HiP
HUMAN IMPACT PARTNERS

January 2023

Human Impact Partners

humanimpact.org/research-code-of-ethics

RESEARCH CODE OF ETHICS

Human Impact Partners' approach to research is rooted in sharing and building power in partnership with grassroots community organizing groups and communities most harmed by structural inequities and racism. We believe that research, in conjunction with policy change and power building, is a core strategy to achieve health equity and justice for all.
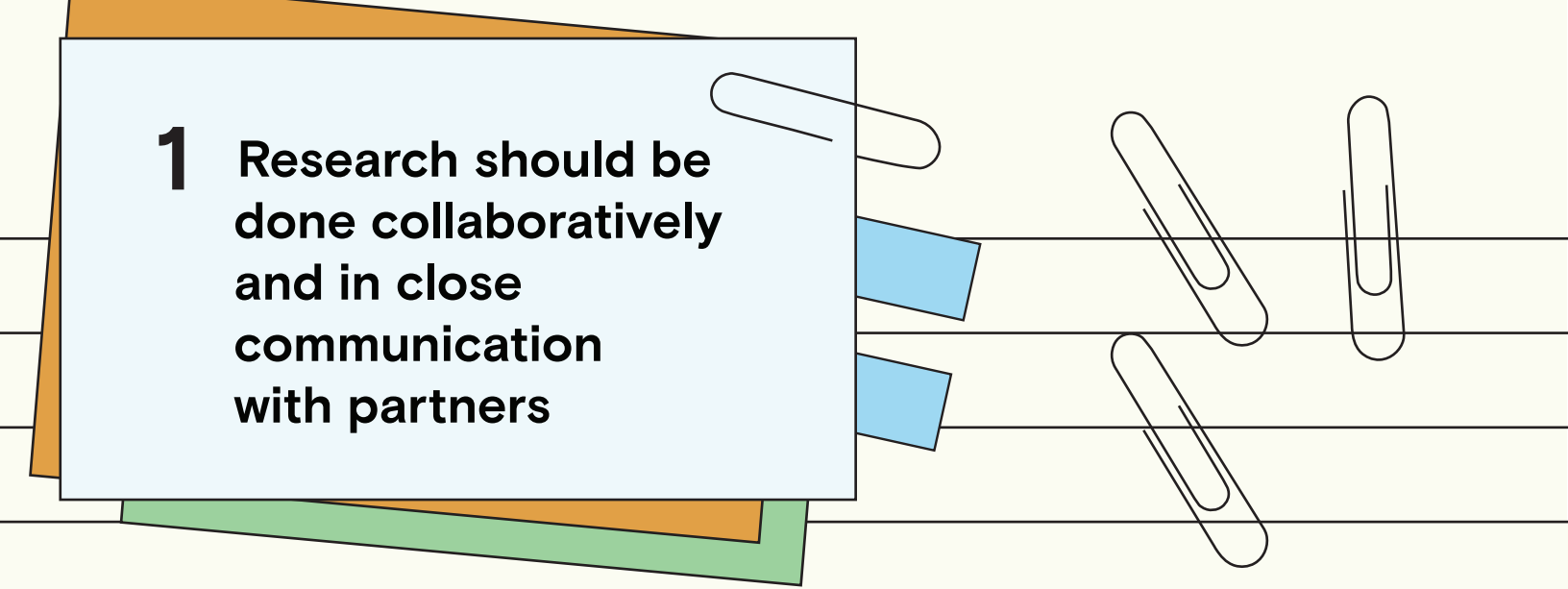
At HIP, we aim to create a collaborative research experience that honors the humanity and complex truths of community members and organizers, as well as the humanity of HIP staff. The spirit of this Code of Ethics — and the spirit of our research — is heavily influenced by various forms of participatory research, wherein researchers, community organizers, and community members work as equal partners in the research process and develop deep, trusting relationships that extend beyond the research project. The intent of this Research Code of Ethics is to ensure our research is rigorous, equitable, and just, and to hold HIP staff accountable to the communities and the community organizing groups we conduct research with.

