal impact analysis.

HB 5767 & HB 1466 HA1 – Sentence Enhancements for Methamphetamine Delivery Within 500 feet of a Protected Zone

House Bill 5768 and House Amendment 1 to House Bill 1466 proposed amending the Methamphetamine Control and Community Protection Act to increase the offense class for delivery of methamphetamine and aggravated delivery of methamphetamine in a protected zone from a Class 2 to a Class 1 felony. The increased class would have resulted in an increased likelihood of a longer stay in IDOC.

IDOC POPULATION INCREASE: 25 additional inmates

TOTAL COSTS INCREASED OVER THREE YEARS: **-\$532,754.00**

TOTAL VICTIMIZATION BENEFITS RANGE OVER THREE YEARS: \$498.00

NET BENEFITS (BENEFITS MINUS COSTS): **-\$532,256.00** (A negative benefit indicates that costs are greater than benefits)

2019 Legislative Session Fiscal Impact Analyses

During the 2019 legislative session, SPAC completed the following fiscal impact analyses for the following bills, none of which passed. All fiscal impact analyses can be found at: <https://spac.illinois.gov/publications/fiscal-impact-analysis>.

SB 219 SA1 – Mandatory Minimums for Child Pornography Possession Offenses

Senate Amendment 1 to Senate Bill 219 proposed a mandatory minimum prison term for possession of child pornography when the victim is a family or household member of the offender. This proposal would have removed the ability of a judge to sentence an individual to a term of probation and would increase the number of sentences to prison.

IDOC POPULATION INCREASE: 15 additional inmates annually

TOTAL COSTS INCREASED OVER THREE YEARS: **-\$305,710.00**

TOTAL VICTIMIZATION BENEFITS RANGE OVER THREE YEARS: \$0.00

NET BENEFITS (BENEFITS MINUS COSTS): **-\$305,710.00** (A negative benefit indicates that costs are greater than benefits)

SB 1311 – Changes to Sentence Enhancements for Animal Cruelty

Senate Bill 1311 increased the offense class by one level for violations of the Humane Care of Animals Act. Class A misdemeanors would become Class 4 felonies, and all other felonies would move up one felony class. The proposed change would have increased the potential sentence ranges for these offenses and increased the length of stay in IDOC.

IDOC POPULATION INCREASE: 6 additional inmates annually

TOTAL COSTS INCREASED OVER THREE YEARS: **-\$737,496.00**

TOTAL VICTIMIZATION BENEFITS RANGE OVER THREE YEARS: \$197.00

NET BENEFITS (BENEFITS MINUS COSTS): **-\$719,601.00** (A negative benefit indicates that costs are greater than benefits)

SB 1968 – Revisiting Sentencing for Non-Violent Offenders with Less Than Four Months Stay

Senate Bill 1968 proposed to prevent admission of people to IDOC who were being admitted for stays of four months or less. This proposal would have applied to Class 3 and Class 4 felons with little time left to serve on their sentence due to pretrial detention. Under this bill, those with these short lengths of stay would be sent to Home Detention, an adult transition center, or another facility or program within IDOC. This proposal would have decreased admissions to prison for people with short lengths of stay.

IDOC POPULATION DECREASE: -21 inmates annually

TOTAL COSTS INCREASED OVER THREE YEARS: **\$91,564.00**

TOTAL VICTIMIZATION BENEFITS RANGE OVER THREE YEARS: **\$18,771.00**

NET BENEFITS (BENEFITS MINUS COSTS): **-\$110,335.00** (A negative benefit indicates that costs are greater than benefits)

SB 1971 – Drug, Probation, and Sentencing Reform

Senate Bill 1971 was a comprehensive criminal justice reform bill that incorporated many elements of prior reform bills. SB 1971 changed drug penalties, felony thresholds for theft and retail theft, truth-in-sentencing, limiting the number of people in prison who would serve short terms in IDOC custody, habitual criminal laws, and increased probation eligibility and other forms of qualified probation. SB1971 also reformed other criminal

justice topics outside of sentencing policies. As a whole, the proposal would have reduced lengths of stay and fewer people would have been admitted to IDOC.

PARTIAL IDOC POPULATION DECREASE: 6,000 additional inmates annually (this is a partial projection due to data limitation)

PARTIAL TOTAL COSTS AVOIDED OVER THREE YEARS: Between \$465 and \$538 million

PARTIAL VICTIMIZATION COSTS OVER THREE YEARS: \$18 million

PARTIAL NET BENEFITS (BENEFITS MINUS COSTS): \$447 and \$520 million

HB 1614 – Changes to Felony Dollar Value of Theft and Retail Theft

House Bill 1614 increased the dollar value threshold for felony theft from \$500 to \$2,000 and felony retail theft from \$300 to \$2,000. The bill also changed the criminal history enhancements by requiring the prior offense that triggers the sentence enhancement to be a felony offense rather than any prior theft or retail theft offense. This proposal would have resulted in fewer felony cases eligible for a sentence to IDOC. **Because Illinois does not report the dollar value of the property stolen, the data was not sufficient to do a full fiscal impact analysis.**

HB 1615 – Changes to Felony Murder

House Bill 1615 proposed to amend the first-degree murder statute to separate felony murder into cases where the person causes death while committing a forcible felony other than second degree murder, (a)(3), and cases where the other parties to the forcible felony cause the death, (a)(4). Consistent with current laws, both primary and accountable defendants would face first-degree murder sentencing. **SPAC could not determine the impact of HB1615, as it is redefining felony murder.**

HB 2291 HA1 – Drug Offense Sentencing Reform

House Amendment 1 to House Bill 2291 proposed to reclassify possession of low levels of controlled substances and methamphetamine from felony offenses to misdemeanors. This proposal would have removed the possibility of being sentenced to IDOC for these reclassified offenses.

Criminal history data does not include drug weights. Consequently, SPAC is unable to identify the weight of drugs an individual possessed at the time of their arrest for the low-level drug possession offenses in the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) and the Methamphetamine Control and Community Protection Act (MCCPA).

SPAC Research Reports

In addition to fiscal impact analyses, SPAC's research team published research reports centered on important and relevant aspects of the criminal justice system. These reports provide more detail to policymakers, public officials, and other stakeholders to improve their knowledge of the system, and shine a light on areas of the criminal justice system that are often overlooked or need further analysis. SPAC also published reports as mandated by legislation. In 2018 and 2019 SPAC published 12 different research reports.

SPAC is statutorily mandated to report on Public Act 99-861 ([PA99-0861](#)) on Presentence Investigations (PSI). SPAC did not publish a report on PA99-0861 in 2018 or 2019 because there was not sufficient data to analyze. However, in early 2020, SPAC found an innovative approach to use available AOIC aggregate data on the number of PSIs ordered and sentencing data from the Criminal History Information Reporting system to analyze the impact of Public Act 99-861. SPAC found that the number of PSIs reported decreased after the Act went into effect and that sentences to IDOC did not appear to be affected by the Act.

SPAC is statutorily mandated to report on Public Act 100-3 ([PA100-0003](#)) on Downward Departures for UUU sentencing. Due to the limited data, SPAC was not able to do an analysis of the bill's impact in 2018 or 2019. In early 2020, the Conference of Chief Circuit Judges approved a sentencing order SPAC developed to collect the necessary data, so a report will be published in 2021.

2018 Research Reports

All fiscal impact analyses can be found at: <https://spac.illinois.gov/publications/research-reports>

SPAC Misdemeanor Report:

SPAC's misdemeanor report focused on the offense characteristics, dispositions, criminal history, and the demographics for 2017 arrest and dispositions. The report also analyzed three years of recidivism patterns for misdemeanor arrests that occurred in 2014. The report was the first analysis of the large number of misdemeanors and sentencing practices in the misdemeanor system, which is often overlooked in criminal justice policymaking. Whether the result of successful sentencing policies or other factors we cannot measure at this time, the report found that the majority of misdemeanants did not go on to commit more crimes, and that those receiving supervision had the lowest recidivism rates.

Prison Research Infographic

As an update to the previous Prison Resource Infographic, SPAC published this report to illustrate how different offense classes consume resources. For the updated report, SPAC analyzed the average number of exits in each offense class for 2015, 2016, and 2017. Resources consumed are expressed in bed-years and dollars. SPAC's report finds that, in 2018, the true per capita cost for housing one inmate for one year, including all of the benefits and pension costs is \$44,704.

Commission Recommendations Implementation

After SPAC served as a primary research team for the Rauner Commission in 2015, SPAC started to publish an annual document that tracks how the State of Illinois is progressing on implementing the recommendations provided by the commission. Of the 27 recommendations, SPAC last found that most were not fully implemented.

Average Joe Profiles Prison

In another update of a previous SPAC report, SPAC published Average Joe Prison profiles. These profiles answer the questions: Who is the average inmate coming out of state prison? What crime did they commit? How long did they stay in the system? What was their experience? To answer those questions, SPAC used exits from state prisons from 2017 to determine the basic demographics and characteristics of this group and exits in 2014 (2017?) from state prisons to analyze new offense and return to prison trends.

2018 Prison Pies

SPAC provided an annual update of the previous fiscal year to provide insight to the criminal justice system. This report details IDOC Admissions, Exits, and Current population using data from the 2018 State Fiscal Year and June 30th, 2018.

2019 Research Reports

State Use of Electronic Monitoring

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board (PRB) asked SPAC to review PRB orders for electronic or GPS monitoring over a three-month period in 2018. SPAC reviewed 2,191 unique orders representing approximately 31% of PRB hearings held during that time. SPAC tracked the frequency at which electronic monitoring (EM) was imposed by PRB staff or recommended by IDOC staff.

As noted by the Budgeting for Results Commission, both IDOC and PRB share responsibility for administering EM but neither agency has sole authority for implementation. The available EM data show that IDOC and PRB are adding an equal number of cases to the EM caseload and that both agencies impose it for similar reasons. The PRB provides an additional check on IDOC facility related differences in recommending EM, producing some additional consistency in its use. Although the application of EM appeared to comply with Illinois' Electronic Monitoring and Home Detention Law, no clear administrative rules were available for review, so SPAC could not analyze regulatory consistency.

EM generally has a minimal effect on reducing recidivism and changing criminal behavior. The additional supervision is often effective at providing a justification for a revocation from community supervision, which can lead to higher costs for the system without corresponding recidivism-reducing benefits. The question of whether EM is effective as a condition of supervision can only be answered by evaluating the program to determine the outcomes it produces. The information gained through that process could also guide improvements for the use of EM to ensure that the benefits of the program are greater than its costs.

The end result of the study provided momentum for the Budgeting for Results Commission's examination of the costs and benefits of EM, which likewise led to an evaluation of EM by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

SB1557 HA1 Cannabis Expungement Analysis

SPAC reviewed state administrative data to estimate the potential impacts of expunging past criminal history records under the proposed Senate Bill 1557, House Amendment 1, which became the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act of 2019.

Data Access Chart

SPAC's Data Access chart provides additional information about finding and requesting Criminal Justice Data in the State of Illinois.

Average Joe Felony Conviction Profiles

To grasp a more complete picture of the criminal justice system, SPAC expanded its average offender profiles from people who are exiting prison to all people who are convicted. These profiles detail all convictions in 2017 to determine the characteristics and demographics of those who are convicted of a felony offense in Illinois. SPAC also used people who were convicted in 2014 to measure recidivism patterns for those who were in the community and able to recidivate after their offense.

2019 Prison Pies

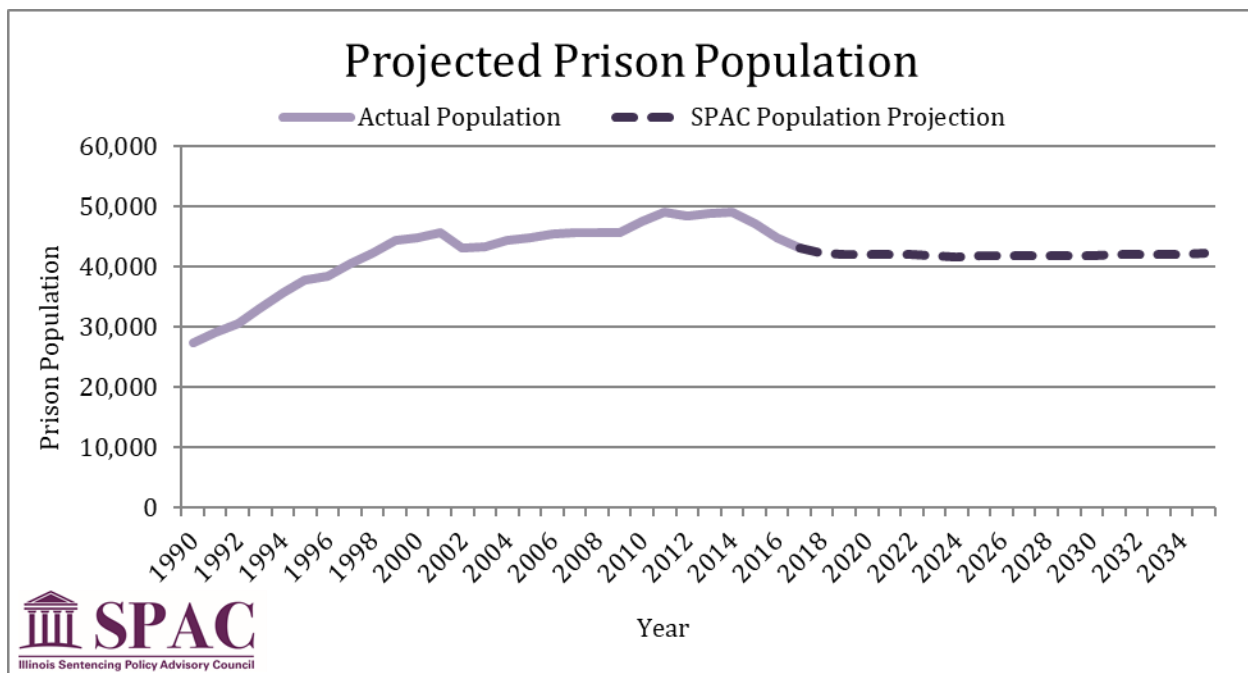
SPAC provides an annual update of the previous fiscal year to provide insight to the criminal justice system. This report details IDOC Admissions, Exits, and Current population. It highlights data from the 2019 State Fiscal Year and June 30th, 2019.

Population Projections

2018 Baseline Illinois Department of Corrections Population Projection

The SPAC prison population projection takes the two key policy levers—admissions and length of stay—to create a reasonable estimate of the State’s future prison population. Both admissions and the average prison terms are held constant from the average of the past year. This approach gives a plausible baseline to compare any simulated policy changes. The implicit assumptions are also familiar to system stakeholders. For example, if a reader believes admissions were abnormally low for the past year, s/he can read the model’s output as a conservative underestimate of the future prison population. Likewise, a reader who believes admissions will continue to fall can read the output as an overestimate of the future prison population. Both can understand the projection based on familiarity with past experience.

SPAC projected the prison population for FY2018-2035 using the average prison admissions, sentences, and policy positions of FY2017. The projection model projects the prison population to decrease to around 42,000 and then to stay relatively flat with a slight annual increase occurring in the future.

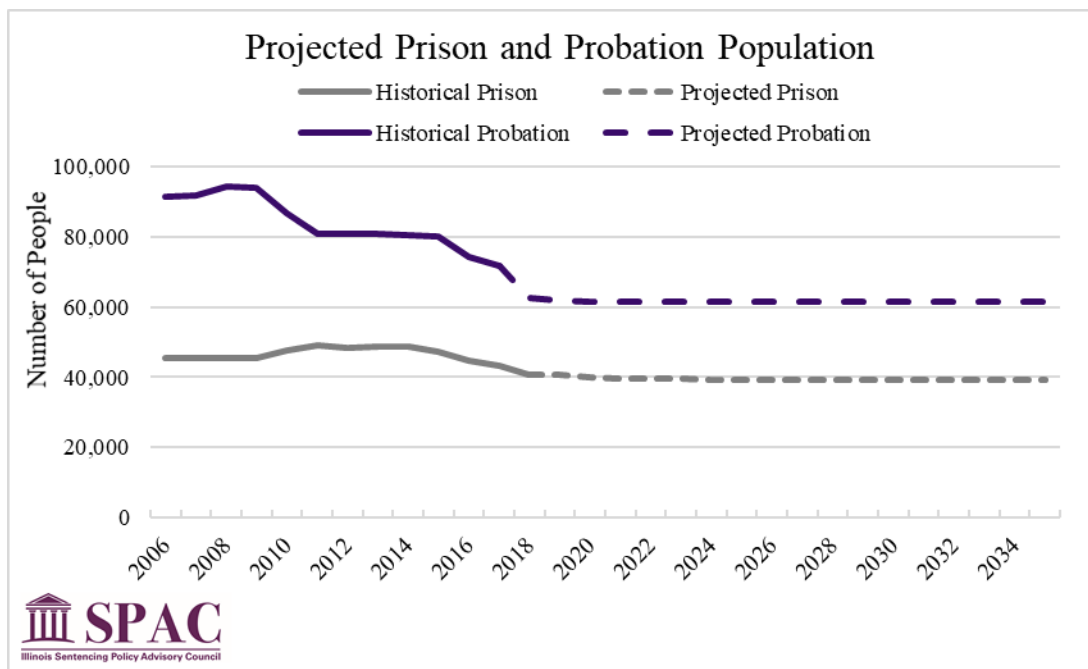


The assumption of constant admissions results in a fairly flat projection. The model currently overestimates the population, at least in the short-term, because of the assumption that future admissions will look like the average FY2017 admissions. Prison admissions have declined and continue to decline every month, and the higher admissions of early FY2017 cause the projection to be high. However, the use of historical admissions presents a realistic estimate of future prison populations if the downward trend of admissions slows and eventually stabilizes.

2019 Baseline Illinois Department of Corrections Prison and Probation Projections

Using the latest data for both prison and probation populations, SPAC projects the prison population for 2019-2035 using the average prison admissions, sentences, and sentence credit policies of FY2018. SPAC projects the probation population for 2018-2035 using probation sentences and sentence lengths. The projection model

projects the prison population to decrease to around 39,100 and then to stay relatively flat and the probation population to be relatively flat at 61,700.



The assumption that sentences will be constant results in a flat projection after a small initial decline. In the short term, the model overestimates the population because of the constant-sentences assumption; for example, prison admissions have declined and continue to decline almost all due to fewer arrests, convictions, and sentences. The decline continues every month and the higher admissions of early in the prior year cause the projection to overestimate the current population. Similarly, probation sentences have dropped substantially in recent years and the probation projection may also be an overestimate. However, the use of historical admissions presents a realistic estimate of future populations if the downward trend of admissions slows and then stabilizes.

Special Topic SPAC Events

Criminal Justice 101

On February 5th, 2019, SPAC held Criminal Justice 101, a briefing for the General Assembly. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce SPAC and SPAC's work to the General Assembly and to provide the new members of the General Assembly with a crash course in the need-to-know facts of the criminal justice system in Illinois. Attendees included House and Senate Staff from both Democrat and Republican caucuses, members of the General Assembly, and other interested parties. SPAC then gave a similar presentation to the Lt. Governor's office.

SPAC Budget 101

On April 24th, 2019, SPAC partnered with the Governor's Office of Management and Budget to provide a presentation to nonprofits and philanthropy organizations on the budget process in the State of Illinois. This meeting was well attended and provided a detailed explanation of how the budget process works in Illinois and how people crafting legislation can engage budget analysts to better understand how funding is allocated for new and existing programs.

Criminal Justice Data 101

On October 18th, 2019, SPAC held Illinois Adult Criminal Justice Data 101. The purpose of this meeting was to provide background on the criminal justice data in Illinois to organizations engaged in research and the legislative process. The meeting allowed attendees the opportunity to learn about criminal justice data in Illinois, how the different agencies use the data, what datasets are available publicly, and how to properly request data. Feedback from attendees was that it was helpful in getting a better understanding of the current state of criminal justice data in Illinois and how to access data from different sources.

SPAC Research Lunch Get Togethers

In 2019, SPAC's John Specker initiated Research Lunch Get-Togethers, hosted by SPAC, for criminal justice researchers around the state to begin to build a community of shared knowledge and collaboration. Attendees include academics, researchers at other state agencies, and researchers from local groups that work with Illinois specific criminal justice data. SPAC hosts these meetings quarterly in Chicago and downstate as an opportunity to develop relationships, discuss ongoing projects, share analysis techniques, ask questions, and provide feedback to help ensure that criminal justice research in Illinois is robust and efficient. In the future researchers from non-criminal justice agencies will be invited to join the discussion to further strengthen the utility of research in agency administration and policymaking.

November 2018 SPAC Meeting: Imagining the Future of Sentencing

The question presented at this meeting was, assuming that the Criminal Code and Code of Corrections have been repealed, and using what we know now, how would you design a new criminal justice system? Members were reminded at the outset of SPAC's examination of the Illinois system, as well as the conclusions of more recent national research on crime and punishment that debunked some of the strongly held beliefs about harsh sentences and how new science supported different approaches to improving individual and societal outcomes, including:

1. The two levers that drive our sentenced population, admissions and length of stay, remain constant. But our sentencing trends have come full circle, shifting from a slightly higher percentage of sentences to prison than to probation in 2011 to probation edging out prison since 2015.
2. The consistent, statewide decrease in arrests and admissions to IDOC over the last four years has resulted in a decrease in the population that is almost the 25% Governor Rauner set as his goal in 2015. This decrease demonstrates that the discretionary decisions at the front end can decrease the prison population far more quickly than statutory reforms. For example, Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx's decision not to prosecute retail thefts below a \$1,000 threshold led to an almost immediate decline in the number of retail thieves in the prison population.
3. The belief that harsher prison sentences deter crime and make our communities safer has been discredited by decades of research. The "prison paradox" is that more prison does not lead to more safety and social science suggests that the system is now affirmatively harming the communities it targets, supporting the generational cycles of crime and violence.
4. Criminal history, which includes arrests and convictions, remains the most powerful factor in sentencing and plays a critical role in risk assessment as well. A history of "violent crime," for which Illinois has three separate and somewhat overlapping definitions, can operate to bar individuals from diversion, alternatives to incarceration, and probation even when those options may be the best suited to achieve a rehabilitative result. Violent arrests and convictions are also barred from sealing and expungement regardless of how much rehabilitation an individual has demonstrated during or after incarceration.
5. Risk assessment remains elusive in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and consistent use in probation cannot be established by available data.
6. As knowledge about the role of trauma and addiction evolves, our system does not evolve as quickly. Access to treatment in the community remains unacceptably low, and access in IDOC

remains far below the number of slots needed. Capacity for all types of behavioral health services is well below what it should be for a state of our size.

7. The cycle of victimization and perpetration remains strong. There is now a recognition that in order to support all victims we must revisit how we provide victim services and compensation so that the majority of victims and their families are not excluded from accessing those things based on criminal history.
8. Probation officers, who supervise more people than the prison system, have no information about the services their clients consume. Nor do they have input into what happens to their clients if they are rearrested, frequently finding out that probation was revoked after the client has been resentenced to prison. Though recidivism rates for probation remain lower than those for prison, there is no real evaluation of probation outcomes to inform the stakeholders and data on probation is not readily available to researchers.
9. SPAC follows the money on a system-wide basis using a cost-benefit approach to calculate victimization costs for fiscal impact statements. We also participate in the broader implementation of CBA through the Budgeting for Results Commission housed in the Governor's Office of Management & Budget. This work highlights the importance of a feedback loop that includes legitimate performance measures and outcome evaluations.
10. Misdemeanor sentencing – SPAC took its first look at misdemeanor sentencing and found that while most people in IDOC have misdemeanors in their history, most misdemeanants do not go on to commit more crimes, and that those with the lowest level of supervision have the lowest recidivism rates.

SPAC members were reminded of the principles articulated by the National Academy of Sciences in its 2014 report on the growth of incarceration in this country. The 2014 report, spearheaded by Jeremy Travis and marshalling many of the nation's top criminologists and justice researchers, identified the main causes of the growth in incarceration and the relationship with crime. Overall, the Academy report rearticulated the foundational purposes of sentencing for policymaking:

- Proportionality – the sentence should be proportional to the seriousness of the crime.
- Parsimony – the punishment should be the minimum needed to achieve its legitimate purpose.
- Citizenship – conditions of imprisonment and supervision should not be so severe that they undermine an individual's status as a member of society.
- Social Justice – as public institutions in a democracy, prisons should promote the general well-being of all members of society.¹

A copy of the most recent report from the Vera Institute of Justice project on reimagining prison from the baseline value of respecting human dignity also helped shape the discussion.² The Vera Report suggested rooting our conversations on sentencing around human dignity and highlighting the humanity even of those who commit crimes. As stated in the report, the discussion of criminal justice policy frequently does not include people who have lived experience in the system, so it was an added benefit to SPAC to have several individuals who had survived sentences for murder, sexual assault and less serious offenses join the conversation. In all cases, the refrain was the same – that every day of incarceration was degrading and for those sentenced to IDOC basic human dignity was not part of the ultimate mission of “correcting” criminal behavior.

¹ National Research Council. (2014). *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences*. Committee on Causes and Consequences of High Rates of Incarceration, J. Travis, B. Western, and S. Redburn, Editors. Committee on Law and Justice, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. The full report is available here: <https://www.nap.edu/read/18613>. See page 3 for summary of principles cited here.

