Stages of a collaborative research project

Like all projects, research projects develop in stages over a period of time. It is useful to see the overall process of a typical research project between SJSC and a community partner. But of course many variations are possible.

1. A community organisation approaches SJSC about a concern that the organisation would like to see researched or a question which needs research to find the answer. An initial meeting will decide whether the topic is within the scope of SJSC and of interest to an academic in SJSC. If so then …

2. A further meeting or meetings are needed to explore the issue in detail, the relevant stakeholders, specify the research questions and identify appropriate methods. A steering committee will be established. Then …

3. Resources need to be identified. If adequate resources are not available from the organisation, the project can either begin on a small scale or be delayed until a source of funding can be found. SJSC can help with grant applications. In the process of applying for funds, further development of the research questions and methods is needed in order to produce a realistic budget. If participants are to be paid, this needs to be included in the budget. When adequate resources are found …

4. Ethics approval must be sought for any project that involves working with people or people’s records. The ethics application requires even more precise details of the research methods. SJSC academics are familiar with the process so they can manage this application. The ethics committee meets monthly so there can be a delay especially if further information is needed. When the ethics approval is received …

5. Funds are available to recruit research assistants and equipment can be purchased. Recruitment of research assistants is another possible point of connection with the people whose issues are being researched. It is often possible to find someone who has the skills to be a research assistant and shares the life experiences or identity. SJSC will have a separate project account for the project for purchases and salaries. We can also manage the recruitment of suitable staff. The project can be promoted on the websites of the community organisation and SJSC.

6. Data collection is completed by research assistants, possibly with the assistance of the academic. The community partner usually helps with the recruitment of participants.

7. Data analysis and interpretation can be quite time consuming and the SJSC academic will often need input from the community partner about the interpretation of the findings. Sometimes it is useful to hold a meeting or seminar to discuss the findings.

8. Dissemination of findings. SJSC focuses on research that will be made public – not just for the organisation that initiated the project. We like to compile reports that can be understood by the broad community and widely disseminated. Usually the community partners will be involved in the report writing and they are crucial for the dissemination. As academics, we also need to publish in academic journals which are blind refereed by other academics – this process can take some time but is usually completed by the academic but sometimes partners are also involved.