We envision using this document to:

- Introduce community organizing partners to our values as researchers
- Address organizers' concerns about ethical research practices
- Hold ourselves accountable to conducting ethical, responsible, and engaged research

Our research principles:

1. Research should be done collaboratively and in close communication with partners

2. Research should interrogate unjust systems, be beneficial to communities, and support our partners' work to change policy and improve living conditions

3. Research should uplift and reflect people's lived realities

4. Research should respect participants and their stories, and participants should have the authority to determine how their experiences are included

5. Research should offer acknowledgment and compensation to community partners and research participants for the time and contributions given to the work

6. Research should give participants the option to end participation at any time and for any reason

7. Research should have follow-up beyond project completion

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1 Research should be done collaboratively and in close communication with partners

At Human Impact Partners, we recognize the harms that researchers across institutions (private, government, academic, and nonprofit) have inflicted, historically and today, on Black, Indigenous, and people of color, immigrants, women, elders, children and youth, LGBTQ people, incarcerated people, people with disabilities, people with mental health needs, people who use drugs, and sex workers — and those who hold multiple of these identities. In order to avoid replicating the harm that research can do, our research process centers relationships with the communities most impacted by the issues we work on.

We are committed to advancing racial justice and dismantling white supremacy through our research and all aspects of our work. All of our research happens in close partnership with community-based organizations and grassroots organizing groups. From the formation of the research plan to the development of research tools to the creation of the final product, each step of our research process is participatory and guided by organizers working with communities impacted by the issue we are researching.

We intentionally partner with community organizing groups because they are in deep relationship with communities impacted by issues such as racism, housing and economic injustices, and immigration enforcement and the criminal legal system. Our partners are committed to building power in impacted communities, as well as to policy and systems change. Organizers and organizing groups hold both wisdom and solutions for addressing these issues. Our philosophy is that directly impacted people are experts in their own lived experiences and best know the solutions to the issues affecting their families and communities.

