Community based research (CBR) is research that is conducted as an equal partnership between traditionally trained experts and members of a community. CBR can strengthen community-university research partnerships by bridging community partners with research that is relevant to the community needs. In CBR, the community participates fully in all aspects of the research process including the design and implementation of research and dissemination of results.

There are several resources investigators may utilize to obtain assistance with CBR. The Michigan State University (MSU) Clinical and Translation Science Initiative (CTSI), in conjunction with the Office of Clinical Research, are working to improve communication the community by improving access to health information and understanding of research. The CTSI provides consultation to faculty and affiliated health care partners. The Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) website offers a feedback form for community members and research participants to provide their feedback which is critical to improving the HRPP. Information or suggestions from these individuals that impact researchers may be shared more broadly or lead to the development of new initiatives as appropriate. See HRPP Manual 3-3 “Evaluation and Quality Improvement.” For engagement at other sites see HRPP Manual 1-1 “Federal Wide Assurance.”

Investigators of CBR studies should develop terms of reference or memoranda of understanding that clearly outline the goals of the research study, principles of partnership, decision-making processes, roles and responsibilities of partners, and guidelines for how the partnership will handle and disseminate data.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) encourages researchers to engage in community participation in all stages of research when appropriate, including the initial planning stages. While conducting CBR the researcher is encouraged to document the process by which key decisions regarding research design were made and how the communities most affected were consulted. These documents are including but not limited to the following:

1. A description of how and by whom participants will be approached and recruited
2. Recruitment materials (e.g., letters, advertisements, flyers, telephone scripts).
3. A description of where participants will be recruited from

If the study involves CBR, the researcher should include descriptions of the CBR activities within their IRB application as appropriate (e.g., recruitment methods, consent
process, procedures). If community members become engaged in the conduct of the research, IRB training requirements are also applicable to these individuals. It is important that all individuals involved in the study are familiar with human research protection principles. See HRPP Manual 11-1-A “Education: Investigators and Research Staff” for requirements.