² Ruth Delaney, Ram Subramanian, Alison Shames, & Nicholas Turner. (2018). *Reimagining Prison*. Vera Inst. of Justice. The full report and summaries are available here: <https://www.vera.org/publications/reimagining-prison-print-report>

Also joining the members was Lisa Daniels who lost her son to gun violence and pleaded for leniency for his killer. She talked about how lengthy imprisonment would not bring her closure nor make the man less likely to commit crimes in the future. Ms. Daniels, now a member of the Prisoner Review Board, emphasized the need for a restorative justice approach to true accountability, not just punishment, for the offender and support for victims to find their own path to closure and healing.

Against this backdrop, and with reference to a number of projects SPAC presented at prior meetings the discussion was wide-ranging and heartfelt. Prominent themes emerged:

1. The system can dehumanize the stakeholders as well as the people it processes by requiring judges to impose sentences that bear no relationship to reality and that result in the ruination of numerous lives.
2. The system punishes too harshly and does too little to rehabilitate.
3. Our largest prison populations are housed in Pontiac and Menard, two buildings that exemplify the punishment philosophy of the past and are not conducive to a rehabilitative function.
4. The correctional staff are still primarily security focused and do not have the skills necessary to support rehabilitation.
5. Parole (MSR) revocation is too punitive.

Snapshots of the Illinois Criminal Justice System

A new feature in annual reports this year and going forward are a sample of SPAC's snapshots of information on the top offenses resulting in conviction. The snapshots provide 2018 data including trends in arrests, convictions, and court supervisions, racial demographics of those people who are convicted, the conviction class and the sentences imposed (statewide and SPAC geographical regions), and three-year recidivism measurements for people who were convicted of these offenses in 2015. Additional snapshots are available on [SPAC's website](#).³

³ See the full set of dashboards at: https://spac.illinois.gov/publications/research-reports/snapshot_2018.

Calendar Year 2018 – Data Factsheet

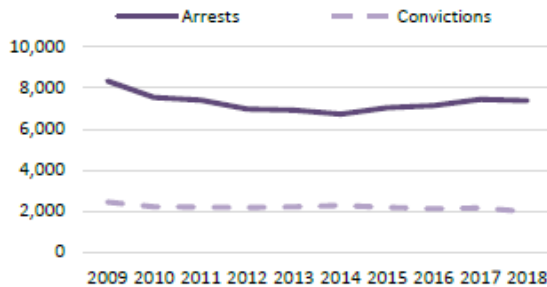
Aggravated Battery

720 ILCS 5/12-3.05

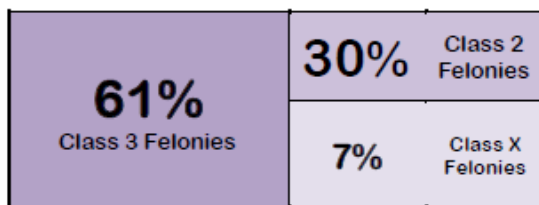
accounted for 6% of 2018's felony convictions

Arrests: 5,917 Convictions: 1,956 Court Supervision: <10

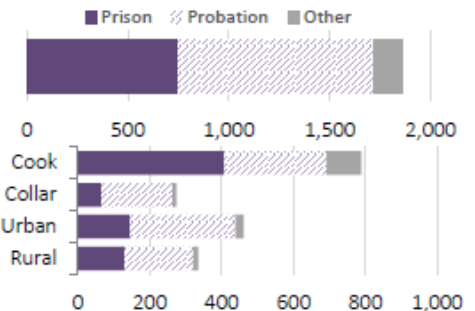
Trends



Conviction Class

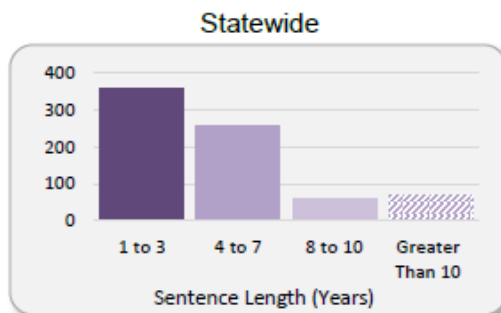


Most Severe Sentence

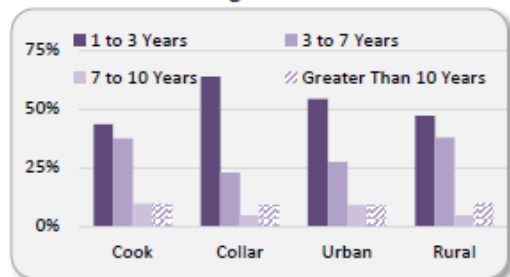


Sentence Type	2009 Average Sentence Imposed	2018 Average Sentence Imposed	Percent Change
Prison	4.6 years	5.1 years	+11%
Probation	2.1 Years	2.0 years	-2%

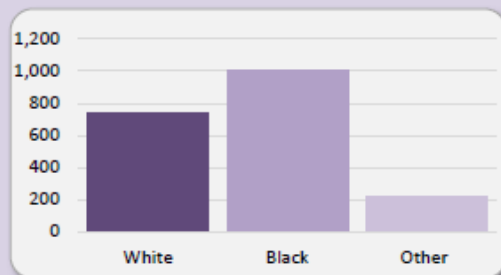
Prison Sentence Distribution (years)



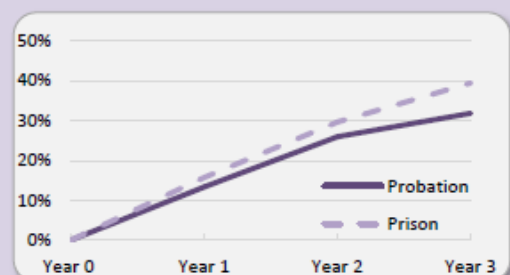
Regional



Racial Breakdown 2018 Convictions



Recidivism



Recidivism: convictions that occur within three years of (a) sentence to probation or (b) release from prison, counted in convictions' arrest year. Data from 2015 probation sentences and prison releases.

Calendar Year 2018 – Data Factsheet

Possession of Controlled Substance

720 ILCS 570/402

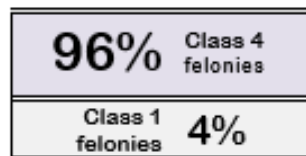
accounted for 13% of 2018's felony convictions

Arrests: 18,922 Convictions: 4,276 Court Supervision: 1,075

Trends



Conviction Class



Most Severe Sentence

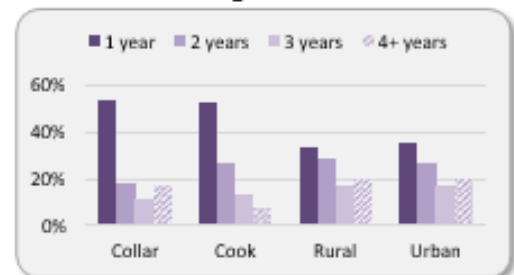


Sentence Type	2009 Average Sentence Imposed	2018 Average Sentence Imposed	Percent Change
Prison	2.2 years	2.1 years	-7%
Probation	2.1 years	2.0 years	-2%

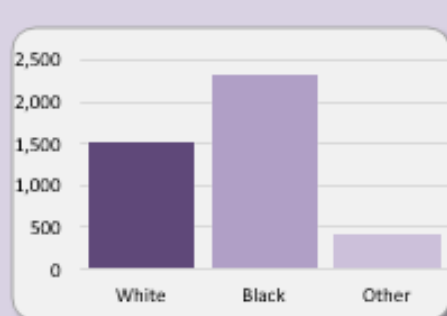
Prison Sentence Distribution (years)



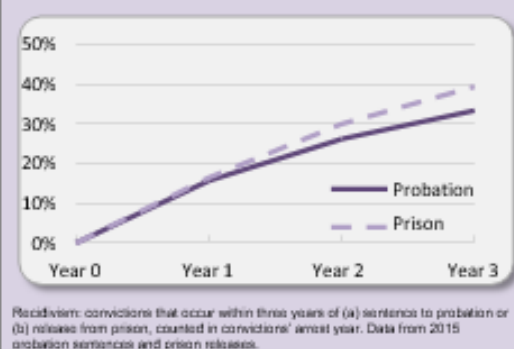
Regional



Racial Breakdown 2018 Convictions



Recidivism



Recidivism: convictions that occur within three years of (a) sentence to probation or (b) release from prison, counted in convictions' arrest year. Data from 2015 probation sentences and prison releases.

Conclusion

Pushing forward, SPAC will continue to work to produce user-friendly, understandable and relevant research and analysis to the executive and legislative decision-making processes, always with the goal of improving the outcomes produced by the Illinois criminal justice system. As always, we welcome constructive criticism and rigorous collaboration. Our members reflect the people who are responsible for the integrity of our system and they have never failed to actively engage and participate in our meetings or raise important questions. As the role of data in decision making continues to develop, SPAC will work to make sure that our members and our colleagues in the criminal justice policy arena are fully equipped with analysis that supports better outcomes and a more effective system to address the harms caused by crime and victimization.

Appendix – SPAC's Enabling Statute

(730 ILCS 5/5-8-8)

Sec. 5-8-8. Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council.

(a) Creation. There is created under the jurisdiction of the Governor the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council, hereinafter referred to as the Council.

(b) Purposes and goals. The purpose of the Council is to review sentencing policies and practices and examine how these policies and practices impact the criminal justice system as a whole in the State of Illinois. In carrying out its duties, the Council shall be mindful of and aim to achieve the purposes of sentencing in Illinois, which are set out in Section 1-1-2 of this Code:

(1) prescribe sanctions proportionate to the seriousness of the offenses and permit the recognition of differences in rehabilitation possibilities among individual offenders;

(2) forbid and prevent the commission of offenses;

(3) prevent arbitrary or oppressive treatment of persons adjudicated offenders or delinquents; and

(4) restore offenders to useful citizenship.

(c) Council composition.

(1) The Council shall consist of the following members:

(A) the President of the Senate, or his or her designee;

(B) the Minority Leader of the Senate, or his or her designee;

(C) the Speaker of the House, or his or her designee;

(D) the Minority Leader of the House, or his or her designee;

(E) the Governor, or his or her designee;

(F) the Attorney General, or his or her designee;

(G) two retired judges, who may have been circuit, appellate, or supreme court judges; retired judges shall be selected by the members of the Council designated in clauses (c) (1) (A) through (L);

(G-5) (blank);

(H) the Cook County State's Attorney, or his or her designee;

(I) the Cook County Public Defender, or his or her designee;

(J) a State's Attorney not from Cook County, appointed by the State's Attorney's Appellate Prosecutor;

(K) the State Appellate Defender, or his or her designee;

(L) the Director of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, or his or her designee;

(M) a victim of a violent felony or a representative of a crime victims' organization, selected by the members of the Council designated in clauses (c) (1) (A) through (L);

(N) a representative of a community-based

organization, selected by the members of the Council designated in clauses (c)(1)(A) through (L);

(O) a criminal justice academic researcher, to be selected by the members of the Council designated in clauses (c)(1)(A) through (L);

(P) a representative of law enforcement from a unit of local government to be selected by the members of the Council designated in clauses (c)(1)(A) through (L);

(Q) a sheriff outside of Cook County selected by the members of the Council designated in clauses (c)(1)(A) through (L); and

(R) ex-officio members shall include:

(i) the Director of Corrections, or his or her designee;

(ii) the Chair of the Prisoner Review Board, or his or her designee;

(iii) the Director of the Illinois State Police, or his or her designee;

(iv) the Director of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, or his or her designee; and

(v) the Cook County Sheriff, or his or her designee.

(1.5) The Chair and Vice Chair shall be elected from among its members by a majority of the members of the Council.

(2) Members of the Council who serve because of their public office or position, or those who are designated as members by such officials, shall serve only as long as they hold such office or position.

(3) Council members shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses incurred in their work for the Council.

(4) The Council may exercise any power, perform any function, take any action, or do anything in furtherance of its purposes and goals upon the appointment of a quorum of its members. The term of office of each member of the Council ends on the date of repeal of this amendatory Act of the 96th General Assembly.

(5) The Council shall determine the qualifications for and hire the Executive Director.

(d) Duties. The Council shall perform, as resources permit, duties including:

(1) Collect and analyze information including sentencing data, crime trends, and existing correctional resources to support legislative and executive action affecting the use of correctional resources on the State and local levels.

(2) Prepare criminal justice population projections annually, including correctional and community-based supervision populations.

(3) Analyze data relevant to proposed sentencing legislation and its effect on current policies or practices, and provide information to support evidence-based sentencing.

(4) Ensure that adequate resources and facilities are

available for carrying out sentences imposed on offenders and that rational priorities are established for the use of those resources. To do so, the Council shall prepare criminal justice resource statements, identifying the fiscal and practical effects of proposed criminal sentencing legislation, including, but not limited to, the correctional population, court processes, and county or local government resources.

(4.5) Study and conduct a thorough analysis of sentencing under Section 5-4.5-110 of this Code. The Sentencing Policy Advisory Council shall provide annual reports to the Governor and General Assembly, including the total number of persons sentenced under Section 5-4.5-110 of this Code, the total number of departures from sentences under Section 5-4.5-110 of this Code, and an analysis of trends in sentencing and departures. On or before December 31, 2022, the Sentencing Policy Advisory Council shall provide a report to the Governor and General Assembly on the effectiveness of sentencing under Section 5-4.5-110 of this Code, including recommendations on whether sentencing under Section 5-4.5-110 of this Code should be adjusted or continued.

(5) Perform such other studies or tasks pertaining to sentencing policies as may be requested by the Governor or the Illinois General Assembly.

(6) Perform such other functions as may be required by law or as are necessary to carry out the purposes and goals of the Council prescribed in subsection (b).

(7) Publish a report on the trends in sentencing for offenders described in subsection (b-1) of Section 5-4-1 of this Code, the impact of the trends on the prison and probation populations, and any changes in the racial composition of the prison and probation populations that can be attributed to the changes made by adding subsection (b-1) of Section 5-4-1 to this Code by Public Act 99-861.

(e) Authority.

(1) The Council shall have the power to perform the functions necessary to carry out its duties, purposes and goals under this Act. In so doing, the Council shall utilize information and analysis developed by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, and the Illinois Department of Corrections.

(2) Upon request from the Council, each executive agency and department of State and local government shall provide information and records to the Council in the execution of its duties.

(f) Report. The Council shall report in writing annually to the General Assembly, the Illinois Supreme Court, and the Governor.

(g) (Blank).

(Source: P.A. 100-3, eff. 1-1-18; 100-201, eff. 8-18-17; 101-279, eff. 8-9-19.)



EXECUTIVE ORDER

2019-09

**EXECUTIVE ORDER CREATING THE JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND OPPORTUNITY
INITIATIVE**

WHEREAS, Illinois has an opportunity to create a justice system that better reflects Illinois' values by focusing on increasing justice, equity, and opportunity in Illinois; and

WHEREAS, overincarceration has ripple effects on entire communities, particularly those that have been disproportionately affected by high incarceration rates as the result of a system that has disenfranchised communities of color; and

WHEREAS, boosting economic development in areas of the State that have been left behind by economic progress and improving access to professional licenses, state procurement opportunities, educational opportunities and housing will reduce recidivism and provide opportunities for people in the criminal justice system to return to their communities, obtain high-quality jobs and steer clear of crime after their release; and

WHEREAS, 45% of people released from prison recidivate, a clear indication that the Illinois prison system must do more to successfully rehabilitate people and prepare them to return to their communities after release by, among other steps, strengthening mental health treatment, effectively addressing substance abuse disorders, increasing job training and education programming in Illinois prisons; and

WHEREAS, the people in prison who are the most at risk of recidivating and most in need of services often do not receive those services; and

WHEREAS, increasing the use of high-quality, bias-free risk assessment tools will help judges and the Illinois Department of Corrections make decisions about sentencing and programming; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois Department of Corrections has recently faced significant lawsuits alleging discrimination, poor access to health care, and inadequate mental health treatment, demonstrating a clear need for higher-quality training for Illinois Department of Corrections staff and improvements in the services provided to people in the corrections system, changes that will make Illinois prisons safer and reduce the likelihood of recidivism; and

WHEREAS, women make up a growing percentage of Illinois' prison population have unique healthcare and familial needs; and

WHEREAS, while important progress has been made in addressing the needs of women incarcerated in Illinois, including the passage of a law that gives pregnant pretrial detainees an alternative to incarceration, more family-centered and trauma-informed policies are needed; and

WHEREAS, youth make up another unique prison population, and improving juvenile justice education facilities, prevention programming, and diversion opportunities will reduce the number of young people in Illinois prisons and better position those young people in prison for success post-release; and

WHEREAS, increasing judges' use of diversion programs, reducing the use of pretrial detention, implementing bond reform, reducing mandatory minimums, and implementing alternatives to incarceration will all play an important role in making sentencing in Illinois more equitable; and



WHEREAS, building trust between police officers and the communities they serve is a crucial part of criminal justice reform in Illinois, and reducing excessive force, racial profiling, civil asset forfeiture, and vehicle impoundment will all be necessary to implement effective, community-based policing; and

WHEREAS, gun violence is a scourge on Illinois communities and needs to be treated as a public health issue, and the State of Illinois can enhance gun violence prevention programs and improve firearm safety; and

WHEREAS, legalizing cannabis for adult use and ensuring licensing leads to equitable business ownership will help to right some of the wrongs created by the criminal justice system by providing economic opportunity for communities disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs; and

THEREFORE, I, JB Pritzker, Governor of Illinois, by virtue of the executive authority vested in me by Article V of the Constitution of the State of Illinois, hereby order as follows:

I. Definitions

As used in this Executive Order, “State Agency” means any office, department, agency, board, commission or authority of the Executive Branch of the State of Illinois under the jurisdiction of the Governor.

II. The Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative is Established

The Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative is established in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor to:

- a. Convene and create a collaborative environment, especially among stakeholders, State Agencies and the organizations they work with;
- b. Improve communications across State Agencies and ensure a coordinated, holistic effort to transform the criminal justice system and effective implementation of the necessary actions;
- c. Support research and pilot programs that will test groundbreaking efforts to reform the criminal justice system and provide data and analysis to assess program efficacy and guide new and different efforts; and
- d. Advise decision making to ensure the different branches of Illinois government work proactively to create a more fair and equitable criminal justice system.

III. The Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative Shall Report to the Office of the Governor

The Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative shall:

- a. Within 90 days of the effective date of this Executive Order, deliver a report to the Office of the Governor describing the goals and the deliverables for the first year of the Initiative; and
- b. On January 1 of each year, deliver a report to the Office of the Governor describing the accomplishments of the Initiative, as well as the opportunities and challenges the Initiative encounters, and the goals and deliverables for the upcoming year.





IV. The Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative Shall Collaborate with all State Agencies

The Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative shall interact with any State Agency. All State Agencies shall work cooperatively with the Initiative as needed to define and achieve the deliverables of the Initiative.

V. Savings Clause

Nothing in this Executive Order shall be construed to contravene any federal or State law or regulation. Nothing in this Executive Order shall affect or alter the existing statutory powers of any State Agency or be construed as a reassignment or reorganization of any State Agency.

VI. Prior Executive Orders

This Executive Order supersedes any contrary provision of any other prior Executive Order.

VII. Severability Clause

If any part of this Executive Order is found to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect. The provisions of this Executive Order are severable.

VIII. Effective Date

This Executive Order shall take effect immediately upon its filing with the Secretary of State.

JB Pritzker, Governor

Issued by Governor: February 11, 2019

Filed with Secretary of State: February 11, 2019

1 AN ACT concerning criminal law.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Resentencing Task Force Act.

6 Section 5. Purpose; findings. The State is committed to
7 ensuring that sentences of imprisonment continue to advance
8 the interest of justice and promote public safety. The task
9 force is created by recognizing that in this State, once a
10 person is sentenced, there are few meaningful opportunities
11 for release.

12 Section 10. Resentencing Task Force; creation. There is
13 created the Resentencing Task Force. The task force shall
14 study innovative ways to reduce the prison population in
15 Illinois from initiations of resentencing motions filed by
16 incarcerated individuals, State's Attorneys, the Illinois
17 Department of Corrections and the judicial branch.

18 Section 15. Task Force Members.

19 (a) The Resentencing Task Force shall consist of the
20 following members:

21 (1) a member of the House of Representatives appointed

1 by the Speaker of the House;

2 (2) a member of the House of Representatives appointed
3 by the Minority Leader of the House;

4 (3) a member of the Senate appointed by the President
5 of the Senate;

6 (4) a member of the Senate appointed by the Minority
7 Leader of the Senate;

8 (5) a member appointed by a statewide agency that
9 represents State's Attorneys and is elected to a county of
10 under one million people or his or her designee;

11 (6) a member appointed by a statewide agency that
12 represents State's Attorneys;

13 (7) a member appointed by the Office of the State
14 Appellate Defender;

15 (8) a member appointed by an organization that
16 advocates for victims' rights;

17 (9) a member appointed by an organization that
18 advocates for sentencing reform;

19 (10) a member appointed by the Illinois Sentencing
20 Policy Advisory Council;

21 (11) 3 retired judges appointed by the Governor, each
22 from a different judicial circuit or judicial district;

23 (12) a member of law enforcement appointed by an
24 association representing law enforcement;

25 (13) a member representing the private criminal
26 defense bar;

1 (14) a member appointed by the Public Defender's
2 Association; and

3 (15) a member appointed by the Department of
4 Corrections.

5 (b) The task force shall meet no less than 4 times and
6 shall provide recommendations for legislation to the General
7 Assembly and the Governor's Office on or before July 1, 2022.

8 (c) The members of the task force shall serve without
9 compensation.

10 (d) The Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council shall
11 provide administrative and technical support for the task
12 force and are responsible for appointing a chairperson and
13 ensuring the requirements of the task force are met.

14 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
15 becoming law.

1 AN ACT concerning criminal law.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Code of Criminal Procedure of 1963 is
5 amended by adding Section 123 as follows:

6 (725 ILCS 5/123 new)

7 Sec. 123. Motion to resentence by the People.

8 (a) The purpose of sentencing is to advance public safety
9 through punishment, rehabilitation, and restorative justice.
10 By providing a means to reevaluate a sentence after some time
11 has passed, the General Assembly intends to provide the
12 State's Attorney and the court with another tool to ensure
13 that these purposes are achieved.

14 (b) At any time upon the recommendation of the State's
15 Attorney of the county in which the defendant was sentenced,
16 the State's Attorney may petition the sentencing court or the
17 sentencing court's successor to resentence the offender if the
18 original sentence no longer advances the interests of justice.
19 The sentencing court or the sentencing court's successor may
20 resentence the offender if it finds that the original sentence
21 no longer advances the interests of justice.

22 (c) Upon the receipt of a petition for resentencing, the
23 court may resentence the defendant in the same manner as if the


1 offender had not previously been sentenced; however, the new
2 sentence, if any, may not be greater than the initial
3 sentence.

4 (d) The court may consider postconviction factors,
5 including, but not limited to, the inmate's disciplinary
6 record and record of rehabilitation while incarcerated;
7 evidence that reflects whether age, time served, and
8 diminished physical condition, if any, have reduced the
9 inmate's risk for future violence; and evidence that reflects
10 changed circumstances since the inmate's original sentencing
11 such that the inmate's continued incarceration no longer
12 serves the interests of justice. Credit shall be given for
13 time served.

14 (e) Victims shall be afforded all rights as outlined in
15 the Rights of Crime Victims and Witnesses Act.

16 (f) A resentencing under this Section shall not reopen the
17 defendant's conviction to challenges that would otherwise be
18 barred.

19 (g) Nothing in this Section shall be construed to limit
20 the power of the Governor under the Constitution to grant a
21 reprieve, commutation of sentence, or pardon.



WHY AM I ALWAYS BEING RESEARCHED?

A GUIDEBOOK FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS,
RESEARCHERS, AND FUNDERS TO HELP US GET
FROM INSUFFICIENT UNDERSTANDING TO MORE
AUTHENTIC TRUTH

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT

**CHICAGO
BEYOND→**

EQUITY SERIES, VOLUME ONE

WHY AM I ALWAYS BEING RESEARCHED?

CHICAGO BEYOND EQUITY SERIES, VOLUME ONE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If evidence matters, we must care how it gets made.

As an impact investor that backs the fight for youth equity, Chicago Beyond has partnered with and invested in community organizations working towards providing more equitable access and opportunity to young people across Chicago. In many cases, we have also invested in sizable research projects to help our community partners grow the impact of their work. Our hope is that the research will generate learnings to impact more youth in our city and nationwide, and arm our partners with “evidence” they need to go after more funding for what is working.

Through the course of our investing, another sort of evidence emerged: evidence that the power dynamic between community organizations, researchers, and funders blocks information that could drive better decision-making and fuel more investment in communities most in need. This power dynamic creates an uneven field on which research is designed and allows unintended bias to seep into how knowledge is generated.

There are many voices in the social impact space who have begun to call out the power dynamic. “Grantmaking is not trusting of the community, and the community is not trusting of funders,” Edgar Villanueva, author of *Decolonizing Wealth*, has said. In annual letters, the President of the Ford Foundation, Darren Walker, pushes funders to reckon with privilege, acknowledging that communities closest to the problems possess unique insight into the solutions. The power dynamic in the social impact space is impeding our collective efforts to create a better world.

Right or wrong, research can drive decisions. If we do not address the power dynamic in the creation of research, at best, we are driving decision-making from partial truths. At worst, we are generating inaccurate information that ultimately does more harm than good in our communities. This is why we must care about how research is created.

In this publication, we offer “how” we can begin to level the playing field and reckon with unintended bias when it comes to research. Chicago Beyond created this guidebook to help shift the power dynamic and the way community organizations, researchers, and funders uncover knowledge together. It is an equity-based approach to research that offers one way in which we can restore communities as authors and owners. It is based on the steps and missteps of Chicago Beyond’s own experience funding community organizations and research, and the courageous and patient efforts of our partners, the youth they serve, and others with whom we have learned.