We believe that research, in conjunction with community power building and policy change, is an effective and important lever to address the issues that communities identify as needing change. We recognize that many communities have been excluded from decision-making processes on issues that impact their lives, and we aim to center and uplift these communities in our research work.
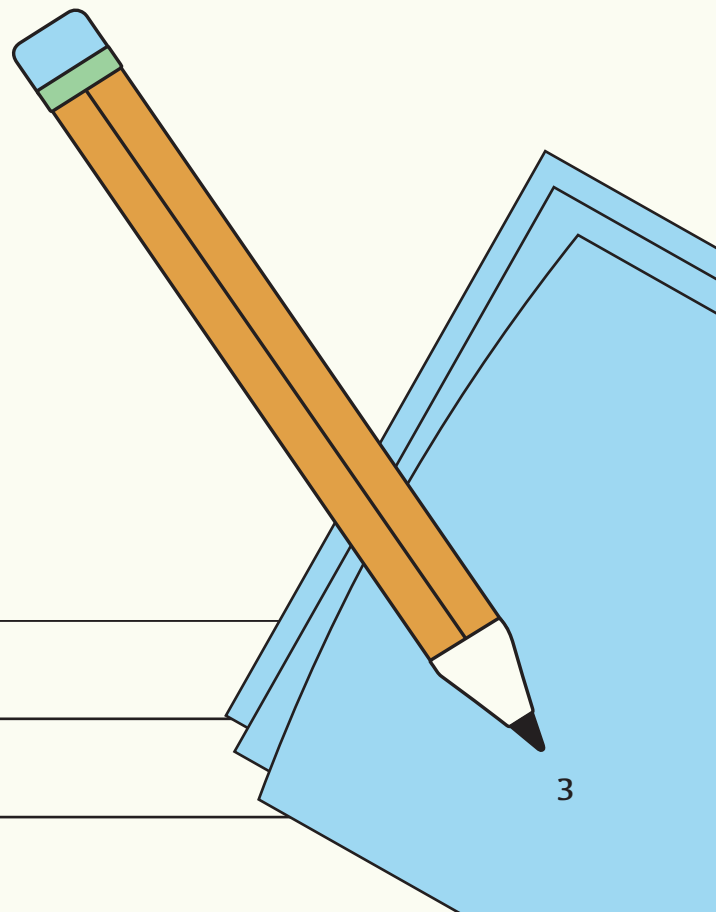
2 Research should interrogate unjust systems, be beneficial to communities, and support our partners' work to change policy and improve living conditions
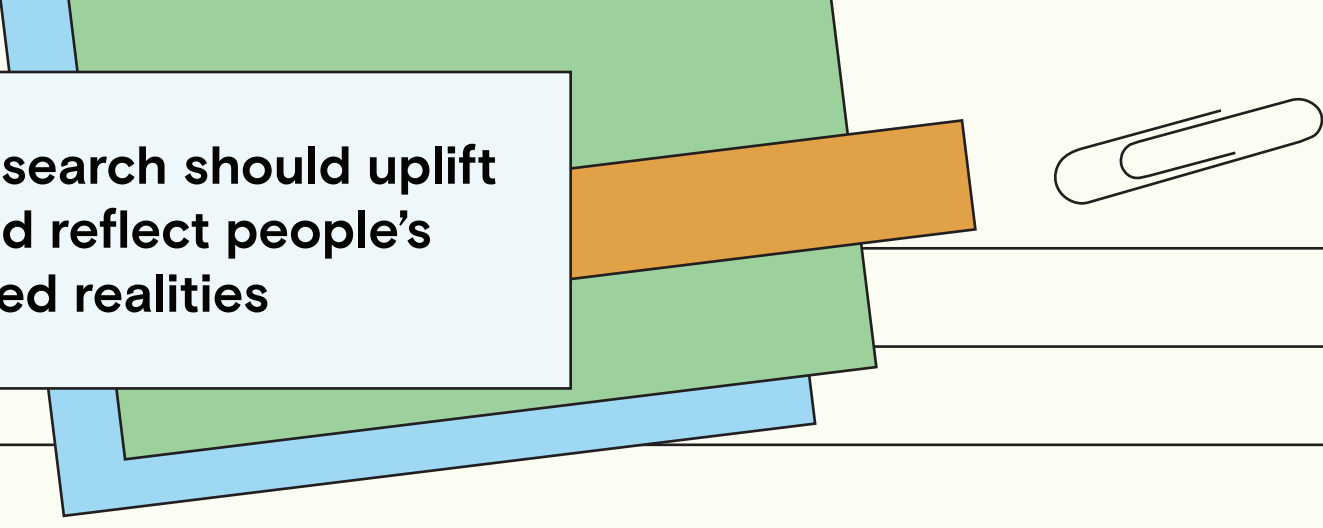
We believe that all of our research should benefit the communities we're working with and expose the systems that cause harm, rather than extract data or narratives from communities for the sole purpose of gaining knowledge, as some traditional research has done. The information we seek to understand and disseminate is meant to be actionable: in collaboration with community organizers and communities, we propose policy solutions that are rooted in the expertise of those who are directly impacted by the issues we are researching. We intend for our research products to be used to support health-focused changes to policies, messaging, and the research landscape itself.

We look to organizers to define and communicate to us what is beneficial and strategic for them in the data we collect, the messaging we apply, and the products we develop. We also engage in advocacy support, such as writing op-eds and speaking with policymakers. HIP is committed to community partners for the long haul.

Unlike traditional academic research, which strives to develop replicable and generalizable knowledge, we frequently conduct research to support localized campaigns. The information we attain is often specific to people's realities in one geographic region or a particular life experience. That said, some of our research is generalizable enough to be used in similar campaigns in other locations.

