



Participatory Action Research Template

“With the proper tools and information everyone is a researcher” (Kuumba, 1996)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) integrates research and action. This Participatory Action Research template supports community based organizations’ seeking to undertake research projects to support their community development and advocacy work.

Why do research?

Although we understand that information is not power, information is certainly powerful. Understanding more about a problem or gathering information to help better actualize community or organizational vision can help clarify and sharpen our planning and execution, and gather important feedback on our current work. Given how important this kind of information can be to effective work in communities, it’s important that community groups do not relegate it to “experts” alone.

What follows is a template to help you undertake research projects. *The template is not a recipe but a guide from which to begin your research.*

Participatory Action Research Steps

- ✓ Engage Community Participants
- ✓ Clearly Define the Problem
- ✓ Examine assumptions
- ✓ Assess organizational needs
- ✓ Identify a Research Team
- ✓ Develop an Action Plan
- ✓ Develop Research Plan
- ✓ Identify/Clarify Research Question (s)
- ✓ Data Collection Strategies
- ✓ On – Going Data Collection and Analysis
- ✓ Findings and Results

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Engage Community Participants

Participatory Action Research begins with issues that emerge from day to day living. Therefore, PAR involves a broad range of community participants to choose the issue or problem that is within their sphere of influence.

The Problem or Issue (in 25 words or less):

Complete the chart below to clarify the problem. Use the following questions to guide your thinking.

- ✓ How frequently does the problem occur?
- ✓ How many people are affected?
- ✓ How severe is the effect?
- ✓ How important do group members perceive the problem to be?
- ✓ How important is the problem seen by others?
- ✓ Is the problem “solvable”?
- ✓ Are there negative impacts?
- ✓ What resources are available to solve the problem?

Problem Causes (e.g., root causes and others)	Problem Consequences (e.g., Who’s affected? What does it cost?)	Potential Solutions (ideas that can address a part or all of the issue)	Resources (Available and needed)

Examine Assumptions about the Problem

Community participants have a critical voice in determining the direction for solving the problem.

- ✓ Why is the problem important?
- ✓ What do you already know about the problem?
- ✓ Determine what you want to know about the problem
- ✓ Identify possible sources for additional information about the problem
 - survey
 - interview
 - the library
 - the internet
 - others?

Assess Community Resources

Review the issue you will address. With that in mind, list three specific ways in which your community needs to be strengthened in order to achieve your goal.

- List resources you bring to solve the problem
- List three internal concerns that have to be considered or overcome
- How will addressing this problem strengthen the organization? Your community? Bring you closer to your vision and/or goals?

Identify a Collaborative Research Team

The collaborative research team will serve as research leaders. The team is responsible for working with all participants to turn felt, but unarticulated, problems or issues into identifiable problems/issues for collective investigation. It's important that the team and participants create and maintain authentic and mutual relationships by having on-going examinations of status, authority, actions, and research content.

Who will participate	What strengths/resources will they bring	What role will they play?



Building Skills and Communication

Identify local research resources through collective brainstorming, internet searches, news coverage and other sources.

Identify and agree upon questions for surveys and interviews in advance

Roleplay interviews to test questions, possible responses, and to help team members feel comfortable with techniques. Use the experience to refine the method.

Schedule regular times to discuss progress and any emerging issues and challenges.

Develop an Action Plan

The research team works with all participants to develop an action plan.

Problem/Issue Goal:

Research Goal:

Short term objectives:

Tasks to accomplish for each action:

Action Steps	Person responsible	Date Completed	Resource required	Potential Barriers	Collaborators
Action 1					
Action 2					
Action 3					

Develop Research Plan

Determine the purpose for the research

- To gain insight
Assess needs and wants of the community
- To improve how things are done
Mobilize community support for a program
- To determine the effects of a program
Document the level of success in accomplishing objectives
- To determine the effects of a problem
Document the level and range of impact (who's affected and how)
- To affect participants
Stimulate dialogue and raise awareness about an issue

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The research question is the main question that provides a focus for data collection. These questions often ask:

- What happens if...?
- What have we changed?
- What are the effects of ...?

Identify your research question:

Data Collection Strategies

It is important that data collection strategies allow community voices to speak.

Experience	Inquire	Examine	Creative Communication
Observation-field notes	Researcher ask	Use and make records	Community testimony Written songs, poetry
Participant observations Active participation	Informal interview Focus group interview	Archival documents	Oral history, skits or <i>teatro</i> Images and artwork
Privileged, active observation? <i>(i.e. research committee)</i>	Structured interview	Journals	
Passive observer <i>(i.e. community participant)</i>	Questionnaire Mini survey Standard instrument	Artifacts <i>(i.e. historical object)</i> Field Notes	Video/Audio recordings

Research Plan

Research team presents the research plan to all participants for comments. This encourages full participation in the research process.

Actions	What data needed	Where to get it?	By when	Dialogue/reflection session (Are we doing what we said we'd do? How are we doing?)
Planning and implementation issues 1. 2. 3. 3.				
Action Objectives 1. 2. 3. 4.				
Impact on Participants 1. 2 3.				

On – Going Data Collection and Analysis

Action takes place concurrently with data collection and analysis.

- Research team utilize research strategies to collect facts and information
- The research team is responsible for the collection and preliminary review of data
- Research team creates dialogue/reflection session with all participants throughout the process

The research team and all participants understand social context as a necessary component of data analysis. Preliminary analysis completed by the evaluation team is brought to all participants for continued dialogue and interpretation. This permits the data analysis process to create opportunities for co-learning among all participants and for all research results to continuously have an impact upon action.

Dialogue/Reflection Sessions

Action ----- Dialogue

On-going dialogue/reflection sessions allow participants to talk to one another as they undertake actions. Participants share perceptions and questions during dialogue. This sharing of ideas and actions leads to a *group* understanding of the work and what it means. The dialogue sessions help participants to learn from posing questions and critically examine their own experiences from a broader context.

Findings and Results

PAR results are presented to participants as topics for collective reflection. Participants then determine how to use results for continued actions.