This guide is intended to:

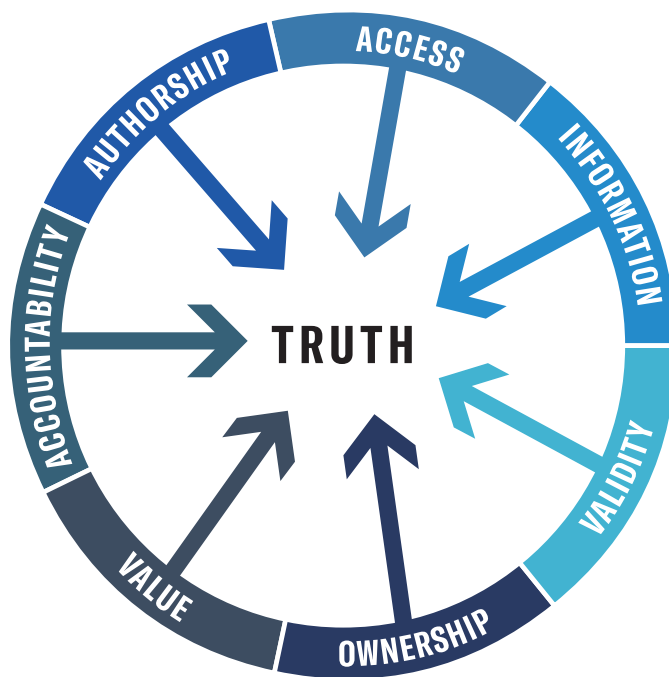
- ① Fuel community organizations to not only participate in research on their own terms, but to lead it
- ② Support researchers in recognizing their immense influence and unintended bias in shaping the questions asked, and the inputs used to answer them
- ③ Inspire funders to ask hard questions about their agendas, unlock more meaningful knowledge, and therefore achieve greater impact

The guide begins by naming seven inequities standing in the way of impact, each held in place by power dynamics.

1. **Access:** Could we be missing out on community wisdom because conversations about research are happening without community meaningfully present at the table?
2. **Information:** Can we effectively partner to get to the full truth if information about research options, methods, inputs, costs, benefits, and risks are not shared?
3. **Validity:** Could we be accepting partial truths as the full picture, because we are not valuing community organizations and community members as valid experts?
4. **Ownership:** Are we getting incomplete answers by valuing research processes that take from, rather than build up, community ownership?
5. **Value:** What value is generated, for whom, and at what cost?
6. **Accountability:** Are we holding funders and researchers accountable if research designs create harm or do not work?
7. **Authorship:** Whose voice is shaping the narrative and is the community fully represented?

We at Chicago Beyond see this publication as a start—it is by no means the answer. We wrestle regularly with operating in this world while envisioning an equitable one.

We ask you to join us in questioning, wrestling with bias, and pushing against “how it has always been done.” We need to collectively move from insufficient understanding to more authentic truth. The stakes are too high for us to do otherwise. ■



Seven inequities held in place by power, seven opportunities for change.

VOICES OF SUPPORT



“We are not asking the right questions. To reverse the cycle of oppression, we must understand the intersectional complexity of personal responsibility, programmatic acts of charity, and the interplay of systems and policies that are designed to deny opportunity. To evaluate an afterschool program absent of intersectional context is misleading and provides answers that are insufficient, and often useless to transforming the lives of people living in the community. This guide pushes the conversation, which is exactly what the field needs.”

MICHAEL MCAFFEE, PRESIDENT AND CEO, POLICYLINK

“When Dr. King was assassinated, in the 60s, we were doing studies in North Lawndale and Garfield, and here it is almost sixty years later. We have been studied for years and years and years—what is the positive outcome we are going to see for these studies we are always doing? Will it be in these young men’s lifetimes? While they are still in their twenties?”

KAREN JACKSON, DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, LAWDALE CHRISTIAN LEGAL CENTER



Chicago Beyond has just handed us an incredible tool for funders, researchers and organization leaders. This pushes the reset button and allows us to rethink evaluation. And let’s face it, the problems we aim to alleviate are too complicated for us to approach solutions without examining how we are entering the work. This tool gives us questions to use in our everyday work. Questions like: What if building trust is the variant that indelibly strengthens our outcomes? How can funders come to the table recognizing our own power to influence, shape and therefore limit the results? And what if funders had to use the same evaluation approaches and metrics on ourselves that we force others to submit to? So, let’s rethink. Let’s come to the table recognizing the power source is the ORGANIZATION. They aren’t the subject, they are the research designer.”

ANGELIQUE POWER, PRESIDENT, THE FIELD FOUNDATION OF ILLINOIS

“For our own kids, we understand the context of their lives, their trajectory over time, and what ‘safe’ and ‘happy’ and ‘realizing potential’ look like in the long term. But for kids in social services, we typically create some limited data set of how they interacted with one specific service at some specific point in time or a series of isolated services, and then claim we are ‘evidence-based.’ It is time to support these kids as we support our own kids and these families as we support our family. Our goal should be to help them realize their potential. It is time to change what we do, and don’t, accept as evidence. Is the evidence we are working from the truth of the people studied, or did it get imposed on them? Is it teaching us about how we support full life and well-being?”

PAULA WOLFF, DIRECTOR, ILLINOIS JUSTICE PROJECT



This guide offers thoughtful advice to practitioners, researchers, and funders on how to combine resources to conduct high-quality research. Importantly, the guide advances the idea that rigorous research methods, when applied appropriately, can help us *all* learn whether interventions are producing the hoped-for benefits.”

KIM CASSEL, DIRECTOR OF EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY, ARNOLD VENTURES



“The questions we are asked, where do they come from? Whose lab are we in? When I was doing my masters I had to do research too. The starting question was never ‘how is this going to benefit the people being researched?’”

**ASIAHA BUTLER, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT,
RESIDENT ASSOCIATION OF GREATER ENGLEWOOD**



Photo credit: WTTW

“There is without a doubt a valuable role for outside evaluation. But—outside evaluation can be problematic for communities and for community programs when there are agendas at work beyond their own. We need to remember the first priority is to produce something that is not just accessible to, but actually valuable to, the community. This guide is such an important project for this reason.”



UNMI SONG, PRESIDENT, LLOYD A. FRY FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

A guidebook for community organizations, researchers and funders to help us get from insufficient understanding to more authentic truth.

In the hometown of urban research, Jonte asks aloud “why am I always being researched?” His peers are in three studies at once. A grandmother on his block, neighbors, and staff at nonprofits serving him, remember being in studies, too.

Jonte is one of thousands in Chicago who, over decades, have participated in research studies with price tags in the millions, all in the name of societal change. And yet, the fruits of those studies have infrequently nourished the neighborhoods where their seeds were planted. Instead, there remains “not enough evidence” about what works, and a deep distrust between community, funder, and researcher, driven by systemic injustices: racism, segregation and disinvestment.

And then, there are questions behind how evidence gets made. What if the structures we use to find what works to improve communities is negatively impacted by the same power dynamics that have propped up those systemic injustices?

At its core, this is an interaction of individuals, human beings, each with their own biases. What if our research questions are unintentionally rooted in bias? Have we stopped to consider if our inputs are unfairly affecting our intended outcomes? ■





— How does it feel to be black in America?
— They don't even know you but they hate
— You or they Scared of Ya.
— At the age of 10 they label you
— a Super Predator.
— Mama's baby, Daddy's? Maybe, if
— he wasn't locked up Doing half of
— 80 years for trying to feed his kid
— the best way he could. Because he's
— Broke and he's black and he's
— Stuck in the hood. It's just
— Studies to You but to me it's
— Real. No matter how much I
— tell You! You will never know
— how it feels.

Jonte

PRIVILEGE SHAPES KNOWLEDGE

As an impact investor that backs the fight for youth equity, Chicago Beyond has partnered with and invested in community organizations working towards providing more equitable access and opportunity to young people across Chicago. In many cases, we have also invested in sizable research projects to help our partners “validate” what is working, as that evidence may support further investment, reaching more youth, and spreading what our partners have learned.

In the course of our work, we have seen community organizations with deep expertise contribute to how research gets produced, researchers with a desire to work with community organizations to define outcomes, and funders committed to advocating for a central role at the research table for community organizations.

On the flip side, we have heard program staff struggle with what the proposed research design means for their relationships in their communities and with their families. We have heard social workers wonder why validating their work to those with power starts with inputs that have structural racism built in to them. We have seen funders, researchers and community organizations jump to action when research protocols or timelines are at risk, but silent when research does not produce a high quality outcome for the community. We have heard community organizations wonder why researchers who are disconnected from their communities have the privilege of telling them what works and what does not. And in listening to those we serve, Jonte, a young man in a program we invest in unforgettably asked, “why am I always being researched?”

We recognize our privilege at Chicago Beyond as funders of both community organizations and researchers, and with that the power to shape research and the resulting knowledge produced. Therefore, we recognize the need for us to check our privilege, our power. At Chicago Beyond, we devote considerable focus to identifying and counteracting our own personal biases through anti-racist trainings, calling out inequities, and being in communities. We are a funder whose leadership is majority people of color. Today, our relationships with community partners are intensely human. We dedicate a team of individuals to our partners to provide thought-partnership, strategic support, a sounding board, and more. Our partnerships are multi-year, and are not contingent on research outcomes or compliance checklists. When the research conducted does not match the intent of the research, we look for our accountability even though the power dynamic might have suggested that a funder like Chicago Beyond does not have any.

SO WHAT?

Right or wrong, research can drive decision-making. If we do not address the power dynamic in the creation of research, at best, we are generating partial truths to inform decision-making in the social impact space. At worst, we are generating inaccurate information that ultimately does more harm than good in our communities. This is why we care about how research is created.

This guide was designed to help us level the playing field and reckon with unintended bias when it comes to the research. It is about shifting the way community organizations, researchers, and funders ask for, produce, and use knowledge. It is about restoring communities as experts. It calls on us all to stop, recognize, and question bias. It is an equity-based approach to research. It is based on the steps and missteps of Chicago Beyond's own experience funding community organizations and research, and the courageous and patient efforts of our partners, the youth they serve, and others with whom we have learned.

Chicago Beyond created this guide because we see the opportunity for a new path. Shifting the existing power dynamic offers a way forward: From not enough evidence on what works, to more meaningful knowledge that supports more meaningful action.



Color of Chicago Beyond's Experience:

In the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago, decades of hosting research studies have been punctuated by disinvestment. Researchers are not popular, and are rarely seen as separate from their institution and its racial history. When the leadership of one of Chicago Beyond's community partners determined that a rigorous research study was the best way to make the case for change within the juvenile justice system, it brought up fierce distrust among their staff. To reach a more authentic truth in service of change, we addressed the power dynamic in these ways:

1. Engaged with our community partner at a human level and built trust.

- › Broke bread and spent time sitting on the stoop, as human beings, sharing our hopes and fears.
- › Participated in a Peace Circle, and asked that the research team participate in a Peace Circle separately. This opened the door for the community organization to build trust with us and the researchers.
- › Continued to nurture the relationships we built and hold today.

2. Supported access to information on the community organization's own terms, and helped inform the organization and community members

- › Funded access to research based on the community organization's learning goals.
- › Sat with the community organization's Executive Director and the research partner to help the community organization get informed about options for research and the related risks. Still, it was not until later, as our relationship developed, that we were trusted enough by enough of the community organization for them to truly recognize what the risks and costs were, and it was not until later that the research felt "real" to the Executive Director.
- › Understanding that it takes time and multiple engagements to address the information imbalance, we connected the community organization with another nonprofit going through a similar type of research to share their perspective.

continued on page 14 >



3. Followed our partner's lead on research design and supported their ownership of the research study.

- Before setting study design and outcomes, together we determined the primary audiences for the final output of the evaluation, to use the needs of those audiences to inform the study, and to cultivate a network of support. The intention was to ensure the final outcomes would be helpful to our community partner, and lead to the systemic change they hope for.
- Built upon the community organization's vision for an "Evaluation Committee" comprised of staff members from all parts of the community organization, as well as researchers, and Chicago Beyond. The group incorporated the community organization's goals and questions into the study, made critical decisions about the study's design and is shaping study outcomes.
- With guidance from the Evaluation Committee, we designed a consent process to inform participants about the research in accessible language before asking if they would participate.

4. Supported our partner's study rollout and helped address intangible costs.

- Worked with the Executive Director to map stakeholders and support communication within the organization and with critical organizational partners.
- Worked with the community organization to develop internal tools to help the organization grow and best leverage its team and their skills.

5. Embraced messiness, interruption and being uncomfortable. Put accountability, not comfort first.

- Changed the funding timeline substantially to allow time to understand and prepare, emotionally and organizationally, for the execution of a rigorous evaluation.

WHAT WE MEAN BY EQUITY-BASED APPROACH TO RESEARCH

At Chicago Beyond, we believe that research can drive decision-making. For that reason, we also believe that the creation of research should begin from a place of mutual understanding between community organizations, researchers, and funders. Those involved in the research design must recognize unintended bias to arrive at an authentic truth that does the most good for those being researched. ■



"Researchers have to understand the reality and the culture of the participating population. For example, asking a question as simple as, '*Do you put your kids to bed?*' will mean different things to different people. And, may mean something totally different to you now than when you were younger. Growing up, my mom told me to 'put my butt in bed,' and that's what I did. If she were asked that question back then, she might say, no, but the reality is, she did put me to bed because she was home caring for her family making sure we were fed, bathed, and in the bed. She would probably answer 'no' because the generalized version is putting your kids to bed, reading to them until they fall asleep, and turning off the light. Researchers have to understand these many nuances to truly assess the population."

→ **SHELDON SMITH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER, THE DOVETAIL PROJECT**



“When was the last time you were at a gathering and the ‘subjects’ of a study talked about it in glowing terms, because the research helped the practical work?”

**RAMI NASHASHIBI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
INNER-CITY MUSLIM ACTION NETWORK (IMAN)**



Chicago and Beyond: The History of Urban Research

Chicago changed how urban studies are done.

What is the history of research, in Chicago, nationally, and beyond? Rather than a partnership of equals, there is a legacy of researcher “brains” and community “brawn.” In many communities, the remembered history is that when the community and research institution interact, the institution benefits. Countless research surveys mine communities for the raw material of lived experiences, without yielding much for the community—or worse. Yet, there remains a lack of evidence about the value of interventions for those from whom the most has been taken. That “lack of evidence” justifies investing less still. Community organizations often cannot afford access either to large datasets or to the kinds of researchers that institutions attract, and their own data and stories have limited influence on decision-making until those institutions authenticate them. Like most people outside of universities, community organizations may not be aware of the options in research, or what they may risk for scientific rigor. Some may not dare to assert themselves, internalizing biases about who the experts are.

Today, in Chicago, we see new opportunity to shape urban research, for greater equity, and greater impact.



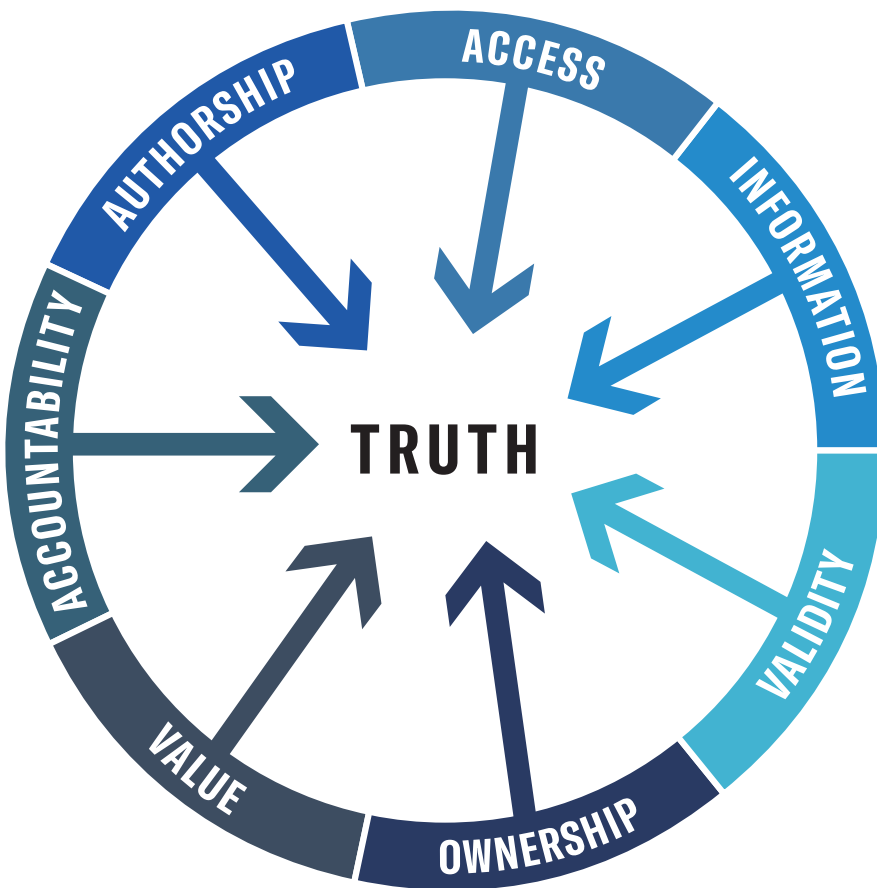
PEOPLE SAY ‘IF YOU’RE NOT AT THE TABLE, YOU’RE ON THE MENU.’

It's more than that. It is how you are at the table. If you don't decide what's on the menu, if you are invited after the menu is set, you are still a guest. We as researchers get funded to be hosts. But in truth, the community should be the hosts, we are guests."

ANGELA ODOMS-YOUNG, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
UIC INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH RESEARCH AND POLICY

HOW THIS GUIDEBOOK IS ORGANIZED

This guide begins by naming seven inequities held in place by power, and calls out how they get in the way of truth and impact.



With each inequity, there are suggestions for potential ways forward for community organizations, funders, and researchers.

This is followed by specific questions in the guide to help community organizations, researchers, and funders relate to one another differently, for greater impact. The guide organizes these questions from start to finish of a research study, so users can add questions to their individual, or collective, agendas at the appropriate time.

This guide is a start—it is by no means the answer. We wrestle regularly with operating in this world, while envisioning an equitable one. ■

**SEVEN INEQUITIES
HELD IN PLACE
BY POWER,
SEVEN
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR CHANGE**

Starting commitment

The challenge we face...

The work of changing “how it’s always been done” is hard. The most important thing for all of us is human engagement and a continuous effort to check our biases. Making technical changes without this commitment to openness will not work.

Community organizations, researchers, and funders can...

- Bring awareness to your own biases and assumptions.
- Start with this commitment and find new ways to relate to each other.

This guide can help.





ACCESS.

THE CHALLENGE

Access to creating knowledge about communities and the programs that serve them is controlled by people outside those communities, who also often control the questions asked.

Conversations about research often happen without community organizations or community at the table, or on an “invitation only” basis on others’ terms.

THE IMPLICATION

When a voice is missing from the table, the answers we get are insufficient. We may perpetuate bias, and fail to find out.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Community organizations can...

- Recognize that the power dynamic makes it tempting to compromise what matters for the chance to produce research evidence.
- Where possible, speak up to participate—or not participate—in research on your own terms, and shape research to help your community.

Researchers can...

- Design research to serve community purpose.
- Not participate in research that perpetuates the researcher as “brains” and community as “brawn” stereotype.
- Insist that conversations about community happen with community.

Funders can...

- Fund research that community organizations want, need, and are able to lead. Fund research that informs action on root causes.
- Not fund research where the questions asked and the approach hold power dynamics in place.
- Insist that conversations about community happen with community.



Pictured: North Lawndale

➔ 02

INFORMATION.

THE CHALLENGE

Information about research options, methods, inputs, costs, benefits and risks often reside with researchers and funders, but less often with community. Often, the community does not have enough information to contribute their wisdom to which questions are asked and why, what outcomes are the focus, and what data sources are used—or to give informed consent to participate in the first place.

THE IMPLICATION

When one party does not have full information, it is difficult to partner effectively or to get to the full truth.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Community organizations can...

- Get informed. Know your options, know your rights, know the risks.
- Seek and use information to ask questions about methods and inputs.

Researchers can...

- Share information, recognizing that without it, the community organization cannot actually consent to the research.
- Have reciprocal exchange about methods and inputs.

Funders can...

- Ensure accountability for the community organization to understand the options and the risks.



➔ 03

VALIDITY.

THE CHALLENGE

Community organizations and members are often viewed as credible sources when talking about the community, but they are not viewed as voices with authority to sway those with power. The institutions, frameworks, methods and data sources seen as most authoritative and valid are often far from community reality.

THE IMPLICATION

When outside experts hold the authority to produce and interpret knowledge, we diminish the value of community voice. Without that community wisdom, we accept partial truths as the full picture.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Community organizations can...

- Value the validity of your own voices at the table, especially on the questions, the inputs to answer the questions, and how participants experience the research.
- Build relationship with the researcher. Check partial truths.

Researchers can...

- Recognize how the research frameworks, process and inputs reinforce power dynamics, and bring your creativity to making change.
- Build relationship with the community organization.
- Check partial truths.

Funders can...

- Be accountable for what questions the research you fund asks, and what processes and inputs it is (and is not) validating.
- Create accountability for authentic engagement between community and researchers. This will check partial truths.



➔ 04

OWNERSHIP.

THE CHALLENGE

Community organizations often cede critical decisions about how the study operates, what to measure, how study tools are developed, and what participants experience, because they do not feel they have equal ownership in the research. This is solidified in legal agreements and permissions, which may say that the community organization cannot access the data itself, does not own data produced by the study, or must seek permission to speak about the research.

THE IMPLICATION

Without shared ownership, the process of research can take from, rather than build up, the community, and the inputs and answers are incomplete.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Community organizations can...

- Recognize that the power dynamic makes it tempting to cede ownership.
- Build your ownership of your study, which starts with knowing what you want to learn, and why. It is likely that your organization has the most at stake.

Researchers can...

- Invite co-ownership of research, in your processes and legal agreements.

Funders can...

- Set expectations for co-ownership of research, in processes and legal agreements.



VALUE.

THE CHALLENGE

Research often fails to teach us what is working or produce value for the community.

At the same time, research often comes at a high tangible and intangible cost. Community organizations and communities shoulder financial and relational costs that are not explicit, visible, or compensated.

THE IMPLICATION

Uneven accounting allows investment to be high while impact is low.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Community organizations can...

- Get aware of the potential costs—including intangible costs to your participants, organization and community—and advocate for a full accounting.
- Get clear and speak up on how research can produce value for your community.

Researchers can...

- Recognize the full cost of the research—including intangible costs to participants, community organization, and community—and find ways to support it.
- Shape research so producing value for the community is central.

Funders can...

- Account for the full cost of the research—including costs to recruit additional participants, intangible costs borne by participants, staffing at the community organization—and support these costs.
- Insist on clarity: How will the research benefit the community? According to whom?



➔ 06

ACCOUNTABILITY.

THE CHALLENGE

Often, funders and researchers choose whether or not to take responsibility and make changes when the way research is designed unintentionally creates harm or does not work, while the community organization and community bear the greatest risk.

Community organizations have to prove their effectiveness and fidelity, while funders and researchers are exempt from the same scrutiny and vulnerability.

THE IMPLICATION

Without accountability, trust is limited, and the work cannot be as bold. Worse, communities can be harmed.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Community organizations can...

- Build trust-based relationships with the other entities. Hold researchers with whom you have built trust accountable.
- Identify and mitigate risks to you and to your stakeholders.

Researchers can...

- Build trust-based relationships with the other entities. Be accountable to understand the context.
- Own your role in missteps.
- Help identify and mitigate risks.

Funders can...

- Build trust-based relationships with the other entities. Be flexible in timelines so trust can develop. Be accountable to understand the context.
- Own your role in missteps.
- Help identify and mitigate risks.

➔ 07

AUTHORSHIP.

THE CHALLENGE

Often, the power dynamic lifts up the voices of researchers and funders to shape the narrative and pushes down the voices of the community. Racial dynamics between white researchers and funders, and communities of color, contribute to the imbalance. Funders are often cast as “outside of the work,” and researchers as objectively neutral and merely “observing the work.” This does not account for the biases and perspectives every person brings to the work.

When data is analyzed and meaning is derived from the research, the power dynamic often mutes voices of those who are marginalized.

THE IMPLICATION

When we restrict authorship and ignore bias, it allows incorrect meanings to be drawn.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Community organizations can...

- Recognize that the power dynamic makes it tempting to cede interpretation and presentation of the results.
- Participate in how results are made into meaning, and shared. Is it contextualized? Can you hear your participants?

Researchers can...

- Invite co-ownership in contextualizing and sharing results. Analyze and frame data with an equity lens for greater impact.

Funders can...

- Set expectations for co-ownership of contextualizing and sharing results. Create accountability for an equity lens for greater impact.

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A NOTE ON SOURCES

The content here draws on Chicago Beyond's role in the power dynamic, experiences with our community and research partners, and experiences others have shared.

We credit any wisdom here to the patience and courage of those we have worked with and learned from.

While there does not yet seem to be a consistent practice or set of protocols for an equity-based approach to research, we have learned from several sources of wisdom in addition to experience: **ancient and indigenous approaches to knowledge; systems thinking; community-based participatory research; design thinking; racial equity and cultural awareness; epistemology.**

This guide can inform research and its close cousin, evaluation, but uses the word "research" throughout. ■

A close-up portrait of John Rich, an older man with short, graying hair and a mustache. He is wearing black-rimmed glasses and a dark, textured jacket over a plaid shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with some architectural elements.