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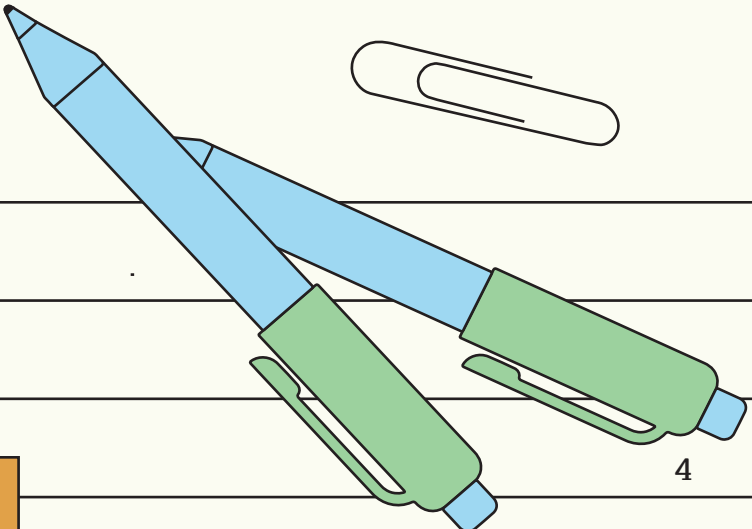# 3 Research should uplift and reflect people's lived realities

Our goal as researchers is to accurately and respectfully reflect the experiences of those most directly impacted by the issues we research through data and storytelling. We collect qualitative data by conducting interviews and focus groups with participants who have lived experience of the research topic and, with their permission, including their stories and quotes throughout our reports. The data from interviews and focus groups help organizers shift narratives by amplifying the stories of people affected by the policies we wish to change. Qualitative data captures the complexity of the issue and provides strong descriptions of the real human impact of policies and systems.

The quantitative data we gather — for example, through surveys or datasets — is useful to understand broad trends across a larger population and to describe the scope of the problem. We can often get larger numbers of participants in quantitative data collection, which allows us to make arguments with stronger statistical power and more generalizable results. Policymakers are often more swayed by an argument when both qualitative and quantitative data are present.

We are careful to ensure that the data we use — quantitative or qualitative — are authentic to what our participants share with us. We work to respectfully hold and communicate their lived realities in a way that will allow participants to feel seen and represented in our research.

As an organization with a commitment to advancing racial justice, we aim to explicitly explore and name inequities impacting Black and Brown communities. We also work to incorporate an inter-sectional framework into our research to understand the ways that certain people experience multiple and layered forms of systemic oppression through their layered identities. In particular, we work to uplift nuanced and important stories of Black and Brown women, youth, LGBTQ people, immigrants, working class people, currently and formerly incarcerated people, and people with disabilities.

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4 **Research should respect participants and their stories, and participants should have the authority to determine how their experiences are included**

Working in partnership with community organizing groups who have relationships with people directly impacted by our research issues ensures that the research process is transparent, clear, and culturally competent. Community partners review and provide feedback on research material and recruitment procedures to ensure that community members who participate in research activities are respected and represented fairly.

Respecting participants also includes respecting their stories in how we use and manage this information. Participants can choose to use pseudonyms or remain anonymous, skip over or stop the research process at any point, and/or opt out of being audio recorded or have their photo taken.

We also ensure participants have the option to review quotes, stories, and photos we attribute to them before research products are finalized. All data collected from individuals is confidential and is not shared beyond HIP and our community partners. Data is stored on password–protected computer platforms.

Community partners have equal access and ownership of the research data generated from each project. After the research project is completed, any research data (e.g. audio recordings) that could identify individual participants by name, location, or other identifier is deleted by HIP research staff. Partners continue to have access to research data, including literature reviews, datasets, and summaries from focus groups and interviews, to support their work.

Research tools and products are translated into the preferred language of participants whenever possible. Community partners also inform other efforts to make research findings accessible, which can include delivering paper copies of research products and hosting webinars, trainings, or workshops on the results.

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5 Research should offer acknowledgment and compensation to community partners and research participants for the time and contributions given to the work

We understand that it is costly — both in time and energy — for participants to share their personal experiences with the issues we're working on. We respect and honor the time, labor, and stories shared with us. One way we do this is by recognizing participants either individually or collectively in the acknowledgements section of our research products. We also ensure that interview and focus group participants from impacted communities are compensated with gift cards. The amount of value on the gift card is decided in conjunction with our community partners for each project we work on, to ensure that incentives are respectful of participants' time but do not exert undue influence on participants to be a part of the research.

