



G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T.

a checklist for community-research engagement

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G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T.: a checklist for community-research engagement. This document is a supplement to the 1-page checklist. <http://cbrc.net/growlift>

WHAT IS THE G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T. CHECKLIST?

This checklist is a communication tool for academic researchers to reflexively account for how their research is effectively serving the communities and community-based organizations they (want to) work with. It is meant to be used in conversations between and among:

- Researchers and community-based organizations
- Research trainees and supervisors
- Research teams, e.g., gathered for the purposes of grant-writing or research planning

The checklist is intended to guide (but not resolve) difficult and possibly time-consuming conversations about things like goals, values, expectations, financial resources, language, power, and anti-oppression.

The checklist is not itself a training tool. There are, however, many useful training tools already available that researchers may wish to explore. Some of these are provided in [section 4](#), below.





WHO SHOULD USE THE G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T. CHECKLIST?

Any researcher may find this tool useful; however, we have developed it specifically with new academic researchers (trainees and early career investigators) in mind.

Not every researcher is able to engage with community to the same degree. And arguably, not every researcher *should* attempt community engagement—or at least, not until they have considered whether they are prepared to do the work to make this engagement meaningful. In writing this check-list, the authors reflected on our own experiences as trainees in various graduate programs. While we are committed to the principles of community-based research (CBR), we acknowledge that CBR projects are not always feasible because of the limitations many students face in terms of funding, timelines, and supervisors' expectations. For us, the lesson was that good community engagement is about timing. This checklist is one way to ask yourself: *Is this the right time for me to conduct community-engaged or community-based research?*

Most of the people involved with the development of G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T. work in the HIV/AIDS field, and we thus drew on important traditions in the HIV research movement (including GIPA/MIPA, described in section 3, below). This checklist, however, may be useful to researchers working in other fields of health, or indeed any discipline that seeks to engage community in meaningful ways.

Finally, while this checklist is primarily meant as a tool for researchers to use, community organizations may find it useful to use this checklist in their conversations with prospective researchers. For example, this supplement (and checklist) could be provided by CBOs to academic researchers who are proposing a research project, with an invitation for the researcher to review the checklist and respond with some assessment of how prepared they are with regard to each of the 8 items.

HOW WAS G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T. DEVELOPED?

In 2017-2018, we consulted with over 35 staff and volunteers from gay and bisexual men's* health and HIV community-based organizations through key informant interviews and workshops, to hear about their experiences working with academic researchers. G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T. is the culmination of these consultations. We also consulted a number of existing guidelines and documents, such as those related to GIPA/MIPA, two-eyed seeing, and community-based research traditions in the fields of HIV/AIDS and disability rights activism.[†]

Learning from our roots...

In 1983, a group of activists living with AIDS rallied at a gay and lesbian health conference in Denver. They asserted that AIDS research and other outputs (reports, interventions, conferences, AIDS programs) should meaningfully include people living with AIDS. They pioneered the concept of community engagement, asserting their status not as victims but as empowered agents of change. The Denver Principles later gave way to the concepts of GIPA (the Greater Involvement of People living with HIV/AIDS) and MIPA (the Meaningful Involvement of People living with HIV/AIDS).[‡]

Sixteen years later, the International Network for Community-Based Research on HIV/AIDS gathered in Ottawa, Canada, to reaffirm GIPA/MIPA, and other principles that became hallmarks of good community-research engagement, among them, community benefit, capacity building, and collaboration. This meeting resulted in the document *Communities Creating Knowledge: A consensus statement on community-based research*.[§]

Why another tool? Why now?

In developing G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T., we wanted to acknowledge and build upon these important historical steps, while also responding to a few contemporary trends in our own fields of research. The first trend is a recent and marked increase in the number of academic HIV/AIDS researchers seeking partnerships with Canadian LGBTQ2S community organizations. This has important implications for the abilities of these organizations to maintain their own programs of work, while working in partnership with academic and government researchers. Second, while we found numerous resources

outlining the principles of CBR or community engagement (see section 5, below), we talked to academic researchers—in particular, research trainees—who wanted focused advice about what to do if they were keen to involve community in their research, or consult with community about their research, but were not prepared to undertake more participatory CBR. In other words, they wanted to do better community engagement. The authors believe these research attributes are transferable to many types of research involving community.

Formative work

In the summer of 2017 we began the process by meeting with a number of community partners in Vancouver and other parts of British Columbia. In November 2017, a group of 35 individuals, representing a range of experiences with community-based and academic-based health research, gathered at the Annual Summit for Gay Men's Health, on the traditional territories of the Coast Salish people. Our objective was to facilitate an ongoing discussion regarding new ways to improve community-research engagement (CRE)^{||} in the context of a growing number of LGBTQ2S-focused research projects, locally and beyond.