“We have to try to see from participants’ perspectives, to understand the impact of what we are doing.”

JOHN RICH, MD, DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR
NONVIOLENCE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC HEALTH, DREXEL UNIVERSITY,
CO-FOUNDER OF HEALING HURT PEOPLE

FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Before you start: Should we do research?

Research can be empowering, overwhelming, motivating, exhausting, and more. For a community organization, giving a second thought to why your organization should take on a research evaluation—beyond the notion that data drive funding—can enable your organization to not only participate in a study, but to guide it on your own terms. This makes it more likely to produce knowledge that helps, rather than harms, your mission.

Consider some of the benefits community organizations have gotten from research:

New knowledge.

- Access to data about program participants they might not otherwise have, building motivation for staff who can better see their direct impact through this information.
- Better understanding of how the program is working, what parts of the program are working best, or which participants are best served. Sometimes called an “implementation evaluation,” this research can help organizations figure out what is core to the program and if it is being delivered as intended. These types of learnings have helped community organizations improve how they recruit instructors or teachers, how they recruit participants, what parts of the program to focus on more, or how they measure program quality so that what matters most, happens most.

“Validating” the model.

- Perceived validation from an external person or organization of whether the program is doing what they believe it is doing, with those they intended to serve. Sometimes called an “outcomes evaluation,” this research can provide an evidence base from an independent source.
- Ability to communicate to philanthropy the value of the program.
- Data to drive their ability to apply for government funding.

Preparing for growth.

- If the organization wanted to try growing the program, standardizing it, or building program infrastructure, committing to research and the pressure of a research timeline can force the organization to make these activities a priority.

Along with the benefits, there have also been costs, such as:

Hidden costs of implementing the research study.

- Research can change the day-to-day processes within a community organization. For example, organizations have had to close the door on providing services to some young people for an extended period, or have had to move from a first-come-first-served model to over-recruiting and then selecting and rejecting participants by lottery, to build up a big enough group of people in the research study (some types of research require a big group of study participants in order to attribute impact to a program).
- Research took much more work and time from program staff than the community organization expected.
- The experience of the research reinforced a sense of powerlessness because the researchers were perceived as “the experts,” or triggered memories of previous exploitative interactions with institutions.

Lost energy and time due to gaps in understanding.

- For example, researchers did not understand the community organization’s recruitment process, and the community organization did not understand the assumptions in the researchers’ math, when setting the recruitment target for the research.

Unmet expectations.

- The research study did not show effectiveness. Only a fraction of randomized controlled trials of interventions—across business, medicine, education, and employment—show a positive impact compared to usual services without the intervention. (You can find more detail on this in the piece from Arnold Ventures, formerly The Laura and John Arnold Foundation, listed in the Bibliography. “Randomized controlled trials” are defined on page 37).

- The research study did not show effectiveness because of a problem with the research design. Many studies are not designed well enough to draw a conclusion of whether the program “worked.” For example, a research study could fail to capture the impact of a program because that impact shows up over a much longer timeframe, or across a broader ecosystem, than was feasible to study, or because there were not enough study participants for the research to attribute impact to the program.
- The community organization expected the research would explain how (not just whether) the program worked to help them scale up.
- The research measured an outdated program model because the program evolved while the study design was fixed.
- Easy-to-measure metrics did not capture what mattered to the program, or captured injustices beyond the control of the program or its participants. For example, research comparing arrest rates could capture increases in neighborhood policing, outside of the control of a neighborhood program.
- Even after a very successful study, there continued to be a lot of work and a large gap in time to get funded. ■

This guide, and understanding how other community organizations are using research to serve their justice mission, can help you navigate the risks and make your decision about whether to do research now, or not.

Organizations have said “no” to doing research even where the funding for it was available, for example, because their partners or participants were tired of being researched.

If you do decide to participate in research, there are a range of ways to begin. Your research can draw on multiple approaches, depending on where you see benefit in an external perspective or voice, and where your wisdom and capabilities lie. Like all people, individual researchers may be biased towards approaches they are familiar with, and their emphasis on first building trust with your organization will vary.

It is important you get informed. Where you feel you can, engage with funders and researchers and speak up. When you do this, you further relationships and mutual accountability. **This guide can travel the journey with you. ■**



1.

KNOW YOUR ROLE, KNOW THE RISKS

EQUITY IN HOW YOU START

a. You are in charge of what you want to learn

Owning your research starts with knowing what you want to learn, and why. It is likely that your organization has the most at stake. Your learning agenda can be an asset, and it is yours. Before jumping in, conduct an exercise that has you asking, “what if?” Research can change the day-to-day processes within a community organization. For example, organizations have had to close the door on providing services to some young people for an extended period, or have had to move from a first-come-first-served model to over-recruiting and then selecting and rejecting participants by lottery, to build up a big enough group of people in the research study (some types of research require a big group of study participants in order to attribute impact to a program).

- 🕒 **Your goals for the research.** Start with fill-in-the-blank statements. On a blank sheet of paper, write down a few outcomes that you would like to see at the end of your research project. Consider: What are the questions you want to answer? What is your purpose of “filling in the blanks” and answering these questions? How do the answers support your goals as an organization? Should the sentences focus not only on individual change but on interpersonal change, change to families, or community change, to honor the work you do? You can share these statements with researchers when you start working together.

➔ For example... “First, we want to write strong applications for state government funding for violence prevention, so we want to say our program reduces participants’ violent behavior outside of the program by [percentage/measure], citing a rigorous outside evaluation. Second, we want to show that it is not just about the participants, but also the families of participants that grow stronger through our program and become advocates of change. Third, we would like to identify early indicators that affect whether a participant will complete the program or not. ”

Organizations have found research useful in day-to-day work when it identifies early indicators of the overall goal, if staff or participants can affect those indicators. Organizations have also found it useful to ask staff: What 3-4 pieces of information would help you to do your job better?

- 🕒 **Your target audience for the research.** The type of data you need to “fill in the blanks,” whether small scale self-collected data or data from a large scale randomized controlled trial, depends on your audience. Are you looking to improve the effectiveness of the work, and would this require making changes to services along the way? Are you looking to evaluate outcomes to make the case to funders—what type of funders? Are you looking to establish a case for change to a specific government entity?

Next, get to know the research partner and what they are bringing to the table:

- **Researchers' openness to building trust.** When you meet researchers, look for the foundations of a trusted relationship. For many community organizations, the instinct based on previous experience is 'never give data to someone I don't really know.' Some community members remember exploitative or unethical interactions with research institutions. Community organizations have shared how rushing for the sake of timelines, rather than taking the time to share history and build relationship with researchers, can be counterproductive.
- **Researchers' motivations.** What motivates their interests in this work? What interests them most about this collaboration? Have they spent time in the community where you work?
- **Researchers' agenda.** What are their intentions for the research in the context of their professional work—what is their agenda? The value of sharing agendas is in the trust built together. Is the work with you supporting papers they intend to publish? Is it enabling them to fundraise for their institution? Is it meeting the requirements of funding they have already received?

- **Researchers' relevant experiences.** What stories can they share of their work that illustrate how they would work with you? How has community participated in identifying the goals of the research in previous projects? In designing the study and in particular how participants experience the study? In developing and testing survey instruments? In collecting data? In interpreting what the data mean and sharing results?

Discuss with the research partner what is realistic:

- **Questions asked.** How do you prioritize the questions you want to answer through the research? Taking into account the effort and change required to tackle each question and who would need to make that effort (the researcher or the community organization), which questions will you focus on now and which will you defer?
- **Information generated.**
 - What types of information can the research give you, and on what timeline? When will initial data be available, and what actions or decisions will it make possible?
 - What answers to questions or new learning can you be certain of getting, even in the "worst case," and what is the potential "best case" of producing the research or evidence you are planning for? What will need to go right for the "best case" to happen?

b. Know your options

One barrier to equal partnership between researchers and those researched is not understanding the options, and potential benefits and costs of each.

→ Ask researchers to help you get informed about the options:

Kelly Hallberg, Scientific Director, Poverty Lab, University of Chicago Urban Labs: “Part of my responsibility is to explain in understandable ways. For example, when helping partners understand the importance of having a large enough sample to detect effects, I often use an accessible example: If we wanted to know the average height of people in the city of Chicago, if we took one person, even if we randomly selected them, we might pick one of the Chicago Bulls, someone extraordinarily tall. If we randomly selected two people, we could get two Bulls, though we are more likely to get one person of a regular height. The more Chicagoans we pick, the more certain we are that the average height of the Chicagoans we pick is representative of the average height of people in the City of Chicago. When we talk about “statistical power” in a sample, we want to have enough people in all the treatment and control group that we are not just counting the outliers—we want to know that the differences between the two groups are real differences, not the result of who happened to be in the sample.”

Few outside of research institutions have this understanding unless they have previously experienced research projects, but without it, it is difficult for a community organization to participate with full voice. One method of gathering data may be the ‘gold standard’ on paper, but may not fit your purpose, mission or organizational stage.

What are the options for the research? Some terms that come up frequently:

QUANTITATIVE STUDIES	QUANTITATIVE STUDY	<p>A “quantitative” study focuses on numbers to count the impact of your organization’s work.</p> <p>A quantitative study often uses government data sets, for example from the public school system or the criminal justice system, census tract data, or surveys.</p> <p>For example, a quantitative study might count how many people your organization serves, what services they receive, and whether they have stable housing after receiving services.</p> <p>A quantitative study can produce data on a large number of participants more cheaply than other approaches. It can show that stories-focused information can be generalized beyond the handful of participants telling the stories.</p> <p>For a quantitative study to be possible, you need to have been running a consistent program, be comfortable ‘standardizing it,’ and not change key program elements during the period of the research.</p>
	QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY	<p>A “quasi-experimental” study is a type of quantitative study that shows a numerical change occurred, but does not show your program caused the change to happen.</p> <p>It does not involve assigning participants to two different groups and studying both groups, and therefore asks less from your organization and your participants.</p> <p>Will this generate what you are trying to learn? Is this rigorous enough for the audience you want to reach?</p>
	RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL	<p>An “RCT” or “random assignment evaluation” is a type of quantitative study used to show your program caused the change to happen. For example, it would allow a researcher to say “participants in this organization had stable housing more often as a result of their participation.”</p> <p>It involves assigning participants randomly to treatment and control groups which is effort-intensive (more detail in the sections called Know the risks and costs and Plan for study recruitment below).</p> <p>It is often favored by public policy-makers. Is it necessary for your goals?</p>
	QUALITATIVE STUDY	<p>A “qualitative” study focuses on stories to convey the impact of your organization’s work.</p> <p>A qualitative study may use interviews, focus groups, or observational data, which means a researcher watches or listens to participants and staff members.</p> <p>For example, a qualitative study might summarize what participants are saying has changed in their lives while participating in your program.</p> <p>Particularly when you are trying something where not much is already known, rich qualitative information, even from a smaller number of participants, helps shed light on “why” and “how” your efforts are working, and why participants find it valuable.</p> <p>Community organizations have found this type of research helpful to scaling up their work because it helps you understand what pieces matter most. Qualitative data can guide improvements, for example: criteria in screening tools, characteristics of staff to hire for, service or curriculum improvements. Qualitative data can also suggest internal metrics the organization can use so that operations produce more of what matters.</p> <p>However, qualitative research can take time and be expensive. Does the qualitative research meet the expectations of the audience you want to reach?</p>
	MIXED METHODS STUDY	<p>A “mixed methods” approach mixes numbers and stories, and can provide the best, and worst, of both worlds.</p>

c. Know the risks and costs

Ask researchers, and reflect on:

- **Risks.** What is the risk of each possible approach “failing” (i.e., not generating anything of value to your organization)? For example, if a randomized controlled trial is not sufficiently “powered,” meaning there are not enough participants in the research, it might not be able to show effectiveness even if your program is actually effective. If a research study is not measuring the most relevant outcomes for your organization, the research study might not show the true impact of your organization.
- **Costs.** What will be the tangible and intangible costs of each possible approach?
 - For example, what additional or different work will staff have to take on?
 - What leadership and change management work will be needed to support your organization with the emotional realities of new constraints? What will need to be formalized, or made into a manual, for the research to be possible and will there be resistance to this that will draw on your organization’s energy, relationship capital, or time?
 - What are the specific costs to how you do your work of recruiting participants for the research? There is more detail in the section called Plan for study recruitment on page 46, but at this stage, understanding the number of participants your organization will need to recruit for the study to work is important.

To understand this, at the table, you need:

- **(1) the voice of operations (for example, outreach, intake)** to explain the process from interacting with a potential participant for the first time all the way through program completion. Where does attrition happen and how much attrition happens? How do participants graduate from or complete the program, and what does this mean for how many new participants can be recruited per week or month? Will the study change the process such that your historical enrollment or attrition might change?
- **(2) the voice of your research partner** to explain their best estimation of what number of participants completing the program is likely to be needed for the research study to show an effect that researchers consider valid.
- **(3) put these pieces together**, to understand the cost to your organization and to your participants of recruiting the numbers needed.

What do you compromise if you do not have discretion to decide who gets services?

- **Restrictions.** What are the restrictions imposed by each possible approach on your organization?
 - For example, community organizations are often innovators and adaptors, but many research methods require core elements of the work to remain the same for the duration of the research, which can be years. Are you willing to not make substantive changes to your program for the period of the study?
 - For example, if you choose a research design with random assignment, while the number of participants you serve may not change, the number of participants you need to engage with, and your flexibility to decide who gets services and who does not, may. For programs that have kept an “open door” for young people who have participated to leave and come back, random assignment may mean closing the door to services for a group of young people for an extended period. It may mean many youth in the neighborhood where you live and work interact with your organization, and then get “randomized out” of receiving service. For programs with age limits, random assignment could close the door to the program for a young person altogether.

- **Learning from peers.** Is it possible to speak with another community organization participating in a study to ask about their experience and risks to be aware of? Is it possible for key staff from your organization to listen to how another organization addressed risks outlined here? Community organizations have commented that this dialogue helped them ask their research partners the right questions. Can the funder or researchers make connections for you, particularly to a community organization with a similar depth of relationship with their participants (e.g., a few hours once a week versus a deep ongoing relationship with a participant and their family)?

d. Research means change, so get ready to lead through change

In deciding how extensive or rigorous of a research effort to start, the capacity of your organization—including the leadership’s mindset for learning and for change, the culture of your organization, the infrastructure in place—matter. These factors affect whether research may feel like some more work, or like a drastic change.

- **Existing data habits.** Does your organization have habits of looking at data, reflecting, and learning? Or do numbers usually come up only for funding proposals or report-outs to the board? Do you have data infrastructure you can build from, such as spreadsheets or other ways of collecting information, or habits of using qualitative and numeric data in day-to-day operations? Are staff already spending time building and maintaining this data infrastructure, or will you need to identify staff and free up capacity to participate in research?
- **Staff’s experiences with research.** What are staff members’ appetites for research? Who among your staff, volunteers, partners, and community members could help shape research?
- **Program readiness.** Is program infrastructure in place to enable research, for example consistently delivered key elements of a program? If the research will require new “standards” or “manualization,” which means writing down how you interact with program participants in a manual and doing it in a consistent way, will your organization embrace this, or resist it as too institutional? This does not mean every participant must receive the same services. For example, a study may allow for variation in what goals your participants set, but measure progress on goals consistently.



“We know it works. So what are the papers and numbers going to actually do for us?”

KAREN JACKSON, DIRECTOR OF
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, LAWNDALÉ
CHRISTIAN LEGAL CENTER

For the executive director/leader of a community organization preparing for the change that a research effort may bring:

- **Listening.** Before committing to research, how can you listen to all the reasons for why research should not happen? Are staff concerned the numbers will not tell the whole story? That there will be copycats? That their voice will not be heard or valued? While from the researcher or funder’s perspective, the research study may be separate from the program, for your staff and participants, it is often all part of the work. Several organizations have shared with us that it was not until these conversations happened that the impact of the research became “real.” One-on-one conversations with naysayers, for example, staff, participants or community members, can be a valuable opportunity to understand reasons for reluctance and opposition. Listening in this way can inform whether and how you engage on the research, improvements to the research plan, and how you communicate about the research.
- **Communicating.**

 - How can you educate, support and influence your staff for a successful study? Does the entire team understand what is happening, why, and how it will impact their work? How, and how often, will you articulate the potential benefit of the research to your organization’s mission? How will you be open about the challenges and risks, and about how workloads will shift as a consequence of doing the research? For larger nonprofits, how will you motivate leaders within your organization to engage in these conversations deliberately with staff on their teams?
 - Who are other stakeholders you need to engage, for example, the community organization’s board, other funders, community partners, participants, participants’ parents? Will having the researchers speak with these stakeholders help you?
- **Champions.**

 - Who, within your organization, tells stories that people hear. Are they informed about and supportive of the research? How can you engage them?
 - As staff turnover is frequent in many community organizations, are there additional members of your organization who can be included in the discussions from the start, so understanding of how and why the research began does not sit solely with one or two people?

e. Know your rights

Power dynamics and trust affect how a community organization participates in research, whether the process feels like justice work or the opposite, and whether the research succeeds.

Some community organizations may feel comfortable taking a direct approach on these issues. Others fear that being assertive may jeopardize the opportunity.

- **From history to present.** Name the local history. How have interactions between your community and researchers typically worked? Set against that context, how do you envision roles and accountabilities will work in this research?
- **Role of Principal Investigator.** What will the Principal Investigator take responsibility for? Is it appropriate for someone from your organization to act as a co-Principal Investigator? In some cases, this can make the co-leadership and co-ownership of the research clear and help with power dynamics; in some cases, you may be looking for the perceived validity that an external university researcher brings.

- **Property rights.** Discuss intellectual property rights and data rights. Who can access the data and when? When will data be processed and shared—at regular intervals, or not until the end of the project? Who can speak about the data and publish the data? Whose consent is required, when? Some community organizations have gotten legal advice and some have asked research institutions and funders to sign non-disclosure agreements.
- **Signed contract.** Sign a memorandum of understanding or similar written contract specifically covering the study, responsibilities, and rights to the data and communications about the data.
- **Cost distribution.** Discuss with researchers and funders how costs to your organization and community generated by the research can be shared. Can researchers share in this cost, in kind, or financially? In our experience, researchers have raised funds, for example to compensate participants for their time, or for stipends for partnering public schools. Can the funder support these costs? ■



Color of Chicago Beyond's Experience:

At Chicago Beyond, experience continues to teach us about the substantial tangible and intangible costs of collaborations between community organizations and researchers, that we and other funders had not accounted for.

Our notes:

1. **Being more proximate enables us to learn.** Through deep relationships we have seen myriad financial and intangible costs of doing research from the nonprofit and community's perspectives. We have built a "growth team" who in turn builds trusted relationships with a broad array of people within our nonprofit partner organizations. This intimacy begins in our due diligence process before making the investment, where our team spends substantial time with, and writes or co-writes the investment proposal in collaboration with, the nonprofit.
2. **Funders have unique opportunities to support and reduce some of the costs.** Some examples from our work: thought partnership on the purpose of the research; helping address strategic and operational challenges such as navigating new recruitment targets; developing communications about the research for the nonprofit's staff, board, and community partners; supporting executive directors in their change management efforts resulting from doing research.
3. **We acknowledge that this work is difficult and messy.** Timelines and timing of funding may need to shift, when the cost of not shifting them becomes clear.

2.

COMMUNITY AND VOICE:

SETTING UP THE STUDY

a. Set up for voice; Consider a community evaluation committee

“Bringing implementors and researchers in close proximity is so important—so we can have conversations without fear. The power dynamic can hold up deeper collaboration.”

LINA FRITZ, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
PROGRAM INNOVATION, ONEGOAL



Research is traditionally set up to keep researchers separate and “neutral.” Engaging and getting proximate is an orientation the community organization and researchers may need to cultivate together, and create new structures for.

One starting point is face-to-face engagement between researchers and community, participants, staff, and partners. Another is to start by outlining the potential benefits and harms of the research, and determining how to hear the voices of those potentially affected through the process.

➤ **Identification of voices needed.** What are potential benefits of the research, and who receives them?

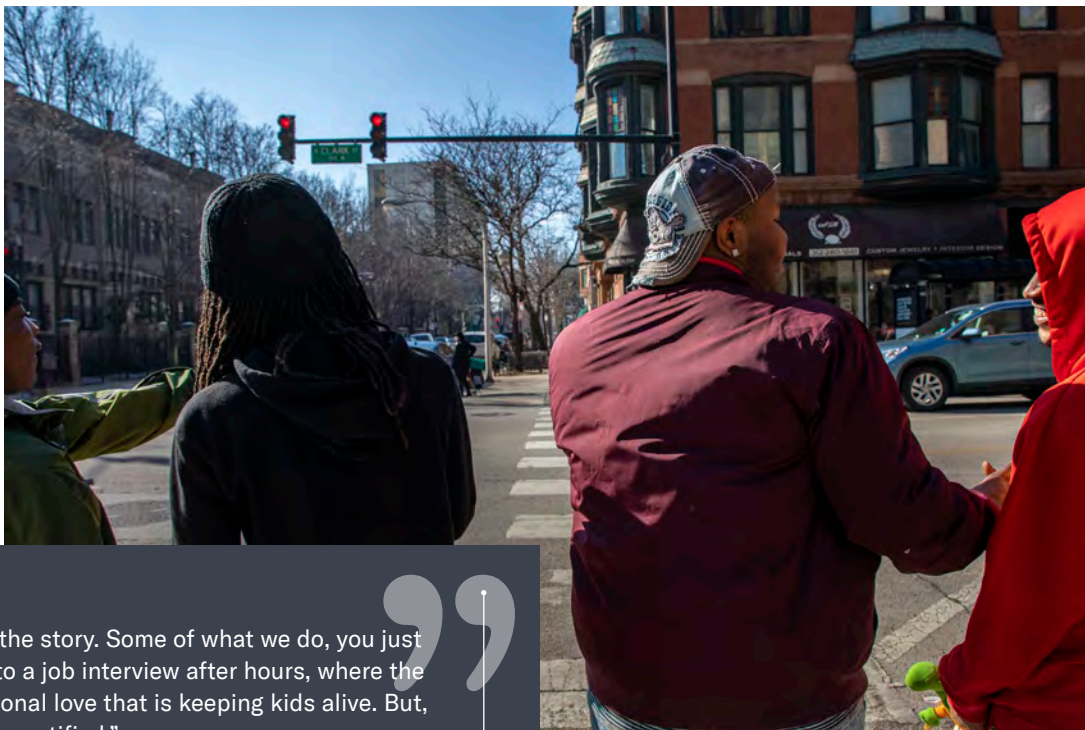
What are the potential harms, and who carries them? For example, what processes of your organization may be changed or interrupted? How will staff relationships with participants be affected? These can be written out in a T-chart (a piece of paper with a large letter “T” creating two columns) with potential benefits in one column and potential harms in the other, following the practice of health impact assessments, environmental impact assessments and racial equity impact assessments. The individuals and groups named on the chart may suggest the starting list of whose voices are important to hear.

➤ **Reciprocal engagement.**

- How can the researchers and community organization staff, participants, partners, or community members engage face-to-face, and see each other as humans? Are Peace Circles an appropriate early engagement? Breakfast forums for partners? Evening forums for community? For researchers, having the opportunity to connect with the work on a human level can provide perspective and, in the words of one community organization, “a positive lens, not just focusing on statistics of demise.” For community organizations, engaging with the researchers formally and informally helps build a relationship of trust.
- In some cases, you may assemble a community evaluation committee representing those voices, which may make decisions about or give input into what is researched, the outcome measures used, and which engages regularly with the research team. The committee may include staff of your organization, researchers, program participants or community members. What is the mandate of your group? What powers does it truly have? How often will it engage with the research team to not burden participants or overwhelm the research team, but also to effectively contribute to the study design and execution? (In the Community-Based Participatory Research approach, this group is called a Community Action Board and steers both the research and the related action.)
- How will you engage with all staff who are affected by the research effort to seek input, while the study remains in its formative stages? How will you engage community members who may be affected by the research effort? Are community meetings appropriate? What is the mechanism to gather and incorporate input?

➤ **Engagement at the right times.** When during the process can you still shape study design? Have you discussed with the researchers the timing of when they will seek “IRB approval” or register the study’s “pre-analysis plan?” An “IRB” or Institutional Review Board is an administrative body that confirms that certain ethical considerations in research are met. A “pre-analysis plan” commits to what the most important outcomes and approaches will be in your research. Once these steps in the research process occur, you have limited ability to change the study design while safeguarding the validity of the study.

b. Participate in deciding what to measure – check the “simple” measures



“Numbers only tell a piece of the story. Some of what we do, you just can’t quantify—driving a kid to a job interview after hours, where the bus doesn’t go. It’s unconditional love that is keeping kids alive. But, there are things that can be quantified.”

CHRISTOPHER SUTTON, DIRECTOR, YOUTH ADVOCATE PROGRAMS, INC.

Pictured: Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. group outing

What you measure is what you incentivize.

The “simple” measures may not be the ones that represent real growth and benefit to participants facing the biggest barriers. As large administrative data sets were in many cases built to report on compliance, metrics of compliance such as arrest rates are, not surprisingly, easier and cheaper to collect data on.

Take the example of recidivism. On the one hand, it is a common metric, with existing data sets. This means it costs less money to track and allows comparison across programs. On the other hand, it does not capture a program participant’s directional progress, while capturing things outside of the program participant’s control, such as a concentration or increase of arrest efforts in a community. *A piece by Jeffrey Butts and Vincent Schiraldi on benefits and shortfalls of recidivism as a metric is listed in the Bibliography.*

What is measured can be a productive focus for a community evaluation committee and researchers, each contributing their expertise.