We also recognize that community partners are often working beyond capacity and doing the important and strenuous work of organizing and advocacy. For all research projects, we provide community organizing partners with a subgrant to cover the time they spend in meetings with us, reviewing material, and recruiting community members to participate in research activities.
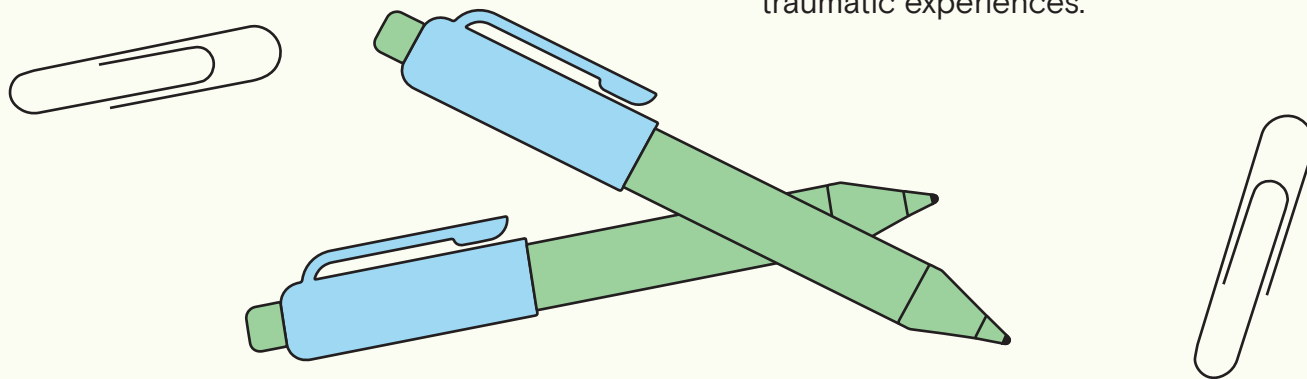
Community partners will make the final decisions about how they prefer to be acknowledged in the publications. Sometimes this means we co-brand the products together, and sometimes partners prefer to be listed as co-authors or just included in acknowledgments.

Because it's important to sufficiently compensate communities for their time and energy, we strive to connect with funders who share our same values in how we conduct research and the issues we conduct research on. We are also transparent to partners and the public about who funds our research projects.
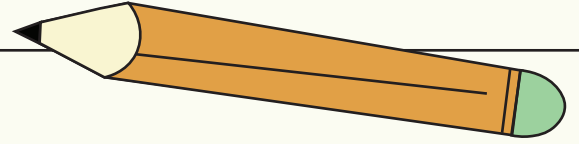
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6 Research should give participants the option to end participation at any time and for any reason

Ensuring that community members feel comfortable during the research process is a priority. Before community members participate in research activities, we walk through an informed consent document that describes the research purpose and goals, the research process, risks and benefits, participants' rights, conflicts of interest, and alternatives to participation, as well as who to contact if participants have concerns or questions. Participants receive a copy of this document for their records. Researchers facilitate ample time and space to address questions and concerns and ensure an interpreter is available if needed.

One way we strive to create a research process that's comfortable is by asking community partners to review all research materials before recruiting potential research participants. Staff from the community organization may also sit in on interviews or conduct interviews themselves and are available as a point of contact should community members have any issues or feedback during the research process or afterwards. When needed, we can also arrange to have counselors, mental health specialists, and mental health resources available for participants during or after focus groups or interviews. Community members can choose to stop participation at any time and for any reason, including if the research makes them feel uncomfortable or surfaces triggering or traumatic experiences.