LGBTQ2S and HIV community organization staff were invited to share experiences from their own histories of engagement with academic researchers. Academic researchers were invited to listen and learn from community dialogues.

We discussed the following questions, in groups of 5-10 people each:

1. When should community organizations be involved in research?
2. How do research projects—and financial resources attached to those projects—align with community organizations' visions, missions, and values?
3. How can researchers improve knowledge translation and exchange (KTE) that works for community partners?
4. BLUE SKY BRAINSTORM: What else needs to be done to create meaningful and inclusive CRE?

We then compiled the notes from this workshop and distilled the notes into G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T.

Drafts of G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T. were sent to workshop participants by email and presented at the Canadian HIV/AIDS Research Conference, in Vancouver in April 2018. We iteratively edited the checklist, as we received feedback.

Notes.

* While we aspire to further develop this checklist in consultation with gender-diverse LGBTQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and two-spirit) communities, consultations thus far have focused on organizations that work primarily with gay and bisexual men.

† For a full list of references, see [section 4 \("Where can I learn more?"\)](#), below.

‡ See: <http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2007/march/20070330gipapolicybrief>
And: <http://vpwas.com/gipa-mipa-and-the-denver-principles/>
And: <https://www.poz.com/blog/how-the-denver-princ>

§ See: <http://cbrc.net/resources/2015/communities-creating-knowledge-consensus-statement-community-based-research%E2%80%A8>

^{||} We define CRE as research that aspires to move toward community-based or participatory research on the "relationship continuum" (unilateral research ← → collaborative research ← → CBR/CBPR), acknowledging that good community engagement can occur even when research is not explicitly CBR, and acknowledging that partnerships shift over time, as we learn and grow. (Cassandra Ritas, *Speaking Truth, Creating Power* 2003)

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

The following resources may be useful to those interested in learning more about community-research engagement. Please contact us (details below) if you have other suggestions.

GIPA/MIPA

King, Mark. (2013). *How the Denver Principles Changed Healthcare Forever*. <https://www.poz.com/blog/how-the-denver-princ>

UNAIDS Policy Brief on Greater Involvement of People living with HIV/AIDS. (2007). <http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2007/march/20070330gipapolicybrief>

Vancouver Island Persons Living With HIV/AIDS Society. (2018). <http://vpwas.com/gipa-mipa-and-the-denver-principles/>

Nothing About Us, Without Us

UN Chronicle. '*Nothing about us, without us*': Recognizing the rights of people with disabilities. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070614173650/http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2004/issue4/0404p10.html>

Community-Based Research (CBR)

Community-Based Research Centre: <http://cbrc.net/>

International Network for Community-Based Research on HIV/AIDS. (2000). *Communities Creating Knowledge*. <http://cbrc.net/resources/2015/communities-creating-knowledge-consensus-statement-community-based-research%E2%80%A8>

Pacific AIDS Network. (2018). CBR Resources/Tool-kit. <https://pacificaidnetwork.org/resources-2/cbr-toolkitresources/>

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. (2018). AHA Centre. <http://www.caan.ca/aha-centre/>

Two-Eyed Seeing

Aboriginal Children's Hurt & Healing (ACHH) Initiative. (2017). Two-Eyed Seeing. <https://achh.ca/about-us/our-approach-two-eyed-seeing/>

Participatory and Action Research

Minkler, et al. (2003) American Journal of Public Health. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447939/>

Dover, Graham. (2008). Quality choice-points in participatory research. <https://participation.wordpress.com/2008/07/14/choice/>

Levels of collaboration (the spectrum)

Weaver, Liz. (2015). Turf, trust, and the Collaboration Spectrum. <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/blogs/1356/turf-trust-and-collaboration-spectrum>

Ritas, Cassandra. (2003). Speaking truth, Creating power: A guide to policy work for community-based participatory research practitioners. http://www.livingknowledge.org/fileadmin/Dateien-Living-Knowledge/Dokumente_Dateien/Toolbox/LK_F_Toolkit_for_Policy_Change.pdf



WHO MADE THIS?

G.R.O.W. + L.I.F.T. was developed by a team of research trainees and community partners who live and work on the traditional unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam: <http://www.musqueam.bc.ca/our-story>), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish: <http://www.squamish.net/about-us/our-culture/>), and Tsleil-Waututh (<https://twnation.ca/about/>) people.

This report was prepared by Travis Salway, Blake Hawkins, Chad Dickie, and Janice Duddy.

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- Mark Gilbert, BC Centre for Disease Control
- Olivier Ferlatte, BC Centre on Substance Use
- Jeff Morgan, Community-Based Research Centre

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