➤ Understanding the risks of possible metrics and data.

- What are the commonly used metrics for this type of work, and what inequities, historical or present, are built into them? What assumptions are built into how these metrics are used? Some examples:
 - Is measuring participant arrests in the current state of racialized policing an accurate metric?
 - In a culture that values nuclear families over independent individuals, is measuring “progress” on self-actualization the best metric?
 - Is it fair to measure housing “overcrowding” for participants from a culture that values living with extended family?
 - Is measuring wealth accumulation for families from a culture that values “sending money home” or supporting extended family members an appropriate metric?
- What are the benefits to your organization and to your participants of the commonly used metrics? What are the harms?
- What are the limitations of the data sets you are working with? How will the research team address these? For example, department of employment services data do not capture all types of employment, which may result in undercounting increases in employment among participants in a program.

➤ Selecting appropriate metrics.

- What does the work intend to create, in addition to what will be avoided? When do staff and participants perceive progress and what marks progress in their eyes? How can this be reflected in metrics that are feasible in this context? For example, are connections to caring adults built through the work important to capture? Expansion of the participant’s support network? Changes in the participant’s perception of their agency?

➔ One example is of a prison-based fatherhood program (you can find the article by Abigail Henson listed at the end), where dialogue between participants, community organization staff, and researchers changed what the study measured: the unit was changed from the father to the family; the short-term measures were changed, from depression and stress, to pride and reconstruction of masculinity (from provider to caregiver); the long-term measures were expanded, from recidivism, to whether the father-child bond remained active and positive.

- What effects of the community organization’s work important to capture in the research? Is the program affecting the system or the capacity of the community, for example supporting cultural revitalization, changing power relations, or increasing the capacity of the community to solve problems? Effects of the ecosystem on a participant, effects of change by the participant on their families or communities, or broader impacts of a program’s work, may be less simple to research. However, this may be critical to a community organization’s impact where easy-to-research approaches have not worked.
- Some community organizations have found that talking with trusted friends and peers has helped them to identify additional outcomes to measure. Sometimes those outside the day-to-day work can help you to see your impact.

➤ Communicating about metrics respectfully. How can you communicate about quantitative metrics within your organization in a way that is respectful, and that recognizes that numbers are an incomplete picture?

c. Plan for study recruitment



“If I could start all over, I’d ask ‘What’s the power number?’”

AIMEE STAHLBERG, ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE,
STORYCATCHERS THEATRE

Several community organizations have noted that a lack of shared understanding between the researchers, those with program operations expertise, and those speaking for the community organization led to lost effort and time, and anxiety, in recruiting participants into the research. In addition, optimism for the research from the community organization’s leadership can contribute to blind spots when it comes to planning for recruitment and retention, which can then make the research less effective.

- **Voices with expertise.** Who needs to be at the table to be able to walk through the recruitment process in detail from start to finish to really understand what is necessary to put together the participant group, or “cohort,” for a research study? Who is closest to the work? Outreach? Social workers? Program directors? Former participants?
- **Recruitment process.** What is the detailed recruitment process based on these voices of expertise? Importantly, the research itself can affect both the recruitment process, and attrition. For example, the research could change how participants apply to the program, from interested young people applying, to schools generating lists of young people invited into the program; as a result of this shift, attrition will rise from what the program has seen in the past. Where does attrition happen in the process and by how much? What number of participants would need to start the recruitment process to end up with a certain number of participants completing the program? How frequently will participants move out of the program and what does this mean for how much time it takes for the target number of participants to complete the program? What does “completing the program” or “graduating” mean for your organization, operationally?

- **Recruitment target.** The higher the number of study participants, the easier it is to show a scientifically valid change, but the greater the effort to recruit participants. For the research study to show an effect that researchers consider valid, how many participants does your researcher estimate need to complete the program? Piecing this together with the program's process from the start of recruitment to program completion, what total number of participants must initially be recruited? Having the researchers and operational team together name different scenarios, then explore the challenges and the manpower related to each, can be a helpful approach.
- **Resources required.** What will your organization need to change to achieve the recruitment target? One community organization believed their social worker could continue to manage recruitment as the research study began, and later found they needed a dedicated person spending 30 hours per week to adequately support recruitment and build new referral partnerships.
- **Data required.** What other data about participants will researchers need to collect, and how will these be collected by researchers, or by staff and passed to researchers?
- **Communications.**
 - How will the recruitment target and recruitment process be communicated to recruitment partners, staff, community or participants?

➔ These types of meetings require planning through an equity lens. What is the best time of day for community members to attend? Evenings? Weekends? What about childcare? Food? Meeting format? Seating arrangement?

- Are breakfasts or evening community meeting appropriate? Should researchers be present to answer questions? What about a school-night kick-off? Are one-on-one conversations between researchers and recruitment partners/staff leading recruitment most appropriate? Will there be any resources or stipend for recruitment partners?
- Are the explanations of the research to participants, staff, partners, community in a form that is understood by these audiences?



“I knew my fathers in the control group needed to be compensated, and we made it happen. Their time is valuable, and they weren’t getting the benefit of being in the program.”

SHELDON SMITH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND
FOUNDER, THE DOVETAIL PROJECT

Pictured: The Dovetail Project graduation

d. Participate in designing how study participants experience the research

When those closest to participants, and participants themselves, shape how the study occurs, the approach can become more equitable. Human connection makes impacts previously unseen to researchers and funders, visible.

For the community organization, community members, or research participants planning with researchers for the study:

🕒 Fit of research design and mission.

- Throughout the study and as it ends, how is the research design consistent with the mission of the community organization and trust it has built in the community? For example, what will potential participants see after study enrollment ends, particularly if the program will not have additional capacity at that point? What is the impact of changes made because of the research study to the organization’s reputation in the community?
- How is consent best approached? In this particular context, is it better for participants in the control group to meet program staff in person and give consent, or to be randomized on a list without ever interacting with staff? Will the control group, if there is one, be asked for consent? Is consent written in a way that is understood? Is consent presented in a context/at a time when the participant actually has agency to give consent?

- **Recruitment strategies.** What specific strategies can be used to bring participants into the study and retain them through the course of the study? There is a “tax” on producing knowledge about those most marginalized: it is harder for researchers to connect with those with instability in their lives; it is harder to obtain consent from those who have learned to distrust institutions; it is harder to retain in a research study those who experience greater barriers. How can social media be helpful? Will multiple redundant strategies be feasible, to increase success?

➔ The article “Study Retention as Bias Reduction in a Hard-to-Reach Population” by Columbia Professor Bruce Western and colleagues referenced at the end may aid brainstorming on study recruitment and retention, e.g., the timing of financial incentives at the start of a study (if applicable); frequency of contact; back-up contacts including mothers and supportive secondary contacts.

- **Experience of being in a research study.**

- How will study participants be contacted? How will they be engaged through the study? Who will engage them? How can the nonverbal cues create the desired experience for study participants? What have participants heard before about research in their community or by similar institutions? What is different here, and how is that explicitly communicated in ways most likely to be heard?
 - The assumption in research can be that “nothing is happening” to the control group. But, from the perspective of a young person going through an application process and being “randomized out” or from the perspective of referral sources referring many additional people to a community organization, only to have them not receive services, something has happened. If the study will include a randomized control group, who will communicate to the control group about the randomization and what will be communicated? How will this feel standing in the young person’s shoes? If members of the control group have been exposed to other research studies, as is often the case in Chicago, what narratives is it important to address, e.g., a sense that “randomization” is not actually random? If young people are randomized out early on in program enrollment, but are aware there is still room left in a sought-after program, what is staff’s response? If participants in the comparison and treatment groups will interact, for example, within a school, what communication will aid each group of people?

- **Responsive communications.** What is the best way to communicate about what matters to participants, for example:

- **What is the best way to communicate about privacy?** Concerns nonprofits have shared, from their participants, include: *Who all will know I am in the study? Will my name be published anywhere? How much will they be in my life? Do they watch from the cameras in the building? If I am involved in questionable activity, are they going to report me to the police?*
 - **What is the best way to communicate about benefits?** Participants have asked: *How does being part of a study help me?*
 - **What is the best way to communicate about expectations?** Participants have asked: *Am I allowed to participate in other programs/employment during the study? Can you still help me if I am not in the treatment group? Can I apply again? Who is going to help me if you can’t?*
 - **Be aware that there may be misunderstandings about research preceding your study.**

- **Trauma.** How do awareness of trauma and the research study’s potential to trigger memories and emotions shape the work? A study can be an emotional trigger for program participants, and for staff who were themselves researched or interrogated in other ways in their childhood. Trauma expertise can inform study outreach and study design to minimize that effect. For example, trauma awareness can shape how staff participate in the research (and change whether their stress is transmitting fear to participants). If this is not an area in which your team is experienced, seek out expertise so you are equipped to answer these questions.

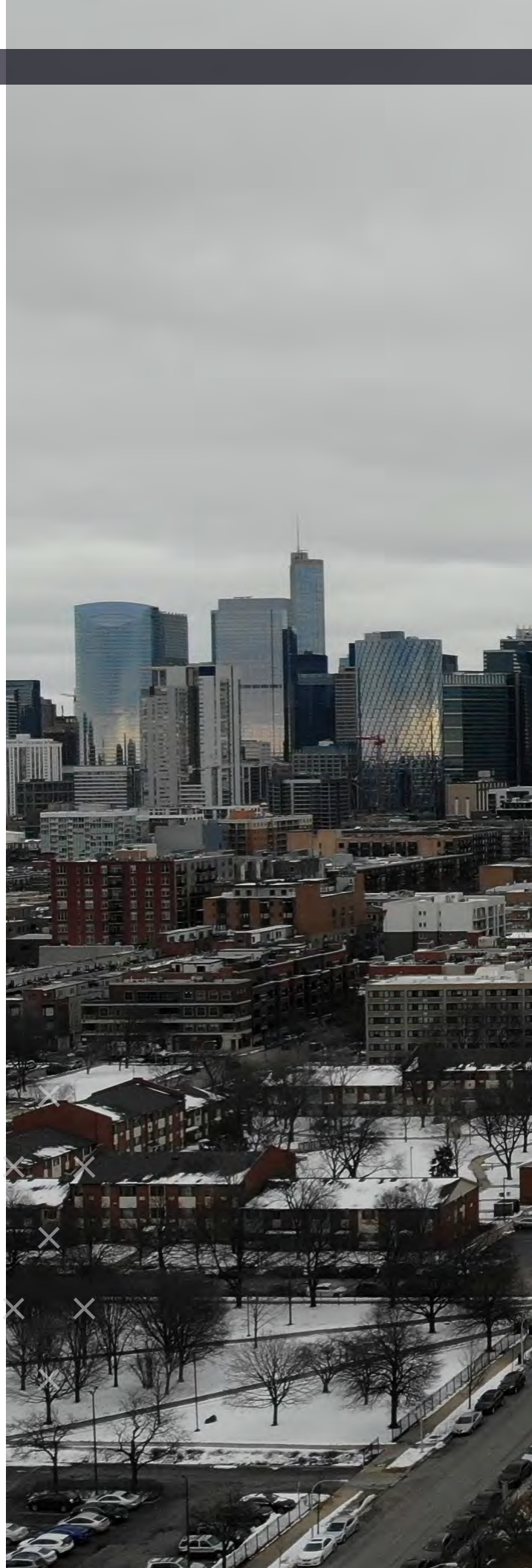
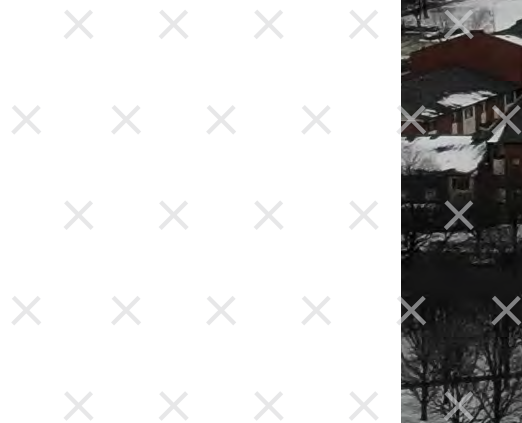
e. Build in time for reflection, failure, change

Meaningful reflection and problem-solving during the initial steps of a community-research partnership take time. Build this into the plan.

➤ **Cadence.** What is the cadence on which the team should reflect on the work and engage on challenges? Where and when will these conversations be held? Who will participate and who will lead?

➤ Discussion topics.

- Feedback on the research effort so far, and what needs to be done to address it.
- How are inequitable approaches, methods, measures filtering into the study, and what are opportunities to do differently? For example, are you unintentionally taking advantage of what your privilege allows you to do, such as dictating meeting times and locations? How is your work creating a way of operating intentionally distinct from the legacy of “research brain” and “community brawn?”
- How are relationships of trust being formed, and how is the team interacting as equals? Note that while researchers’, staff, and community members’ roles in the research differ, the point here is that no one is treated as superior or inferior. ■





3.

COMMUNITY AND VOICE:

DURING THE STUDY

a. Engage during the study

While researchers may be primarily responsible for collecting the data, the research process can remain a topic of joint reflection and improvement. The community organization or community evaluation committee's specific understanding of context and people is critical.

🕒 Feedback loop.

- > How are staff, participants' and community members' voices being heard during the course of the study? What feedback is being shared and what can be done to address the feedback and communicate back to those who shared it? Some organizations have found a biweekly conversation among researchers and those at the community organization involved in implementing the study tremendously valuable to ask and answer questions and to plan for each new step in the work in an organic and effective way.
- > Are you remembering to praise and reinforce the specific actions your research partner is taking in service of equity?

🕒 Listening for clues.

- > How well are efforts to bring participants into the study and engagement with participants during the study working? What is not working and what can be done better?
- > How well is engagement with those in the control group, if there is one, working? What is not working and what can be done better?
- > How are inequitable approaches, methods, measures filtering into the research despite the best of intentions and what can be done to reorient? Where do you need to advocate for more resources or time to be allocated? Who is not appearing as robustly in early data (for example, young people experiencing housing instability or young people with Individualized Education Plans), and does this offer a clue to focus problem-solving? Who is not experiencing being heard?

b. Vet study tools and problem-solving

In our experience, an important opportunity during the study is the collaboration between community organization and researchers on study tools such as surveys.

🔗 Contextual awareness.

- › How can the community organization's leaders and researchers best collaborate so study tools fit the specific context and also have the validity desired?
- › How will draft study tools be vetted from the point of view of participants? Are surveys of an appropriate length?

🔗 Execution.

- › Will certain types of data, for example social security numbers, be a challenge to collect in the specific context, and what are alternatives?
- › If researchers are engaging with a representative group, for example a focus group, is it a meaningful "group?" How can you and researchers together create the conditions for voices to be heard?
- › Can community members be hired to help collect data or conduct surveys? ■

4.

EQUITABLE NUMBERS FOR IMPACT

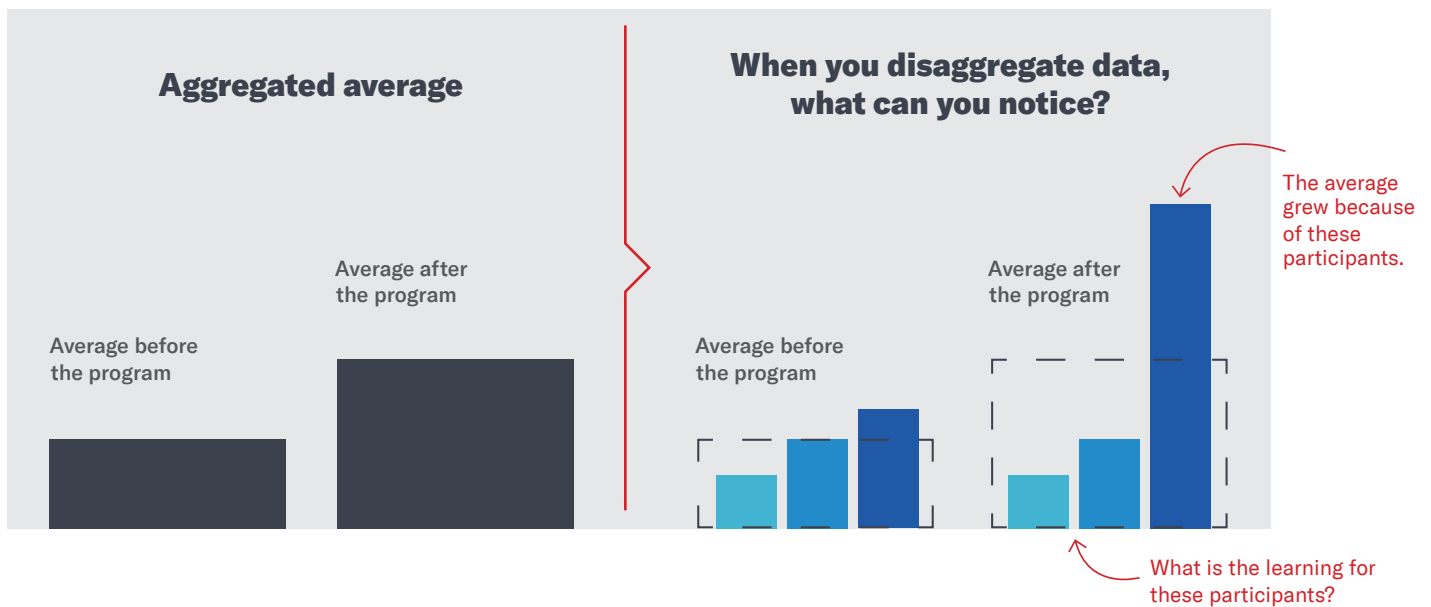
a. Make it useful along the way

The history of distrust between community and researchers comes in part from community organizations entering research partnerships expecting the work will improve lives of participants, and later finding the research may not help them with day-to-day operations or bring resources to their community. How can the research improve lives of participants as much as possible?

- **Early learnings.** What are early learnings from the research and how can these be shared with staff, participants, community, or partners to show what their hard work is yielding?
- **Early action.**
 - What improvements to the program are possible during the research, given the context of your organization and the research design, which may limit what changes can be made?
 - How will those responsible for making the changes engage with the data early on so they can plan for action?
- **Sense checking.** Is there a role for your organization's staff in sense-checking early data or preliminary results? For example, if a researcher is looking for themes in stories from participants, how is the researcher identifying and interpreting important themes ("coding" qualitative data)? Are preliminary results consistent with the experience of your organization, or do they look oddly high or low?

b. Bring attention to who is benefited the most? Least?

Many times, averages hide whether participants most forced to the margins are left further behind, unaffected, or helped by a program.



If your community organization's mission is to serve participants facing barriers, or if you are innovating and looking at whom you could serve, a key purpose of the data is to help you understand who you are succeeding in reaching (and who you are not reaching); who is benefiting most from participating in your program (and who is benefiting least); and what can be learned from the complex stories beneath these numbers to help you do your work better.

- **Disaggregated data.** Against whatever metric you have chosen to measure how your program helps your participants? Take for example, a grade point average. How much change does the program create for participants starting out furthest behind, versus participants in the middle, versus participants starting out furthest ahead? (This must be done in a way that continues to protect individuals' privacy.)
- **Learning from who is benefited least and most.**
 - > Who benefits the most by your organization's work and is this who your organization intended to serve? What are the characteristics— demographic, intersectional, and situational, for example, housing stability, adult relationships, connectedness—of the small group of participants who benefited most?
 - > Who is benefited least by your organization's work? What are the characteristics of this small group of participants and are these characteristics of participants you intended to serve?
 - > What can your organization learn from these stories? Do the greatest success stories, recognizing their complexity, spur ideas for innovation? Are there adjustments to the program your organization will try out, to better serve your target participants?
- **Counting inequity.**
 - > Is the correlation between race and outcomes, or class and outcomes, changed as a result of your organization's work? This is one way to look at impact for equity.
 - > How can your organization use these data and stories to communicate your impact for equity?

c. Who is the comparison point?

Just as averages can obscure who, specifically, is and is not benefitting, comparison to an average can be misleading. For example, comparing to an “average” client load may not be relevant and may burn staff out if the work involves complex trauma. For example, if custodial sentence lengths get shorter because of a program and there is no change in recidivism, this can be an improvement in recidivism, if normally an increase in recidivism is expected whenever sentence lengths get shorter. For example, a young person dropping out of a program and re-engaging several times can be an indicator of an organization's persistence in building relationships, rather than an efficiency marker to improve.

➤ Comparison points.

- > For a study comparing outcomes to a benchmark, or analyzing cost and benefit, who and what is proposed as the comparison? How can comparison points show different perspectives or the complexity of the work?
- > Does the comparison point take into account the impacts of systemic and individual traumas, for example the implications of stress experienced by program staff as a factor in selecting what productivity comparison is relevant?
- > *Does the comparison point ring true to those being measured?*

➤ **Cost-benefit analysis.** If you want to produce cost-benefit numbers, how do researchers propose to capture systemic effects? Accounting for “cost” of the way things are right now only in terms of tax dollars—which are often actually wages that benefit a different group of people—rather than the actual social cost, can unwittingly and incorrectly build a case against investment in your work.

➤ **Capturing growth.** How does the presentation of the data reveal growth journeys which may not be linear? Does the comparison point allow for—to use substance abuse terminology—relapse in the context of recovery? ■



5.

SHARING RESULTS

a. Is it historical? Is it contextualized?

Numbers, without context, take on the assumptions and biases of their audience. Data sources, without context, reinforce the structural bias built into them.

As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns, a story is fundamentally shaped by where you begin it. The origins of inequity are often left out of the story, allowing histories to be laundered, and reinforcing harmful silences in the narrative.

- **Context.** What history and explanation of structural and systemic factors is important to frame the challenges the organization is addressing? To explain fully why the problem exists in the first place and the complexity of root causes and pathways? How can this show up in the description of the organization's work and dissemination of the research?
- **Dominant narratives.** What narratives have previously described the organization's participants, its work in the community, or its type of work? How have these narratives served participants well? How have they harmed them, or reinforced inequities? With this understanding, how can this research be framed to take on unjust narratives? What cultural context is important to tell?
- **Limitations.** How are limitations of the data clearly communicated? For example, limitations of administrative data sets, limitations of summarized data, limitations of common metrics, systematic non-counting, or systematic undercounting? "Objective" data like special education designations, census data, crime that is measured by arrests, or domestic violence information, can incorporate racialized processes and lead to incorrect interpretations, without context.

b. Can you hear your participants? Are you signaling that lived experience is valuable?

Valuing data to achieve an end—whether securing funding, improving programs, sharing learning with the field, changing narratives—is not the same as valuing a human story and experience intrinsically. Honoring a participant's voice requires intention, it may not just happen from documenting a participant's story, demographics or outcomes.

- **Participant voices.** Can you hear your participants in what you, the researchers, the funders, are disseminating about the research? How are images, stories, numbers resulting from the research effort putting participants at the center in how they are shared, versus treating them as objects of a study or as tokens to lend credibility?

➤ **Authorship.** Is there an opportunity for you or your participants to own elements of or co-author what is produced, or be editors? Or does it serve you to have an external author, because an external person is perceived as not biased?

➤ **Respecting experience.**

- > How does the presentation of results message to the audience that experience is valuable and valid, rather than reinforcing the bias that university expertise *produces* validity?
- > *Would participants find that what is being put out is true to their experience?*

c. Is it accessible? Can those researched hear the research?

Often research results are shared through academic journals, many of which are accessible only to subscribers. Prose, data tables and charts may be written so they are inviting only to those with research and statistics backgrounds. These walls hold up traditional power dynamics of who owns the research, and who is dependent on others to share it and interpret it.

➤ **Language.**

- > Is the language used as easy to understand as possible? Do people from different cultures, with different lived experiences, with different technical backgrounds understand the results of the research and the “so what” of what it means, when you test an early draft?
- > Are all inputs, calculations, and methods clearly explained, so stakeholders with different technical backgrounds can understand what has been counted, how, and based on what judgments? Are data tables and charts readable to those without research and statistics backgrounds? Are any technical terms used defined in plain language?

➤ **Forums and formats.**

- > As the community organization owning the research, how will you collaborate with the researchers on identifying the format(s) that will make the results most accessible to those affected by the research? To those who have power to support the work? To your partners or those who are part of your coalition for change?
- > Where—in what forums—will the results of the research be most likely to reach each of these audiences? Does it make sense to host community discussions to share results? Post video on social media? Design a simple summary that articulates what was learned and to what end?
- > Revisit the chart you made to identify those potentially affected by the research. Are those people being reached? ■

FOR RESEARCHERS

Before you start: What is the power dynamic?

Because evidence truly matters, we must care how it is made.

The existing power dynamic between community organizations, researchers, and funders is getting in the way of the scale of impact that we, collectively intend. The power dynamics between specific researchers, funders, and community organizations will vary. Some funding, including government grants, will impose restrictions. Some community organizations may feel comfortable asking questions and asserting their perspectives; others may fear that being assertive may jeopardize the opportunity and funding. In all cases, researchers wield substantial power in shaping the questions asked, and the inputs used to answer them.

“What are the inherent biases we hold? The quantitative paradigm says it is ‘controlling for these’. But what are the biases built in to how your “knowing” works?”

**THEODORE CORBIN, MD, CENTER FOR
NONVIOLENCE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH, DREXEL UNIVERSITY,
CO-FOUNDER OF HEALING HURT PEOPLE**



“People ask: ‘How do I get started?’ How do I encourage voice? How do I use my voice? There is academic theory, but people have challenges doing it. That’s where this work comes in.