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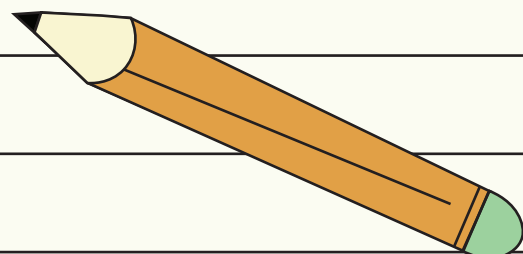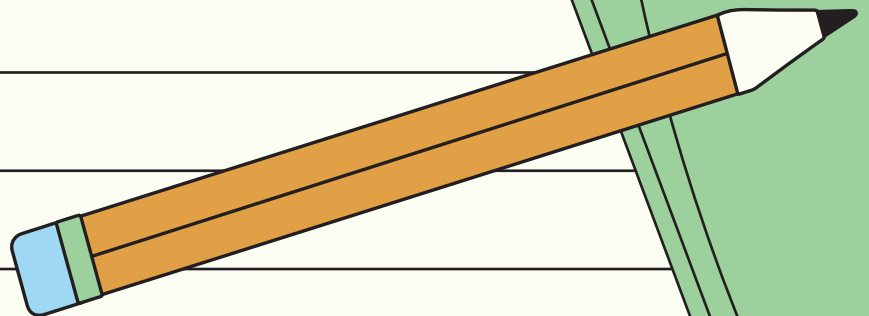# 7 Research should have follow-up beyond completion of the project

We value our relationships with community partners and the communities they organize within. Community organizers play a critical role in advancing health equity and social justice, and they hold wisdom and power to create positive outcomes for the communities they work with. We believe that partnering with community organizers during research and beyond is strategic for creating long-term and effective systems-level change.

After the completion of research projects, HIP checks in regularly with community partners and is available for ongoing support related to advocacy. For example, we have testified at hearings, signed on or written letters of support, spoken to the media, or leveraged connections with public health experts to advance real and lasting change in alignment with our research.

For all research partnerships, we assign at least one HIP staff person to be the point of contact to respond to partners during and after the project. Additionally, all of our research products, including data and reports, are available for partners to use in whatever ways support their advocacy and organizing campaigns.

HIP is committed to being an ally to partners for the long haul. We understand that relationships require time, energy, and nurturance to build deep trust, and we hold ourselves accountable to putting in the work to sustain our relationships.

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Acknowledgments:

First and foremost, we extend our deep gratitude to our community partners whose feedback helped shape this code of ethics, either directly through review or indirectly through our work together over the years of Human Impact Partners research projects. We also thank HIP staff and board members, all of whom read and provided feedback on earlier drafts of the document. We acknowledge particularly the effort of our 2021–2022 research staff who wrote the code of ethics, including Christine Mitchell, Sukhdip Purewal Boparai, Martha Ockenfels-Martinez, and Monica Ramsy. Thank you to Raina Wellman for design and Clara Liang for copyediting.

More about this document:

This document focuses on the philosophy of our research relationship with community organizing partners. We also use a scope of work agreement, which lists our responsibilities and responsibilities of the partner, as well as project management resources (timeline, budget, etc.) and authorship guidelines, to structure our partnerships.

We aim to create a democratic research culture in which researchers proactively and respectfully seek input directly from the community partners and communities participating in research activities. While HIP is solely responsible for the ways we do research, we invite our community partners to hold us accountable to these principles through open dialogue.

Note: In this document, and in HIP research more generally, we have chosen to use the term "community organizing" to describe our research partners because it reflects the language they typically use to identify themselves. We want to note that in many other parts of HIP's work outside of research, we use the term "community power building" instead, defined as "the set of strategies used by communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision-makers that change systems and advance health equity" (source: Power, Housing Justice and Health Equity Primer by Human Impact Partners and Right to the City Alliance).

Resources that informed our thinking:

1. Review of Community-Based Research: Assessing Partnership Approaches to Improve Public Health by Barbara A. Israel, Amy J. Schulz, Edith A. Parker, and Adam B. Becker
2. Participatory Action Research by Fran Baum, Colin MacDougall, and Danielle Smith
3. Community Voices for Health: Community-Engaged Research by Public Agenda, Altarum, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
4. Community Organizing and Community Building for Health and Social Equity edited by Meredith Minkler and Patricia Wakimoto
5. Power, Housing Justice and Health Equity Primer by Human Impact Partners and Right to the City Alliance
6. Our Values by Human Impact Partners
7. Human Impact Partners 2020–2024 Strategic Plan by Human Impact Partners

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