

# DORIS DUKE FELLOWSHIPS TIP SHEET

*—advice from fellows to the field—*

ISSUE 3

## COLLABORATION

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**Whether you are in an academic, policy, or research position, collaborations are a key component to success in the professional world. Understanding how to create effective networks and cultivate meaningful and effective collaborations is critical for professional and personal development. This information sheet provides some practical tips for finding great collaborators and being a great collaborator yourself!**

GREAT COLLABORATORS ARE THOSE WHO:



Have similar or mutually beneficial goals



Communicate regularly



Follow through on tasks



## General Research Collaboration Tips

1. Use and expand your networks
  - a. Continue to nurture your relationships with individuals you have successfully worked with in the past.
  - b. Ask your collaborators if they know of others doing similar work.
  - c. Help connect your colleagues with each other when you identify a potential match. This builds goodwill and may encourage others to reciprocate.
  - d. If there are others doing work that you are interested in and you do not have someone who can connect you, do not be afraid to email and introduce yourself.
2. Say "Yes" to new things, but not everything
  - a. Make sure your tasks associated with new collaborations do not prevent you from completing your ongoing work.
  - b. When meeting with new partners, make your short- and long-term goals clear and listen to their short- and long-term goals. Identify areas of overlap where potential opportunities for collaboration might exist and articulate these objectives at the outset.
  - c. There will always be exciting projects; however, you can't do everything, so determining which projects might lead to fruitful collaborations is important. Sometimes collaborations may not lead directly to a deliverable that matters for promotion, but it may be critical for cementing important connections. Be open to these projects but also be aware of your own workload and how much is being added. You may not always get it right, and that is okay.

3. Work with people who are good collaborators and don't waste your time with collaborations that are no longer healthy, equitable, or mutually beneficial.
  - a. Be kind in your collaborations and expect kindness from your collaborators.
  - b. Sometimes collaborations don't work out forever. If a collaboration is no longer beneficial to you, it is okay to end it. Spending time in unhelpful collaborations takes time and energy that might best be spent nurturing new, positive relationships.
  - c. Be mindful of differential power in your collaborative relationships. Be a good advocate for junior collaborators.
  - d. Set realistic deadlines, follow through on what you say you will do, and communicate often.



## Academic Collaboration Tips

1. Find groups of individuals who share your interests and allow you to magnify your reach by rotating leadership responsibility.
2. When developing a joint product, establish clear expectations early on about authorship; create ways to rotate responsibility for various aspects of the writing and revisit these assignments on a regular basis.
3. When doing interdisciplinary work, use a common language. Ask if you don't understand a term others are using.



## Community/Agency Collaboration Tips

1. Practice "research with" communities, not "research on" communities
  - a. Involve community stakeholders in substantive roles whenever possible.
  - b. Community-based participatory research methods can generate new knowledge that is both culturally responsive and ecologically relevant.
2. Understand how you can help your community partners
  - a. Ask for information about the community or the organization's goals and priorities. You can't always expect to get your needs addressed first.
  - b. Present ideas on how your work might be beneficial to the community or organization; try your best to align everyone's interests.

3. Find a champion within the organization or community that can promote stakeholder buy-in
  - a. Sometimes people are leery about working with researchers. Identifying someone folks trust can provide you with legitimacy and ease your transition into the organization's culture.
  - b. Don't focus only on your research agenda. Create a work plan that offers solutions to real problems facing the agency or community.
  
4. Learn the nitty gritty details for how things work in the community (e.g., who does what, how decisions are made).
  
5. Work on minimizing agency burden
  - a. Plan for enough personnel to support activities without requiring agency staff to shoulder responsibility for finding respondents and managing data collection.
  - b. Provide compensation for staff engaged in this work or for respondents (if allowed).
  
6. No "hit and run" research
  - a. Always leave the community/agency with something they can use.
  - b. Use feedback loops.
  - c. Share findings with community members and involve them in interpreting your findings when possible.
  - d. Avoid jargon in discussing what you are learning. For example, "Evidence based practices" may have different meanings to folks in different jobs.
  - e. Write reports with community partners to help ensure that your language and tone will make the findings accessible to other practitioners.

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*for the Promotion of Child Well-Being*  

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*Seeking innovations to prevent child abuse and neglect*