**ANGELA ODOMS-YOUNG, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, UIC
INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH RESEARCH AND POLICY**



Depending on the kinds of research you do, your research institution, and your own experience, the action you take will look different.

For example, you may:

- Reflect individually or engage with your colleagues and institution on biases and how these flow into your research
- Change how you engage with community to identify research questions and study outcomes
- Propose timelines for research differently, for example to support trust-building, or to develop survey instruments with community input and community testing
- Interrogate numbers and stories you lift up, and use different framing in what you publish
- Evaluate your own work differently, or engage your funder stakeholders differently

Making intentional change can feel messy and uncomfortable. It requires openness to new perspectives and unlearning old ones. It requires shifting power dynamics, departing from how “it has always been done.” Starting from relationship and accountability, researchers can unlock immense creativity, to achieve the promise of what knowledge can yield for communities. ■

1.

KNOW YOUR ROLE, KNOW THE RISKS

EQUITY IN HOW YOU START

a. Bring awareness

How research gets done—the approaches, methods, metrics—has a system of assumptions built in.



Some sources of context include MIT historian Craig Wilder's *Ebony & Ivy* on the history of elite academic institutions in justifying inequities, and the Harlem Children's Zone's writings on their decades of experience "being researched" (you can find both at the in the Bibliography).

In seeking more equitable approaches, one place to start is understanding context and biases.

- **Systemic awareness.** What are the assumptions built into the research approaches you use most frequently? How do these approaches reinforce the privilege of those already powerful? Whose competence, capacity, or fidelity needs to be proven, and whose is taken on faith?
- **Institutional awareness.** What is the history of research in this community, and the particular history for this community organization and these participants? How have research institutions previously been experienced? How does your organization benefit from this dynamic? What experiences, e.g., being reported to child services, might a research effort bring to mind, even if not technically related to the research?
- **Personal awareness.** Everyone comes to their work with some personal knowledge and assumptions. What methods to create knowledge are you predisposed towards? What are your assumptions about the people and the context of your work? For example, if employment is a focus of the study, what are your assumptions about "valid" employment?
- **Awareness of what is at stake.** From the community organization's perspective, what benefits may participants in the research see and how certain are those benefits? What may be the cost to participants, to the community organization, to the community? What are the risks of producing the research or evidence you are planning for? From your own perspective, what benefits may the researchers and their research institution get from the work? How certain are those benefits and what risks do the researchers bear?



You have to build a relationship. There's a history. It takes time, it takes trust, it takes being vulnerable."

**MARQUELL JONES, MAC HOUSE CASE MANAGER,
LAWDALE CHRISTIAN LEGAL CENTER**



"Evidence, without seeing humanity, is folly.

**MICHAEL MCAFEE, PRESIDENT
AND CEO, POLICYLINK**

b. Listen and relate, in order to fit research to purpose

Spending time with, and spending time listening to, the community organization and members of the community humanizes research and enables you to find the right fit between purpose and research design. This is the foundation for an equitable engagement.

First, invest in building relationships:

- **Building trust.** How will you begin to build relationships of trust? How can you spend time in the community? Could sharing what motivates your interest in the work be valuable? What interests you most about this collaboration? For many community organizations, the instinct based on previous experience is "never give data to someone I don't really know." Community organizations have shared that rushing for the sake of timelines, rather than taking the time to share history and build relationships with researchers, can be counterproductive.
- **Sharing your agenda.** Sharing agendas openly contributes to building trust. How does this work fit into your professional research agenda? What is your other current research? What are your intentions for the work and your research institution's priorities?
- **Sharing your relevant experiences.** What stories can you share of your work that illustrates how you would work with the community organization?

"Our study is working well because everybody is unveiling themselves, taking their degrees off the wall, rolling their sleeves up."

CHRISTOPHER SUTTON, DIRECTOR, YOUTH ADVOCATE PROGRAMS, INC

Next, listen in order to fit research to purpose:

➤ **Goals for the research.**

- What are the organization's specific intentions for the research? What are the few statements the organization would like to be able to "fill in the blanks" on at the end of the work, and the organization's intention in filling out those blanks? (You can find prompts for the community organization in the section called You are in charge of what you want to learn, page 34.)
- What other effects does an organization have on the ecosystem around an individual participant?
- How could the research capture the benefit of the program over the appropriate duration, given that benefits may show up over time, and not immediately?

➤ **Target audience.** Where does the organization intend for the research to land, and what type of data and what research design serve that purpose, with least burden on the organization or its participants? How can you shape the research design and approaches to serve the purpose intended?

➤ **Organizational context.** What are the organization's existing approaches to reflection and evaluation, that precede your collaboration?

➤ **Information generated.**

- When does the organization look to act on learnings? When will initial data be available, and what actions or decisions by the organization can it enable?
- What answers to questions or new learning can the organization be certain of getting, even in the "worst case," and what is the potential "best case" of producing the research or evidence you are planning for? What will need to go right for the "best case" to happen?

c. Help create understanding of possible approaches and methods

"Part of my responsibility is to explain in understandable ways. For example, when helping partners understand the importance of having a large enough sample to detect effects, I often use an accessible example: If we wanted to know the average height of people in the City of Chicago, if we took one person, even if we randomly selected them, we might pick one of the Chicago Bulls, someone extraordinarily tall. If we randomly selected two people, we could get two Bulls, though we are more likely to get one person of a regular height. The more Chicagoans we pick, the more certain we are that the average height of the Chicagoans we pick is representative of the average height of people in the City of Chicago. When we talk about "statistical power" in a sample, we want to have enough people in all the treatment and control group that we are not just counting the outliers--we want to know that the differences between the two groups are real differences, not the result of who happened to be in the sample."

KELLY HALLBERG, SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR, POVERTY LAB,
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO URBAN LABS

One practical way researchers can help to address the information imbalance is by helping their community partners see the possibilities for evaluation, and the potential benefits and costs of each. Without this understanding, it is difficult for a community organization to participate with full voice. Translating expertise on what is possible and the implications to an organization's specific context can be a valuable service.

➤ **Options.**

- What type of study is sufficiently rigorous for the intended audience while minimizing burden on the organization? What type of study is valuable to future audiences, or enables systemic change if that is envisioned by the organization? How does understanding how the program is working fit into the picture? Would a qualitative or mixed methods study suit the organization's learning objectives? You might share a simple table such as the one that appears in the community organizations section under Know your options.
- What approach to research—from traditional, to community-engaged, to full partnership between community and researcher—is most suitable? (more on Community-Based Participatory Research appears in the glossary).

➤ **Pressures you face, experience you have.** Are there institutional pressures you as a researcher face to conduct certain types of studies, or are there types of studies where you lack experience, and have you made those explicit to the organization?

➤ **Benefits, risks, costs.** What are the implications—benefits, risks, costs—of each approach, from the organization's perspective?

- What are the benefits of each possible approach? What ongoing benefits could the community organization see after the research ends?
- What will the organization be asked to compromise? For example, would the organization not be able to change key program elements during the period of the research? What would this mean for the organization—recognizing community organizations are often innovative and adaptive by their nature—and for its participants? Would the organization's flexibility to select who receives services be affected? Would the organization need to close the door to services for a group of young people for an extended period? For a program with age limits, could the research design close the door to the program altogether for a young person? What would the organization compromise if it no longer had discretion to decide who gets services?
- If the research will mean that the organization must manualize or standardize its work, will the organization's context and culture embrace this, or will there be significant resistance, which will cost energy, relationship capital and time?
- What data sets will be used in each option for research you are considering, and how does access to those data work? Will the community organization be able to access the data after the research study finishes?
- What may be the costs to the organization and to participants of recruitment for the research? A common topic of miscommunication is the number of participants the organization will need to recruit for the study to work.

➤ **To understand this, at the table, you need:**

- **(1) the voice of operations** (i.e. outreach, intake) at the community organization to explain the process from interacting with a potential participant for the first time all the way through program completion. Where does attrition happen and how much attrition happens? How do participants graduate from or complete the program, and what does this mean for how many new participants can be recruited per week or month? Will the study change the process such that your historical enrollment or attrition might change? Are you asking questions in a context that is likely to yield realistic estimates, for example if a board member or a funder is in the room?
- **(2) your own best estimation** of what number of participants completing the program is likely to be needed for the research study to show an effect that researchers consider valid.
- **(3) put these pieces together**, to understand the cost to the organization and to participants of recruiting the numbers needed. Developing a few different scenarios may help information flow more freely.

This is covered in more detail below in the section called **Plan for study recruitment** on page 72.

- **Learning from peers.** Can you connect the community organization to another organization that has gone through the type of research being considered? Is it possible for key staff from the community organization to listen to how another organization addressed risks?

d. Rights, ownership and costs

The contractual agreement for the research and how costs are distributed can undermine the intention to shift power.

- **Role of Principal Investigator.** What will the Principal Investigator take responsibility for? Is it appropriate for someone from the community organization to act as a co-Principal Investigator? Or is research by an external third party important in this context?
- **Property rights.** Discuss intellectual property rights and data rights. Who can access the data and when? When will data be processed and shared—at regular intervals? Who can speak about the data and publish the data? Whose consent is required, when?
- **Signed contract.** In signing the memorandum of understanding or similar written contract, bring your attention to how you are formalizing the above.
- **Cost distribution.** How can you work with the community organization and community to identify costs generated by the research, and discuss how these costs can be shared? What will participants or partner organizations be asked to do differently for the research, and should this be compensated? Will the research generate new staff responsibilities? Will it generate communications, change management, or other costs to the organization? Can researchers share in this cost, in kind, or financially? In our experience, researchers have raised funds, for example to compensate participants for their time, or for stipends for partnering public schools. Can the funder support these costs?
- **From history to present.**
 - > After naming the local history and how projects typically work at your institution, how do you envision roles and accountabilities will work in this research?
 - > Beyond the contract, how will you choose to modify your approach and your workplan to balance power rather than reinforce a power imbalance? How can you ground your work in the experience of those affected to counteract inherent bias? How can you demonstrate in the words you choose to use, and how you spend your time, that you recognize that what may be one 'project' or a 'study' in a research institution's portfolio may be a life calling for the staff of the community organization? ■



2.

COMMUNITY AND VOICE

SETTING UP THE STUDY

a. Get proximate; Set up for voice

As Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, writes, “getting proximate” changes our capacity to make a difference. Traditional research does not have norms for this.

One starting point is face-to-face engagement between researchers and community, participants, staff, and partners. While community-based research practices offer examples of how to structure this engagement, this is human-to-human work, not a check-the-box exercise to create a particular community hearing or steer committee structure. Spending time with the organization and breaking bread fosters relationships and understanding that matter at a human level, and equips researchers to recognize—and as a result address—ways the power dynamic gets in the way of impact.

➤ Relational engagement.

- How can you spend time with the organization and the community in which the organization resides, and what questions can you ask, to begin to build relationships of trust? To signal your intent to listen and be a partner? To show, not talk about, your humility? To be able to put yourself in the organization's shoes?
- How will you, personally, listen for and hear the subjective experiences of those affected by the research? How can this be built into your research timeline? As one researcher notes, good intentions and interview guides are not by themselves enough to lead to interactions that promote equity.
- Are Peace Circles an appropriate early engagement? Breakfast forums for partners? Evening forums for community? What are the opportunities to engage without agenda, for example at graduation events, community meetings, performances, where you are not conducting observations?

Often, the framework into which researchers are thrust sets up stakeholders as a group to be “managed” in order to “reduce non-adherence.” Inclusion can seem “messy.” One opportunity is to start by outlining the potential benefits and harms of the research with the community organization or community members, and to determine how to hear the voices of those potentially affected through the process.

- **Identification of voices needed.** What are potential benefits of the research and to whom do they accrue? What are the potential harms and to whom do they accrue? For example, what processes of the organization may be changed or interrupted? How will staff relationships with participants be affected? These can be written out in a T-chart (a piece of paper with a large letter “T” creating two columns) with potential benefits in one column and potential harms in the other, following the practice of health impact assessments, environmental impact assessments and racial equity impact assessments. The individuals and groups named on the chart may suggest the starting list of whose voices are important to hear.

🔗 Forums for engagement.

- How will you create conditions so voices of those affected by the research are heard? In some cases, you might help the community organization assemble a community evaluation committee representing these voices. The committee may make decisions or give input into what is researched and the outcome measures used, and may engage regularly with you. The committee may include staff of the organization, researchers, program participants and/or community members. What is the mandate of the group? What powers does it have? How often will it engage with the research team to not burden participants or overwhelm you, but also to effectively contribute to the study design and execution? (For researchers familiar with Community-Based Participatory Research, a Community Action Board is often formed to steer both the research and the related action. Barbara Israel's piece, which is cited at the end, surveys several Community Action Boards and describes varying levels of power, participation, and effectiveness.)
- What engagement with a broad group of staff or community members is appropriate while the study remains in its formative stages? Is it helpful for you as a researcher to participate in a community meeting? Is a mechanism to gather and incorporate input regularly appropriate?

- 🔗 **Engagement at the right times.** When is it particularly important for the community organization to provide its input, so that there is still flexibility to make changes while producing a valid research study? Have you explained when you intend to register your pre-analysis plan or seek Institutional Review Board approval, and what this means for the community organization's ability to modify the study design?

b. Engage on what gets measured—check the “simple” measures

What you measure is what you incentivize.

The “simple” measures may not be the ones that represent real growth and benefit to participants most on the margins. As large administrative data sets were in many cases built to report on compliance, metrics of compliance such as arrest rates are, not surprisingly, easier and cheaper to collect data on.

Researchers can contribute expertise not only on what the common measures are, but also on how inequity is built into those measures, and what adjuncts and alternatives are feasible, to enable an informed approach to metrics that furthers—not contradicts—the intent of the research.

🔗 Illuminating the risks of possible metrics and data.

- What can you learn and share with the community organization about the commonly used metrics for this type of work, and what inequities, historical or present, are built into them? Some examples: measuring arrests in the context of racialized policing; measuring “progress” on self-actualization for participants from a culture that prizes interdependent families over independent individuals; measuring housing “overcrowding” for participants from a culture that values extended family; measuring wealth accumulation for families from a culture that values “sending money home” or supporting extended family members. What are the benefits to the organization and to the participants it serves of the commonly used metrics? What are the harms? [Note to designer: Make these examples a graphic?] (A piece by Jeffrey Butts and Vincent Schiraldi on benefits and shortfalls of recidivism as a metric that might prompt discussion is listed at the end.)
- What are the limitations of the data sets you are working with? How will the research team share these with the community organization, and what can be done to address these? For example, department of employment services data do not capture all types of employment, which may result in undercounting increased employment among participants in a program.

➤ **Selecting appropriate metrics.**

- What does the work intend to create, in addition to what will be avoided? When do staff and participants perceive progress and what marks progress in their eyes? How can this be reflected in metrics that are feasible in this context? For example, are connections to caring adults built through the work important to capture? Expansion of the participant's support network? The participant's perception of their agency?



One example you could share with the community organization is of a prison-based fatherhood program (you can find the article by Abigail Henson listed at the end), where dialogue between participants, community organization staff, and researchers changed what the study measured: the unit was changed from the father to the family; the short-term measures were changed, from depression and stress, to pride and reconstruction of masculinity (from provider to caregiver); the long-term measures were expanded, from recidivism, to whether the father-child bond remained active and positive.

- Is there an opportunity to capture the program's impact relating to systemic causes of inequity? Are ecosystem effects of the community organization's work important to capture in the research? Is the program affecting the system or the capacity of the community, for example supporting cultural revitalization, changing power relations, or increasing the capacity of the community to solve problems?

➤ **Communicating about metrics respectfully.** How can you communicate about quantitative metrics with the organization in a way that recognizes that numbers are an incomplete picture?

c. Plan for study recruitment

Several community organizations have noted that a lack of shared understanding between the researchers, those with program operations expertise, and those speaking for the community organization led to lost effort, lost time, and anxiety in recruiting participants into the research. In addition, the optimism that characterizes most community organization leaders can contribute to blind spots when it comes to planning for recruitment and retention, which then impacts how effective the research is.

- **Voices with expertise.** Who needs to be at the table to be able to walk through the recruitment process in detail from start to finish to really understand what is necessary to put together a 'cohort' for a research study? Outreach? Social workers? Program directors? Former participants?
- **Recruitment process.** What is the detailed process based on these voices of expertise? Importantly, the research itself can affect both the process, and attrition. For example, the research could change how participants apply to the program, from interested young people applying, to schools generating lists of young people invited into the program; as a result of this shift, attrition will rise from what the program has seen historically. Where does attrition happen in the process and by how much? What number of participants would need to start the recruitment process to end up with a certain number of participants completing the program? How frequently will participants move out of the program and what does this mean for how much time it takes for the target number of participants to complete the program? What does "completing the program" or "graduating" mean for your organization, operationally?

- **Recruitment target and resources required.** Based on available information from the community organization, what is your best estimation of the number of participants necessary to appropriately power the study? Piecing this together with the program's process from the start of recruitment to program completion, what total number of participants must be recruited? Can you share example numbers to illustrate what a statistically significant change looks like, using the specific context of the nonprofit and a potential study outcome? Can you share experiences from other studies on what changes were required by the community organization to achieve this? Having the researchers and operational team together name different scenarios, then explore the challenges and the manpower related to each, can be a helpful approach.
- **Data required.** What other data about participants will you need to collect, and how will you collect these, or how will these be collected by staff and passed to you?
- **Communications.**
 - How will the recruitment target and process be communicated to recruitment partners, staff, community or participants?
 - Are breakfast or evening community meetings appropriate, with researchers present to answer questions? School night kick-offs? One-on-one conversations between researchers and recruitment partners/staff leading recruitment? Will there be any resources or stipend for recruitment partners?
 - Are the explanations of the research to participants, staff, partners, community in a form that is understood by these audiences?

➔ These types of meetings require planning through an equity lens. What is the best time of day for community members to attend? Evenings? Weekends? What about childcare? Food? Meeting format? Seating arrangement?

d. Engage on how study participants experience the research

The lived experience of a study can change power dynamics or reinforce them. This can be true even with the best of intentions, and even though the total amount of services provided may not have changed or may even have increased.

While in researchers' minds the study may be "separate" from the program, for staff and participants, that distinction may not have any meaning—it is all part of the work.

The experience of participants in the study also affects study retention.



Pictured: Storycatchers Theatre ensemble

➤ Fit of research design and mission.

- Throughout the study and as it ends, how is the research design consistent with the mission of the community organization and trust it has built in the community? For example, what will potential participants see after study enrollment ends, particularly if the program will not have additional capacity at that point? What is the impact of changes made because of the research study to the organization's reputation in the community?
- How is consent best approached? In this particular context, is it better for participants in the control group to meet program staff in person and give consent, or to be randomized on a list without ever interacting with staff? Will the control group, if there is one, be asked for consent? Is consent written in a way that is understood? Is consent presented in a context/at a time when the participant actually has agency to give consent?

- **Recruitment strategies.** What specific strategies can be used to bring participants into the study and retain them through the course of the study? There is a “tax” on producing knowledge about those most marginalized: it is harder for researchers to connect with those with instability in their lives; it is harder to obtain consent from those who have learned to distrust institutions; it is harder to retain in a research study those who experience greater barriers. How can social media be helpful? Will multiple redundant strategies be feasible, to increase success?

➔ The article “Study Retention as Bias Reduction in a Hard-to-Reach Population” by Columbia Professor Bruce Western and colleagues referenced at the end may aid brainstorming on study recruitment and retention, e.g., the timing of financial incentives at the start of a study (if applicable); frequency of contact; back-up contacts including mothers and supportive secondary contacts.

➤ Experience of being in a research study.

- How will study participants be contacted? How will they be engaged through the study? Who will engage them? How can the nonverbal cues create the desired experience for study participants? What have participants heard before about research in their community or by similar institutions? What is different here, and how is that explicitly communicated in ways most likely to be heard?

- › The assumption in research can be that “nothing is happening” to the control group. But, from the perspective of a young person going through an application process and being “randomized out” or from the perspective of referral sources referring many additional people to a community organization, only to have them not receive services, something has happened. If the study will include a randomized control group, who will communicate to the control group about the randomization and what will be communicated? How will this feel standing in the young person’s shoes? If members of the control group have been exposed to other research studies, as is often the case in Chicago, what narratives is it important to address, e.g., a sense that “randomization” is not actually random? If young people are randomized out early on in program enrollment, but are aware there is still room left in a sought-after program, what is staff’s response? If participants in the comparison and treatment groups will interact, for example, within a school, what communication will aid each group of people?

➤ **Responsive communications.** What is the best way to communicate about what matters to participants, for example:

- › What is the best way to communicate about privacy? Concerns nonprofits have shared, from their participants, include: Who all will know I am in the study? Will my name be published anywhere? How much will they be in my life? Do they watch from the cameras in the building? If I am involved in questionable activity, are they going to report me to the police?
- › What is the best way to communicate about benefits? Participants have asked: How does being part of a study help me?
- › What is the best way to communicate about expectations? Participants have asked: Am I allowed to participate in other programs/employment during the study? Can you still help me if I am not in the treatment group? Can I apply again? Who is going to help me if you can’t?
- › Be aware that there may be misunderstandings about research preceding your study.

➤ **Trauma.** How do awareness of trauma and the research study’s potential to trigger memories and emotions shape the work? A study can be an emotional trigger for program participants, and for staff who were themselves researched or interrogated in other ways in their childhood. Trauma expertise can inform study outreach and study design to minimize that effect. For example, trauma awareness can shape how staff participate in the research (and change whether their stress is transmitting fear to participants). If this is not an area in which your team is experienced, seek out expertise so you are equipped to answer these questions.

e. Build in time for reflection, failure, change

Meaningful reflection and problem-solving during the initial steps of a community-research partnership take time. Build this into the plan.

➤ **Cadence.** What is the cadence on which the team should reflect on the work and engage on challenges? Where and when will these conversations be held? Who will participate and who will lead?

➤ **Discussion topics.**

- › Feedback on the research effort so far, and what needs to be done to address it.
- › How are inequitable approaches, methods, measures filtering into the study, and what are opportunities to do differently? For example, are you unintentionally taking advantage of what your privilege allows you to do, such as dictating meeting times and locations? How is your work creating a way of operating intentionally distinct from the legacy of “research brain” and “community brawn?”
- › How are relationships of trust being formed, and how is the team interacting as equals? Note that while researchers’, staff, and community members’ roles in the research differ, the point here is that no one is treated as superior or inferior.

➤ **Closing the loop.** How are you communicating as clearly as possible to those providing input what you as researchers are doing with that input? How are you “closing the loop?” ■

3.

COMMUNITY AND VOICE

DURING THE STUDY

a. Engage during the study

Once the study launches, staying engaged with the community organization or community evaluation committee helps the research continue in a more equitable way.

🕒 Feedback loop.

- How are staff, participants' and community members' voices being heard during the course of the study? What feedback is being shared and what can be done to address the feedback and communicate back to those who shared it? If no feedback is being shared, what else can be done to listen? Some organizations have found a biweekly conversation among researchers and those at the community organization involved in implementing the study tremendously valuable to ask and answer questions and plan for each new step in the work in an organic and effective way.
- How can you continue to spend time with the organization and build relationships? How can you give credit to the community organization or participants where your partnership is working well, and show—through actions—humility?

🕒 Listening for clues.

- How are efforts to bring participants into the study and engagement with participants during the study working well? What is not working and what can be done better?
- How are touchpoints with those in the control group, if there is one, working well? What is not working and what can be done better?
- How are inequitable approaches, methods, measures filtering into the research despite the best of intentions and what can be done to reorient? Who is not appearing as robustly in early data (for example, young people experiencing housing instability)? Who is not being heard?



b. Collaborate on study tools and problem-solving

Collaboration between the community organization and researchers on study tools such as surveys can improve both the experience of being surveyed and the quantity and quality of information gathered.

➤ Contextual awareness.

- › How can the community organization and researchers best collaborate so study tools fit the specific context and also have the validity desired?
- › How will draft study tools be vetted from the point of view of participants? For example, are surveys of an appropriate length?

➤ Execution.

- › What types of data, for example, social security numbers, does the community organization view as likely to be a challenge to collect in this context, and what are alternatives?
- › If a representative group is assembled, for example a focus group, is it a meaningful “group” in the eyes of the community organization? How can the community organization help you to create the conditions for voices to be heard?
- › Can community members be hired to help collect data or conduct surveys? ■

4.

EQUITABLE NUMBERS FOR IMPACT

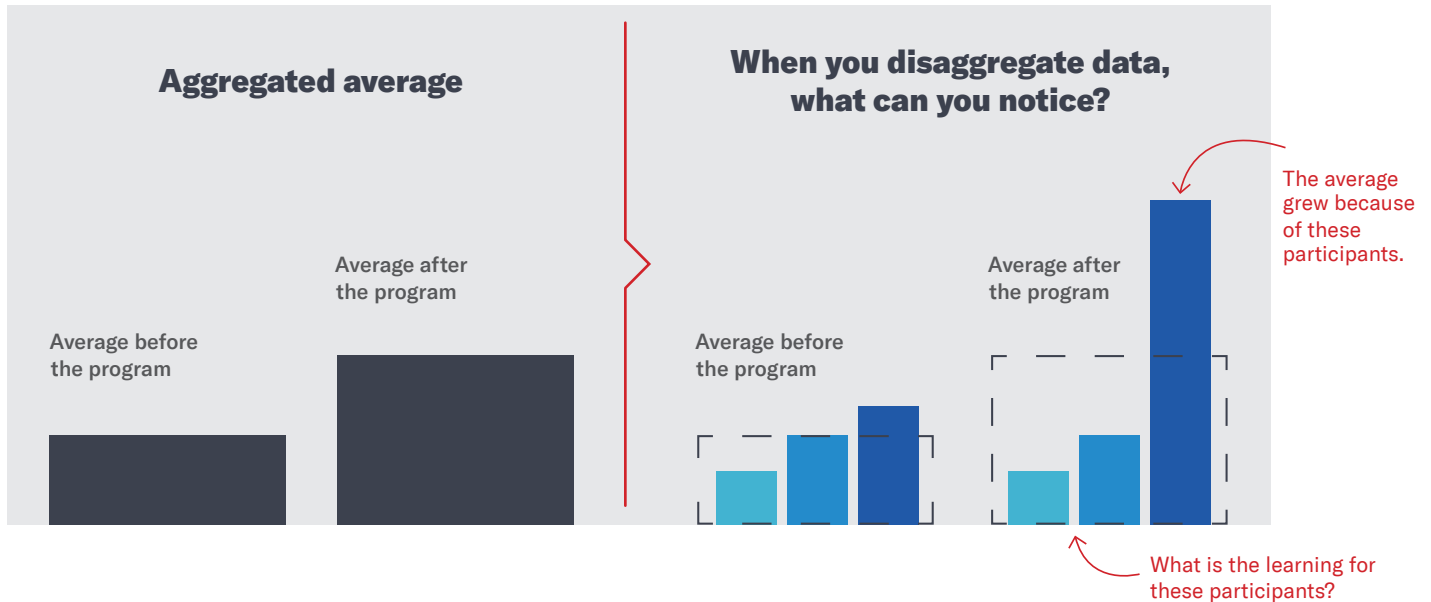
a. Make it useful along the way.

The history of distrust between community and researchers comes in part from community organizations entering research partnerships expecting the work will improve lives of participants, and later finding the research may not help them with day-to-day operations or bring resources to their community. How can the research improve lives of participants as much as possible, as soon as possible?

- **Early learnings.** What are early learnings from the research and how can these be shared with staff, participants, community, or partners to show what their hard work is yielding?
- **Early action.**
 - › What improvements to the program are possible during the research, given the context of the organization and the research design, which may limit what changes can be made?
 - › How will those responsible for making the changes engage with the data early on so they can plan for action?
- **Sense checking.** Is there a role for the organization's staff in sense-checking early data or preliminary results? In reviewing how qualitative data are coded? Are preliminary results consistent with the experience of the organization, or do they look oddly high or low?



b. Bring attention to who is being benefited the most? Least?



As researchers are taught, averages can obscure how impact is distributed. Incentives to support participants to reach a certain bar—less recidivism, more college enrollment, more employment—can make the case for the work supporting participants farther away from the threshold harder-to-make.

For greater impact, researchers can support a more nuanced understanding of who is being successfully reached and who is left farther behind, who is benefiting most and least, and what can be learned from the complex stories beneath the numbers.

🔍 **Disaggregated data.** Against whatever metric has been chosen, for example, GPA, how much change does the program create for participants starting out furthest behind, versus participants in the middle, versus participants starting out furthest ahead? (This must be done in a way that continues to protect individuals' privacy.)

🔍 **Learning from who is benefited least and most.**

- > Who is benefited the most by the organization's work? What are the characteristics— demographic, intersectional, and situational, for example, housing stability, adult relationships, connectedness—of the small group of participants benefited most?
- > Who is benefited least by the organization's work? What are the characteristics of these participants?
- > What can the organization learn from these stories? What can the organization learn from the specific stories of those benefited most, recognizing the complexity of these success stories, to spur innovation? Are there adjustments to the program the organization will try out to better serve its target participants?

🔍 **Counting inequity.** Is the correlation between race and outcomes, or class and outcomes, changed as a result of the organization's work?

c. Who is the comparison point?

Just as averages can obscure who, specifically, is and is not benefitting, comparison to the average can be misleading. For example, comparing to an “average” client load may not be relevant and may burn staff out if the work involves complex trauma. For example, if custodial sentence lengths get shorter because of a program and there is no change in recidivism, this can be an improvement in recidivism if normally an increase in recidivism is expected whenever sentence lengths get shorter. For example, a young person dropping out of a program and re-engaging several times can be an indicator of an organization’s persistence in building relationships, rather than an efficiency marker to improve.

🔍 Comparison points.

- For a study comparing outcomes to a benchmark, or analyzing cost and benefit, who and what is proposed as the comparison? How can comparison points show different perspectives or the complexity of the work?
- Does the comparison point take into account the impacts of systemic and individual traumas, for example the implications of stress experienced by program staff as a factor in selecting what productivity comparison is relevant?
- *Does the comparison point ring true to those being measured?*

🔍 **Cost-benefit analysis.** How can analysis capture systemic effects, where cost-benefit numbers are an output of the work? Accounting for “cost” of the status quo only in terms of tax dollars—which are often actually wages that benefit a different group of people—rather than the actual social cost, can unwittingly and incorrectly build a case against investment in community work.

🔍 Capturing growth.

- How does the presentation of the data reveal growth journeys which may not be linear? Does the comparison point allow for—to use substance abuse terminology—relapse in the context of recovery? ■

WYNDALE CHRISTIAN
LEGAL CENTER
Loving God. Loving People.

1530



5.

SHARING RESULTS

a. Is it historical? Is it contextualized?

Numbers, without context, take on the assumptions and biases of their audience. Data sources, without context, reinforce the structural bias built into them.

As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns, a story is fundamentally shaped by where you begin it. The origins of inequity are often left out of the story, allowing histories to be laundered, and reinforcing harmful silences in the narrative.

- **Context.** What history and explanation of structural and systemic factors is important to frame the challenges the organization is addressing? To explain fully why the problem exists in the first place and the complexity of root causes and pathways? How can this show up in the description of the organization's work and dissemination of the research?
- **Dominant narratives.** What narratives have previously described the organization's participants, its work in the community, or its type of work? How have these narratives served participants well? How have they harmed them, or reinforced inequities? With this understanding, how can this research be framed to take on unjust narratives? What cultural context is important to tell?
- **Limitations.** How are limitations of the data clearly communicated? For example, limitations of administrative data sets, limitations of summarized data, limitations of common metrics, systematic non-counting, or systematic undercounting? "Objective" data like special education designations, census data, crime that is measured by arrests, or domestic violence information, can incorporate racialized processes and lead to incorrect interpretations, without context.



b. Can you hear the participants? Are you signaling that lived experience is valuable?

Valuing data to achieve an end—whether securing funding, improving programs, sharing learning with the field, changing narratives—is not the same as valuing a human story and experience intrinsically. Honoring a participant’s voice requires intention, it may not just happen from documenting a participant’s story, demographics or outcomes.

➤ Participant voices.

- Can you hear the participants in what you, the community organization, the funders, are disseminating about the research?
- How are images, stories, numbers resulting from the research effort putting participants at the center in how they are shared, versus treating them as objects of study or as tokens to lend credibility? How can you engage the community organization to further this?

➤ **Authorship.** Is there an opportunity for the participants or the community organization to own elements of or co-author what is produced, or does it serve the community organization to have an external author?

➤ Respecting experience.

- How does the presentation of results message to the audience that experience is valuable and valid, rather than reinforcing the bias that university expertise gives validity?
- *Would participants find that what is being put out is true to their experience?*

c. Is it accessible? Can those researched hear the research?

Sharing research results in an accessible way—versus only in journals that require a subscription to access and a specific technical training to understand—brings the fruits of the research to those who participated in it and who are affected by it. It is accountable to relationships built, and necessary for the research to power broader change. Some considerations:

🔗 Language.

- Is the language used as easy to understand as possible? Do people from different cultures, with different lived experiences, with different technical backgrounds understand the results of the research and the “so what” of what it means, when you test an early draft?
- Are all inputs, calculations, and methods clearly explained, so stakeholders with different technical backgrounds can understand what has been counted, how, and based on what judgments? Are data tables and charts legible to those without research and statistics backgrounds? Are any technical terms used defined in plain language?

🔗 Forums and formats.

- How will you collaborate with the community organization to identify the format(s) that will make the results most accessible to those affected by the research? To those who have power to support the work? To partners or others in the community organization’s coalition for change?
- Where—in what forums—will the results of the research be most likely to reach each of these audiences? Does it make sense to host community discussions to share results? Post video on social media? Design a simple summary that articulates what was learned, and to what end?
- Revisit the chart you may have made early on to identify those potentially affected by the research. Are those people being reached?
- Revisit what you learned about local context and history, is the work being shared in a way that feels different than what came before?

d. Learning for equity

Having applied creativity to conducting the research, take the opportunity to reflect:

- 🔗 **Process.** What were lessons from this research on the process of doing research with an equity orientation? Were objectivity, bias, or rigor affected? Were participation and community involvement affected? Were accountability or ethics affected? How can you capture this creativity and learning, and share it with your institution and with the research community? How can you support the community organization in sharing this creativity and learning?
- 🔗 **Endpoints.** How were the endpoints of the research different than a traditional approach? Did the level of insight derived change? Did the usefulness of the outputs to the community organization change? Was the capacity of the community organization affected? Did members of the community or community organization get interested in evidence and research? How were you and your capabilities changed?
- 🔗 **Learning and sharing.** What could have been done better, and what worked well? What is the feedback from the community organization and community stakeholders? What is their guidance for future projects? How will you share your lessons with the community organization? How will your institution internalize these lessons? ■



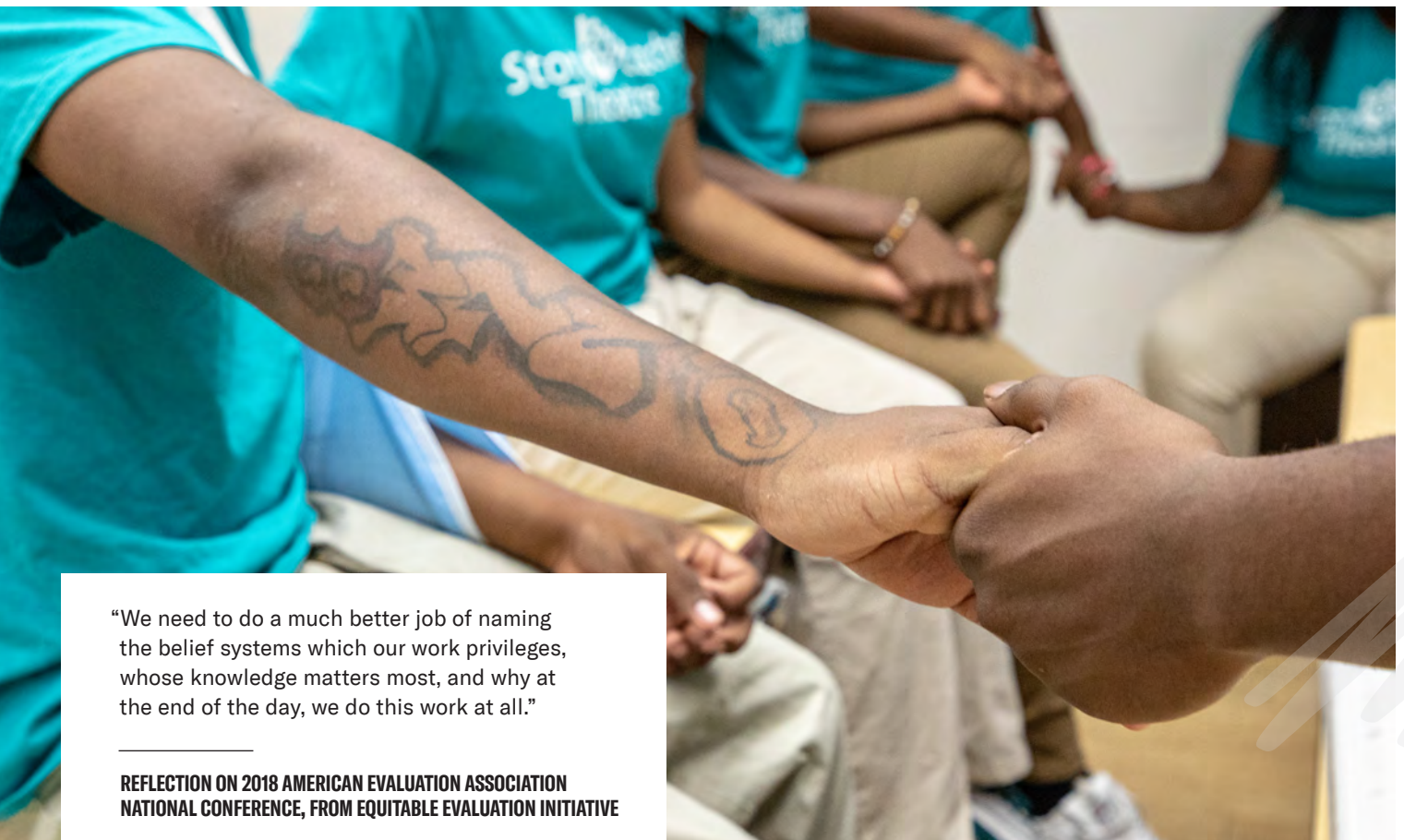
FOR FUNDERS

Before you start:

What is your relationship with research?

Funders are a driver of the economy of research and evaluation: funding the production of research, incentivizing its creation, shaping its form, consuming its outputs. Government funding is influenced by the evidence that philanthropic investments produce.

Individual funders relate to research differently. Some may fund research to generate knowledge for policymakers and other funders on what works and what does not. Others may fund evaluation to assess the impact of their funding, for their or their boards' own consumption. Still others may fund research in service of a community organization's growth or to change narratives. Those that do not fund research at all may participate in the research economy by using data to direct their funding or to summarize the impact of their work.



“We need to do a much better job of naming the belief systems which our work privileges, whose knowledge matters most, and why at the end of the day, we do this work at all.”

**REFLECTION ON 2018 AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL CONFERENCE, FROM EQUITABLE EVALUATION INITIATIVE**

Depending on your particular relationship with research, the action you take to unlock more meaningful knowledge, and therefore greater impact, will look different.

For example, you may:

- Change the research questions you are willing to fund
- Fund and set timelines for research differently
- Issue Requests For Proposals, or RFPs, for research differently or guide and evaluate your evaluators differently
- Engage with board and staff on internal processes and biases, especially relating to how you use data
- Interrogate numbers and stories you lift up, and use different framing in what you publish

In all cases, it will require challenging what has “always been done.” This may not be tidy, or comfortable. But starting from accountability and relationship, funders can help to achieve the promise of what knowledge could yield.

Each funder may, in asking the questions below, find answers appropriate to their own work. Chicago Beyond has shared some of our experience to illustrate. ■



1.

KNOW YOUR ROLE, KNOW THE RISKS

EQUITY IN HOW YOU START

a. Bring awareness

How research gets done—the approaches, methods, metrics—has a system of assumptions built in.

In seeking more equitable approaches, one place to start is understanding context and biases.

- **Board dynamics and beyond.** Who is on your board? Who are the other stakeholders you engage? How do they create or interpret “authoritative” knowledge? Who does not show up in this? What changes does this awareness lead to in how you interact with your board, if you have one? For example, is it valuable to have a board discussion about how research, evaluation, and/or your use of evidence are related to your mission and to experiment with changes in pursuit of the authentic truth? How can you listen to community organizations from whom you have collected data, or where you have funded research, to understand their experience?
- **Value—to whom?** How can you ensure the research produces something of real value to the community? What is the value of the research being proposed to the “subjects” of the research? What are the benefits of producing the research or evidence to you as a funder, and to the research institution hired?
- **Biases in selecting researchers.** How do you select researchers? What assumptions are incorporated into your selection process? How could you include researchers from communities being researched?



Some sources of context include MIT historian Craig Wilder’s *Ebony & Ivy* on the history of elite academic institutions in justifying inequities, and the Harlem Children’s Zone’s writings on their decades of experience “being researched” (you can find both at the in the Bibliography).



“You have to build a relationship. There’s a history. It takes time, it takes trust, it takes being vulnerable.”

**MARQUELL JONES, MAC HOUSE CASE MANAGER,
LAWNDALE CHRISTIAN LEGAL CENTER**

b. Understand context

The power dynamic between researchers, funders, and community may lead a community entity to participate in research that marginalizes the community entity or its participants. Some communities and community organizations may feel comfortable speaking up and engaging with funders and researchers about the purpose of the research and how it is conducted. Others may fear that being assertive may jeopardize the opportunity.

- **History.** What is the history of community-researcher-funder interaction in this community, and the particular history for this organization and these participants? How have they previously experienced research institutions? How have funders participated in this dynamic?
- **Reality of the community.** How can you ensure the work is grounded in the experience of those affected, to counteract bias? How can you get to know the community organization well enough to be trusted with the truthful context, or how can you learn from someone who is?



c. Invite community ownership of the questions

Towards authentic truth, funders bear an important responsibility to listen to the community organization and the community's specific intent.

- **Clarity about purpose.** How will the research help the community? Where does the organization intend for the research to land, and what type of data and research design serve that purpose, with least burden on the organization or its participants? Is the community organization served well by research on the mechanisms, i.e., an implementation study, focused on the “how,” in addition to the outcomes research that is more frequently funded? Is the community organization served well by research to identify the early indicators of their overall goal that they can influence?
- **Research questions.** What are the questions the community organization or community wants to answer? For example, what are specific sentences the organization wants to “fill in the blanks” on at the end of the research, and why? Should the sentences focus not just on individual change but on interpersonal change, change to families, or community change? Are there research questions about root causes that, if evidence were generated by researchers, would lead to action on systemic inequities?

➔ For example... “First, we want to write strong applications for state government funding for violence prevention, so we want to say our program reduces participants' violent behavior outside of the program by [percentage/measure], citing a rigorous outside evaluation. Second, we want to show that it is not just about the participants, but also the families of participants that grow stronger through our program and become advocates of change. Third, we would like to identify early indicators that affect whether a participant will complete the program or not. ”

Organizations have found research useful in day-to-day work when it identifies early indicators of the overall goal, if staff or participants can affect those indicators. Organizations have also found it useful to ask staff: What 3-4 pieces of information would help you to do your job better?

d. Prompt discussion of possible approaches and methods

➤ Information about options.

- What type of study is sufficiently rigorous for the intended audience while minimizing burden on the organization? What type of study is valuable to future audiences or enables systemic change if that is envisioned by the organization? How does understanding how the program is working fit into the picture? Would a qualitative or mixed methods study suit the organization's learning objectives? You might share a simple table, such as the one that appears on the next page.
- What approach to research—from traditional, to community-engaged, to full partnership between community and researcher—is most suitable? (more on Community-Based Participatory Research appears in the glossary).
- What ongoing benefits could the community organization see after the research ends?

➤ Information about risks, costs and tradeoffs.

- How can you ensure the community organization understands the implications of possible research approaches, for the organization? What would the organization be asked to compromise? For example, would the organization not be able to change key program elements during the period of the research? What would this mean for the organization and for its participants, since many community organizations are constantly innovating and adapting for greater impact? Would the organization's flexibility to select who receives services be affected? Would the organization need to close the door to services for a group of young people for an extended period? For a program with age limits, could the research design close the door to the program altogether for a young person? According to operations staff or participants, what may be the impact of the changes contemplated for the research?
- Who else needs to have this information? Is it helpful for you to support the community organization in systematically thinking through which stakeholders, from front line staff to board members, it might be important to communicate with about benefits, risks, costs?
- Can you connect the community organization to another organization that has gone through the type of research being considered, particularly a community organization with a similar depth of relationship with their participants (e.g., few hours once a week versus deep ongoing relationship with a participant and their family)? This may help get around competitive dynamics between nonprofits, to help the community organization better understand the options available.

What are the options for the research? Here is a simple chart you can share:

QUANTITATIVE STUDIES	QUANTITATIVE STUDY	<p>A “quantitative” study focuses on numbers to count the impact of your organization’s work.</p> <p>A quantitative study often uses government data sets, for example from the public school system or the criminal justice system, census tract data, or surveys.</p> <p>For example, a quantitative study might count how many people your organization serves, what services they receive, and whether they have stable housing after receiving services.</p> <p>A quantitative study can produce data on a large number of participants more cheaply than other approaches. It can show that stories-focused information can be generalized beyond the handful of participants telling the stories.</p> <p>For a quantitative study to be possible, you need to have been running a consistent program, be comfortable ‘standardizing it,’ and not change key program elements during the period of the research.</p>
	QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY	<p>A “quasi-experimental” study is a type of quantitative study that shows a numerical change occurred, but does not show your program caused the change to happen.</p> <p>It does not involve assigning participants to two different groups and studying both groups, and therefore asks less from your organization and your participants.</p> <p>Will this generate what you are trying to learn? Is this rigorous enough for the audience you want to reach?</p>
	RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL	<p>An “RCT” or “random assignment evaluation” is a type of quantitative study used to show your program caused the change to happen. For example, it would allow a researcher to say “participants in this organization had stable housing more often as a result of their participation.”</p> <p>It involves assigning participants randomly to treatment and control groups which is effort-intensive (more detail in the sections called Know the risks and costs and Plan for study recruitment below).</p> <p>It is often favored by public policy-makers. Is it necessary for your goals?</p>
	QUALITATIVE STUDY	<p>A “qualitative” study focuses on stories to convey the impact of your organization’s work.</p> <p>A qualitative study may use interviews, focus groups, or observational data, which means a researcher watches or listens to participants and staff members.</p> <p>For example, a qualitative study might summarize what participants are saying has changed in their lives while participating in your program.</p> <p>Particularly when you are trying something where not much is already known, rich qualitative information, even from a smaller number of participants, helps shed light on “why” and “how” your efforts are working, and why participants find it valuable.</p> <p>Community organizations have found this type of research helpful to scaling up their work because it helps you understand what pieces matter most. Qualitative data can guide improvements, for example: criteria in screening tools, characteristics of staff to hire for, service or curriculum improvements. Qualitative data can also suggest internal metrics the organization can use so that operations produce more of what matters.</p> <p>However, qualitative research can take time and be expensive. Does the qualitative research meet the expectations of the audience you want to reach?</p>
	MIXED METHODS STUDY	<p>A “mixed methods” approach mixes numbers and stories, and can provide the best, and worst, of both worlds.</p>

e. Plan for study recruitment



“If I could start all over, I’d ask ‘What’s the power number?’”

AIMEE STAHLBERG, ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE,
STORYCATCHERS THEATRE

How can funders hold ourselves and researchers accountable for creating a shared understanding of what study recruitment will require? Several community organizations have noted that a lack of shared understanding between the researchers, those with program operations expertise, and those speaking for the community organization led to lost effort and time, and anxiety, in recruiting participants into the research. In addition, optimism for the research from the community organization’s leadership can contribute to blind spots when it comes to planning for recruitment and retention, which can then make the research less effective.

- **Voices with expertise.** Who needs to be at the table to be able to walk through the recruitment process in detail from start to finish to really understand what is necessary to put together the participant group, or “cohort,” for a research study? Who is closest to the work? Outreach? Social workers? Program directors? Former participants?
- **Recruitment process.** What is the detailed recruitment process based on these voices of expertise? Importantly, the research itself can affect both the recruitment process, and attrition. For example, the research could change how participants apply to the program, from interested young people applying, to schools generating lists of young people invited into the program; as a result of this shift, attrition will rise from what the program has seen in the past. Where does attrition happen in the process and by how much? What number of participants would need to start the recruitment process to end up with a certain number of participants completing the program? How frequently will participants move out of the program and what does this mean for how much time it takes for the target number of participants to complete the program? What does “completing the program” or “graduating” mean for your organization, operationally?

- **Recruitment target.** The higher the number of study participants, the easier it is to show a scientifically valid change, but the greater the effort to recruit participants. For the research study to show an effect that researchers consider valid, how many participants does your researcher estimate need to complete the program? Piecing this together with the program's process from the start of recruitment to program completion, what total number of participants must initially be recruited? Having the researchers and operational team together name different scenarios, then explore the challenges and the manpower related to each, can be a helpful approach.
- **Resources required.** What will your organization need to change to achieve the recruitment target? One community organization believed their social worker could continue to manage recruitment as the research study began, and later found they needed a dedicated person spending 30 hours per week to adequately support recruitment and build new referral partnerships.
- **Data required.** What other data about participants will researchers need to collect, and how will these be collected by researchers, or by staff and passed to researchers?
- **Communications.**
 - How will the recruitment target and recruitment process be communicated to recruitment partners, staff, community or participants?

➔ These types of meetings require planning through an equity lens. What is the best time of day for community members to attend? Evenings? Weekends? What about childcare? Food? Meeting format? Seating arrangement?

- Are breakfasts or evening community meeting appropriate? Should researchers be present to answer questions? What about a school-night kick-off? Are one-on-one conversations between researchers and recruitment partners/staff leading recruitment most appropriate? Will there be any resources or stipend for recruitment partners?
- Are the explanations of the research to participants, staff, partners, community in a form that is understood by these audiences?

f. Match funding and researchers to the goals; account for all costs

With shared understanding of the purpose of the research, funders can be accountable for aligning support to these goals.

➤ **Selection of researchers.** In discussions with researchers you are considering hiring:

- What experience do they bring to the table about the specific community, program participants, or context?
- What creativity and experience do they bring to the table in doing research in community-led or participatory ways? What experience do they bring to the table of recognizing bias and applying that recognition in their work? What evidence can they offer of this?
- What are their priorities or the priorities of their institution? How do these match with the community organization's approach and priorities?
- What are a particular research partner's limitations in the kinds of research they can support, or are incentivized to produce? What institutional pressures do they face to conduct certain types of studies?

➤ **Expectations of researchers.** Is there an expectation that the research effort will build the capacity or infrastructure of the community organization? How is this translated into the expectations you set for researchers?

➤ **Full accounting of costs.** What costs to the organization and community will be generated by the research? As a funder, you can lead the conversation to account for all costs, both direct and indirect, and discuss how these costs can be shared. What will participants or partner organizations be asked to do differently for the research? Will the research generate new staff responsibilities? Will it generate communications, change management, or other costs to the organization?

➤ **Budget and timeline.** Overemphasis on budget and timeline can get in the way of equity and impact.

- When does research fit to best serve the community organization? How can the community organization drive the timetable? Is program infrastructure in place to enable research, for example, consistently delivered key elements of the program, or would the organization be better served by research timed after necessary infrastructure is built, or with some lead time for preparation?
- Do the budget and timeline support and create incentives for: Building relationships and trust? Developing data tools with community participation? Researchers and the community organization interpreting the data together? Collaboration on how data are shared?
- How can reflection, time for failure, and opportunity to change be built in to the research plan?
- How do the budget and timeline support the fully accounted costs articulated above, for example change management? When the focus is a more marginalized group, how do the budget and timeline take into account the additional efforts it will take to overcome the additional challenges—instead of setting expectations according to the norms of other groups and then treating these individuals as “non-compliant?”
- What are opportunities for residents of the community to be hired, for example to help collect data or conduct surveys, and how can you encourage this?



Color of Chicago Beyond's Experience:

At Chicago Beyond, experience continues to teach us about the substantial tangible and intangible costs of collaborations between community organizations and researchers, that we and other funders had not accounted for.

Our notes:

1. **Being more proximate enables us to learn.** Through deep relationships we have seen myriad financial and intangible costs of doing research from the nonprofit and community's perspectives. We have built a "growth team" who in turn builds trusted relationships with a broad array of people within our nonprofit partner organizations. This intimacy begins in our due diligence process before making the investment, where our team spends substantial time with, and writes or co-writes the investment proposal in collaboration with, the nonprofit.
2. **Funders have unique opportunities to support and reduce some of the costs.** Some examples from our work: thought partnership on the purpose of the research; helping address strategic and operational challenges such as navigating new recruitment targets; developing communications about the research for the nonprofit's staff, board, and community partners; supporting executive directors in their change management efforts resulting from doing research.
3. **We acknowledge that this work is difficult and messy.** Timelines and timing of funding may need to shift, when the cost of not shifting them becomes clear.

g. Memorandum of understanding

The contractual agreement for the research can undermine the funder's intention to rebalance power.

- **From history to present.** Name the local history. How have interactions between this community and researchers typically worked? Set against that context, how do you envision roles and accountabilities will work in this research?
- **Role of Principal Investigator.** What will the Principal Investigator take responsibility for? Is it appropriate for someone from the community organization to act as a co-Principal Investigator? Or is research by an external third party important in this context?
- **Property rights.** Discuss intellectual property rights and data rights. Who can access the data and when? When will data be processed and shared? Who can speak about the data and publish the data? Whose consent is required, when?
- **Signed contract.** In signing the memorandum of understanding or similar written contract, ensure you are formalizing the above. ■



2.

COMMUNITY AND VOICE

a. Create accountability for voice

Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, writes “getting proximate” changes our capacity to make a difference.

Funders can set the tone and expectation of relationships, and, depending on the context, advocate for the interests of the community organization.

🔗 Reciprocal engagement.

- How will you as a funder participate in breaking bread and in building relationships?
- How can you encourage researchers and the community organization to spend time together face-to-face, to begin to build relationships of trust? To show, not talk about, humility? Are Peace Circles an appropriate early engagement? Evening forums for community? For researchers, having the opportunity to connect with the work on a human level can provide perspective, for example on the human cost of research approaches. For community organizations, engaging with the researchers formally and informally helps build a relationship of trust.

🔗 Identification of voices needed. How can you support the researchers and community organization to identify those affected by the research, and to create structures and conditions so that their voices can be heard?

- In some cases, it can be helpful to assemble a committee, which engages regularly to make decisions or give input into what is research and the outcome measures used. The committee may include staff of the organization, researchers, program participants or community members. (For funders familiar with Community-Based Participatory Research, a Community Action Board is often formed to steer both the research and the related action. Barbara Israel's piece, which is cited at the end, surveys several Community Action Boards and describes varying levels of power, participation, and effectiveness.) It is important to be clear about the mandate of the group: What powers does it really have?

🔗 Voice at the right times, and over time.

- How can you support the community organization's engagement at the right times to have impact, for example before IRB approval or before the study's pre-analysis plan is registered? An “IRB” or Institutional Review Board is an administrative body that confirms that certain ethical considerations are met. A “pre-analysis plan” commits to what the most important outcomes and approaches will be in the research. Once these steps in the research process occur, the community organization has limited ability to change the study design while safeguarding the validity of the study.
- How can you check-in regularly during the course of the study, to ensure staff's, participants' and community members' voices are heard? What feedback is being shared—what is working well and what is not—and how can you help address that feedback? If no feedback is being shared, what else might be done to listen?



Color of Chicago Beyond's Experience:

Chicago Beyond hosts quarterly meetings with our nonprofit partners, researchers and our own team. In our experience:

- 1. These quarterly meetings serve as opportunities for the three parties to step back together from the day to day of the work, reflect, and solve problems.** We facilitate the meetings so it is not one group unilaterally presenting. Comfort in these forums has built over time.
- 2. Staff at our nonprofit partners have found they learn from their own colleagues in this reflective space.**
- 3. Researchers have found new insights for their analyses.** For example, hearing from outreach staff that a shift to serve young people pushed further to the margins meant a large proportion of the participants were parents had implications for the study's framing.
- 4. In these forums, Chicago Beyond has been able to support discussions of what preliminary research findings mean practically, and push for more actionable information sooner.**

b. Create accountability for what gets measured

What is measured is what is incentivized.

In doing justice work, the “simple” measures may not be the ones that represent real growth and benefit to participants most on the margins. As large administrative data sets were in many cases built to report on compliance, metrics of compliance such as arrest rates are, not surprisingly, easier and cheaper to collect data on.

Take the example of recidivism. On one hand it is a common metric, and one for which data sets exist. This means it costs less money to track and allows comparison across programs. On the other hand, it is binary. It fails to capture directional progress in desistance from crime. It succeeds in capturing things outside of the program participant’s control such as the intensity of enforcement efforts and prosecutor-judge-public defender dynamics contributing to how pleas are entered. *(A piece by Jeffrey Butts and Vincent Schiraldi on benefits and shortfalls of recidivism as a metric that might prompt discussion is listed at the end.)*

Funders can hold their research accountable for taking an approach to metrics that furthers—not contradicts—the mission of the work.

🔍 Understanding the risks of possible metrics and data.

- What are the commonly used metrics for this type of work, and what inequities, historical or present, are built into them? What assumptions are built into how these metrics are used? Some examples: measuring arrests in the context of racialized policing; measuring “progress” on self-actualization for participants from a culture that prizes interdependent families over independent individuals; measuring housing “overcrowding” for participants from a culture that values extended family; measuring wealth accumulation for families from a culture that values “sending money home” or supporting extended family members. What are the benefits to the organization and to the participants it serves of the commonly used metrics? What are the harms?
- What are the limitations of the data sets you are working with? How will the research team address these? For example, department of employment services data do not capture all types of employment, which may result in undercounting increases in employment among participants in a program.

🔍 Selecting appropriate metrics.

- What does the work intend to create, in addition to what will be avoided? When do staff and participants perceive progress and what marks progress in their eyes? How can this be reflected in metrics that are feasible in this context? For example, are connections to caring adults built through the work important to capture? Expansion of the participant’s support network? Changes to the participant’s perception of their agency?

➔ One example you could share with the community organization is of a prison-based fatherhood program (you can find the article by Abigail Henson listed at the end), where dialogue between participants, community organization staff, and researchers changed what the study measured: the unit was changed from the father to the family; the short-term measures were changed, from depression and stress, to pride and reconstruction of masculinity (from provider to caregiver); the long-term measures were expanded, from recidivism, to whether the father-child bond remained active and positive.

- › Effects of the ecosystem on a participant, network effects of change by the participant, or structural impacts of a program's work, may be less simple to research. However, this may be a critical piece of a community organization's impact where easy-to-research approaches have not worked. Are ecosystem effects of the community organization's work important to capture in the research? Is a program getting at the structural drivers of inequity? If so, how? Is the program affecting the system or the capacity of the community, for example supporting cultural revitalization, changing power relations, or increasing the capacity of the community to solve problems?

🔗 **Communicating about metrics respectfully.** How can you communicate about quantitative metrics in a way that is respectful, and that validates the intuition of the community organization that numbers are an incomplete picture?

c. Create accountability to those “being researched”

The experience of a study can change power dynamics or reinforce them. This can be true even with the best of intentions, and even though the total amount of services provided may not have changed or may even have increased. While the research study may be “separate” from the program in your mind, for staff and participants that distinction may not have any meaning—it is all part of the work.

When those closest to participants, and participants themselves, shape how the study occurs, it can help community organizations and researchers arrive at more equitable and authentic learning. It can also strengthen study retention.

🔗 **Research design.**

- › How can you ensure that the research design throughout the study, and as it ends, is consistent with the mission of the community organization and the trust it has built in the community? How can you ensure that the impact to the organization's reputation in the community resulting from changes made because of the research study has been considered?
- › How is consent best approached? Is consent written in a way that is understood? Is consent presented in a context/ at a time when the participant actually has agency to give consent?



➤ **Experience of being in a research study.**

- How are researchers and the community organization proposing to engage so that the community organization's staff, the community, or participants have voice in what the research feels like?
- For example, how will study participants be contacted? How will they be engaged through the study, by whom? What have participants heard before about research in their community or by similar institutions? What is different here, and how is that explicitly communicated in ways most likely to be heard?
- The assumption in research can be that "nothing is happening" to the control group. But, from the perspective of a young person going through an application process and being "randomized out" or from the perspective of referral sources referring many additional people to a community organization, only to have them not receive services, something has happened. If the study will include a randomized control group, who will communicate to the control group about the randomization and what will be communicated? How will this feel standing in the young person's shoes? If members of the control group have been exposed to other research studies, as is often the case in Chicago, what narratives is it important to address, e.g., a sense that "randomization" is not actually random? If young people are randomized out early on in program enrollment, but are aware there is still room left in a sought-after program, what is staff's response? If participants in the randomized and treatment groups will interact, for example, within a school, what communication will aid each group of people?

➤ **Responsive communications.** What is the best way to communicate to participants about privacy, expectations, and benefits of the study? Concerns nonprofits have shared, from their participants, include: Who all will know I am in the study? Will my name be published anywhere? How much will they be in my life? Do they watch from the cameras in the building? If I am involved in questionable activity, are they going to report me to the police? How does being part of a study help me? For a fuller list of issues, please see page 49.

➤ **Study tools.** How can you encourage the community organization and researchers to collaborate so study tools fit the specific context and also have the validity desired? How will draft study tools be vetted from the point of view of participants?

➤ **Awareness of researchers.** How can funders support the cultural awareness and humility of those conducting the research? For example, Chicago Beyond has supported researchers' participation in racial bias workshops and reflection.

➤ **Trauma.** How do awareness of trauma and the research study's potential to trigger memories and emotions shape the work? A study can be an emotional trigger for program participants, and for staff who were themselves researched or interrogated in other ways in their childhood. Trauma expertise can inform study outreach and study design to minimize that effect. For example, trauma awareness can shape how staff participate in the research (and change whether their stress is transmitting fear to participants). ■

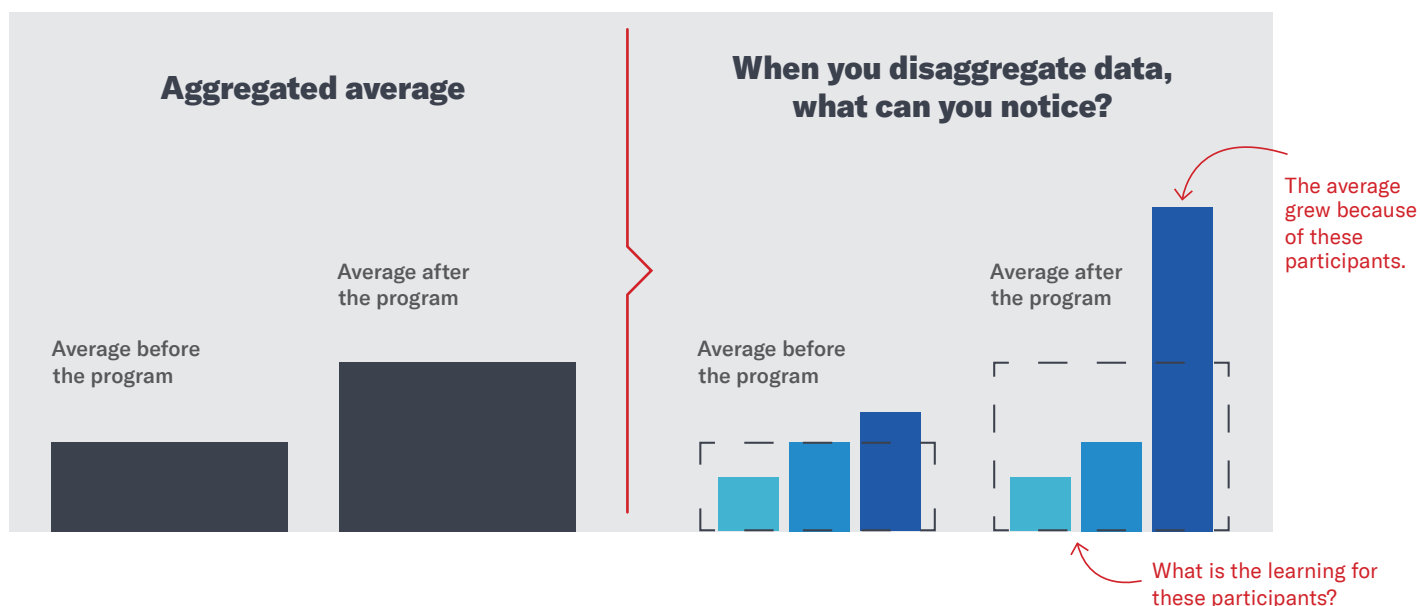




3.

EQUITABLE NUMBERS FOR IMPACT

a. Bring attention to who is being benefited the most? Least?



Averages can hide whether participants most forced to the margins are left further behind, unaffected, or helped by a program. When funders focus on aggregate data describing participants reaching a certain bar—less recidivism, more college enrollment, more employment—it can unwittingly create incentives to focus on participants starting closest to the threshold. For greater impact, research can support a more nuanced understanding of who is being successfully reached and who is left farther behind, who is benefiting most and least, and what can be learned from the complex stories beneath the numbers.

- Disaggregated data.** How can funders bring focus to who, specifically, is impacted and how, while still appropriately protecting individuals' privacy? For example, against whatever metric has been chosen, how can funders create accountability for looking at the change the program creates for participants starting out furthest behind, versus participants in the middle, versus participants starting out furthest ahead?

- **Learning from who is benefited least and most.** Who is benefited the most by the organization's work? What are the characteristics— demographic, intersectional, and situational, for example, housing stability, adult relationships, connectedness—of the small group benefited most? Who is benefited least by the organization's work? What are the characteristics of these participants? What can the organization, the researchers and the funder learn from these stories?
- **Counting inequity.** Is the correlation between race and outcomes, or class and outcomes, changed as a result of the organization's work?

b. Who is the comparison point?

Just as averages can obscure who, specifically, is and is not benefitting, comparison to the average can be misleading. For example, comparing to an “average” client load may not be relevant and may burn staff out if the work involves complex trauma. For example, if custodial sentence lengths get shorter because of a program and there is no change in recidivism, this can be an improvement in recidivism if normally an increase in recidivism is expected whenever sentence lengths get shorter. For example, a young person dropping out of a program and re-engaging several times can be an indicator of an organization's persistence in building relationships, rather than an efficiency marker to improve.

➤ **Comparison points.**

- > For a study comparing outcomes to a benchmark, or analyzing cost and benefit, who and what is proposed as the comparison? How can comparison points show different perspectives or the complexity of the work? How can funders guard against unwittingly pushing community organizations to focus on “low-hanging fruit?”
- > Does the comparison point take into account the impacts of systemic and individual traumas, for example the implications of stress experienced by program staff as a factor in selecting what productivity comparison is relevant?
- > *Does the comparison point ring true to those being measured?*

- **Cost-benefit analysis.** How can funders create incentives for analysis to capture systemic effects, where cost-benefit numbers are an output of the work? Accounting for “cost” of the status quo only in terms of tax dollars—which are often actually wages that benefit a different group of people—rather than the actual social cost, can unwittingly and incorrectly build a case against investment in community work.
- **Capturing growth.** How does the presentation of the data reveal growth journeys which may not be linear? Does the comparison point allow for—to use substance abuse terminology—relapse in the context of recovery? ■

4.

SHARING RESULTS

a. Is it historical? Is it contextualized?

Numbers, without context, take on the assumptions and biases of their audience. Data sources, without context, reinforce the structural bias built into them.

As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns, a story is fundamentally shaped by where you begin it. The origins of inequity are often left out of the story, allowing histories to be laundered, and reinforcing harmful silences in the narrative.

- 🔗 **Context.** What history and explanation of structural and systemic factors is important to frame the challenges the organization is addressing? To explain fully why the problem exists in the first place and the complexity of root causes and pathways? How can this show up in the description of the organization's work and dissemination of the research?
- 🔗 **Dominant narratives.** What narratives have previously described the organization's participants, its work in the community, or its type of work? How have these narratives served participants well? How have they harmed them, or reinforced inequities? With this understanding, how can this research be framed to take on unjust narratives? What cultural context is important to tell?
- 🔗 **Limitations.** How are limitations of the data most clearly communicated? For example, limitations of administrative data sets, limitations of summarized data, limitations of common metrics, systematic non-counting, or systematic undercounting? "Objective" data like special education designations, census data, crime that is measured by arrests, or domestic violence information, can incorporate racialized processes and lead to incorrect interpretations, without context.

b. Can you hear the participants? Are you signaling that lived experience is valuable?

Valuing data to achieve an end—whether future funding, improving programs, sharing learning with the field, changing narratives—is not the same as valuing a human story and experience intrinsically. Honoring a participant's voice requires intention, it may not just happen from documenting a participant's story, demographics or outcomes. Funders are influential in bringing this to life.

- 🔗 **Participant voices.** Can you hear your participants in what you, the community organization, and researchers, are disseminating about the research? How are images, stories, and numbers resulting from the research effort putting participants at the center in how they are shared, versus treating them as objects of study or as tokens to lend credibility?
- 🔗 **Authorship.** Is there an opportunity for the participants or the community organization to own elements of or co-author what is produced, or be editors? Or does it serve the community organization to have an external author?

➤ Respecting experience.

- > How does the presentation of results message to the audience that the community's experience is valuable and valid (for example, in how the community's experience is referred to and credited in the presentation), rather than reinforcing the bias that only university expertise produces validity?
- > *Would participants find that what is being put out is true to their experience, not just responsive to what the funder set out to do, or what the researchers came to ask?*

c. Is it accessible? Can those researched hear the research?

Sharing research results so that those affected by the research can access them, versus sharing results in invitation-only forums and subscription-only journals, is part of taking an equity orientation, and necessary for the research to power broader change. Some considerations for funders:

➤ Language.

- > How can you create an expectation that the language is as easy to understand as possible? Do people from different cultures, with different lived experiences, with different technical backgrounds understand the results of the research and the “so what” of what it means, when you test an early draft? How can you create the expectation that data and charts are readable to those without research and statistics backgrounds?
- > Are all inputs, calculations, and methods clearly explained, so stakeholders with different technical backgrounds can understand what has been counted, how, and based on what judgments? Are data tables and charts legible to those without research and statistics backgrounds? Are any technical terms used defined in plain language?

➤ Forums and formats.

- > How will you distribute what has been learned in formats that the community organization identifies as most accessible to those affected by the research? To those who have power to support the work? To partners or others in the community organization's coalition for change?
- > How can you help those who were “subjects” of the research share what was learned in the ways they think best? How can you as a funder amplify these voices?
- > Where, and in what forums, will the results of the research be most likely to reach each of the intended audiences? Does it make sense for you to support community discussions to share results? Help post video on social media? Design a simple summary that articulates what was learned, and to what end?
- > Revisiting the list you may have encouraged researchers and the community organization to make early on identifying those potentially affected by the research, are those people being reached, to “close the loop?”

d. Learning for equity

As research you have funded concludes, take the opportunity to reflect:

- **Process.** What were lessons on the process of funding research with an equity orientation? How was accountability different? Was the research started at the right time for the community organization to yield the desired results?
- **Endpoints.** How were the endpoints of the research different than a “traditional” approach? Did the level of insight derived change? Did the usefulness of the outputs to the community organization change? Was the capacity of the community organization affected? Did members of the community or community organization get interested in evidence and research? Was the capacity of the researcher affected?
- **Learning and sharing.** What could have been done better, and what worked well? What is the feedback from the community organization, its stakeholders, and the researchers? How will you as a funder internalize these lessons and share them with others? ■

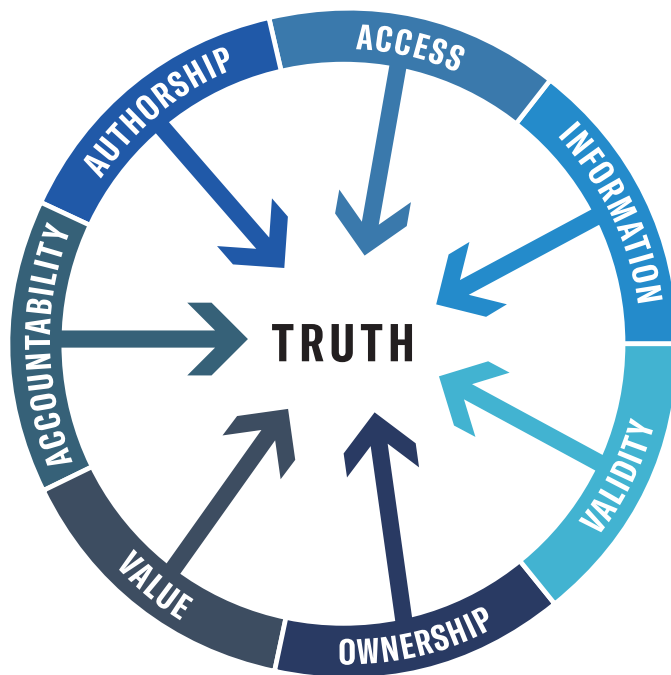
**LET US GO
FORWARD,
TOGETHER**

Let us go forward, together

Thank you for your time, consideration, and use of this guidebook. We see it not as a solution, but as a kindling to something greater, and a new path toward “how” we can all arrive at a more authentic truth in research. We ask that you share these questions and ideas with others in the social impact space, and host conversations to address unintended bias and leveling the playing field to do the most good for our communities.

Ways to join in.

- Share this with your team and encourage reflection and discussion.
- Share these principles on social media. You can pull from the social media suggestions at ChicagoBeyond.org.
- Bring this to your network, in one-on-one conversation with your board members, staff, allies, challengers, and friends.
- Host an event. Visit ChicagoBeyond.org to partner with Chicago Beyond and bring this guidebook to your community.
- Engage in our community of practice. What successes have you had with equity-based research? What has made you uncomfortable, or frustrated you? Send us a note through ChicagoBeyond.org to join the dialogue about our ongoing learning. ■



**Seven inequities held in place by power,
seven opportunities for change.**

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GLOSSARY

Ancient and indigenous approaches to knowledge: Indigenous knowledge is passed through generations, focused on problem solving, and the basis for community decisions. We have learned from wisdom and approaches including ancient spiritual philosophy of India and approaches of Native peoples of the Americas, Canada, New Zealand.

Community-Based Participatory Research: This research approach prioritizes partnership between researcher and community (versus research that is merely community-placed) and commitment to action (versus leaving action to others after the research finishes). The Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research at the National Institutes of Health defines Community-Based Participatory Research as “an applied collaborative approach that enables community residents to more actively participate in the full spectrum of research (from conception to design to conduct to analysis to interpretation to conclusions to communication of results) with a goal of influencing change in community health, systems, programs or policies.” This research approach does not assume you can separate a program from the context for purposes of studying it. Even in Community-Based Participatory Research projects, in practice, the power of the community varies.

Design thinking: A creative problem-solving process that puts humans at the center and focuses on what real people actually do.

Epistemology: The theory of how we know what we know.

Peace Circle: A method rooted in Native American practice to address conflict holistically and solve problems. Peace Circles are a group process that repair harm, include offenders taking responsibility for their actions and, and lead to collective healing.

Racial equity and cultural awareness: Racial equity would be achieved if racial identity did not determine the odds of how one fares. Racial equity work includes dismantling narratives, attitudes, practices and policies that allow or reinforce different outcomes by race. Cultural awareness is awareness of the social systems of meaning and customs of a group, and includes reflection on your own values, beliefs, biases.

Statistically significant: In research, something is “statistically significant” if you can feel confident (up to a defined point) that the difference you are seeing is the result of what you are studying and you did not just get lucky or unlucky in who or what got counted. This is different than what “significant” or “important” mean in everyday English.

Structural racism: A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in mutually reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to, or choose not to, practice. Instead it is a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist.

Systems thinking: A holistic approach to analysis that focuses on the way parts of a system relate to each other and work over time.

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DRAFT

Pictured: Jonte



Chicago Beyond, 2018

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