Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit

Tool 18:
Actioning the Equitable Research Partnerships Code of Conduct Checklist

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This checklist tool is an assessment of the extent to which research conducted in a partnership has acted, or will act, in accordance with the Equitable Research Partnerships (ERP) Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct includes four domains and 23 items. The Code is an adapted version of the Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings (2018). It has been an influential resource in shaping the values and intentions that guide research partnerships. However, values and intentions need to be translated into actions that have a positive impact on equity within real world research partnerships.

Why use the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool?

This tool assists researchers in thinking about what can be done, and/or documenting things that have already been done, to action the Equitable Research Partnerships Code of Conduct. Using this tool addresses equity by:

1. Highlighting a range of domains in which equity enhancing actions could be taken.
2. Providing a structure for thinking about and/or documenting equity enhancing actions.
3. Increasing the likelihood that equity enhancing actions will be considered and implemented within a research partnership.

When to use the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool?

Phase	Rating	Descriptions
Planning	•••	Actioning the Code of Conduct is a tool ideally suited to the planning stage of a research partnership, when decisions about the research process which impact on equity are being made.
Implementing	••	Many of the items on the checklist relate to the study design and implementation and actions that might be taken during the implementing stage.
Disseminating	•	Many of the fairness elements of the Code can be used in the disseminating stage, for instance, to include Southern partners and stakeholders throughout the research process.

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Sustaining	•••	The tool could be used as part of evaluation, or to think about future phases of a research partnership in the sustaining phase.

Ratings
••• Designed for this stage | •• Can be used as is in this stage | •Can be adapted for use in this stage

How long does it take to use the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool?

Minimalist approach

- When time and resources are scarce, focus on a subset of items in the Code. For example, discuss just five of the 23 items or one of the four domains that make up the checklist. This might take 30-60 minutes.

Intensive approach

- A more intensive approach might involve bringing research partners together to discuss and decide upon actions to be taken in relation to each of the 23 items in the checklist. This approach would require two to four hours, depending on how many stakeholders are involved.

What other resources do you need to use the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool?

- [Actioning the Equitable Research Partnerships Code of Conduct Checklist template](#)
- Face-to-face or online meeting space
- A facilitator and notetaker, both of whom can be selected from the participant group

Tips for using the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool

- Use results from the checklist to inform the research budget and ensure there is sufficient funding for actions that will be taken to adhere to the code and enhance partnership equity. But remember many of the actions of the code will give you better science anyway and not cost more than would be expected from the funder (e.g. having proper representation of local researchers).

Comprehensive background information: [The Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings to Prevent Ethics Dumping](#)

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How to use the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool?

Preparation

- In advance of the face-to-face or virtual discussion provide participants with a copy of the Global Code of Conduct.
- Ask participants to familiarise themselves with the Code and think about the meaning of the four values.
- Ask participants to think about the actions that might be taken to address each of the 23 articles.

Meeting

- Download the Actioning the Equitable Research Partnerships Code of Conduct Checklist template.

- Display the checklist on a screen that all participants can see.

- Ask each participant to contribute an action that might be taken to address one of the 23 articles. The notetaker should type the actions into the checklist template as they are suggested.

- Through group discussion, decide:
  - Which of the proposed actions will be implemented by the partnership.
  - For the chosen the action(s), decided which one will represent adherence to one or more articles of the Code.

- In the checklist template, enter a score indicating whether the partnership will adhere to each article. 0 = No and 1 = Yes.

- Discuss the domain and overall scores and their meaning with regard to equity in the partnership.

Suggested questions to explore when using the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool

- What could be done to translate each article of the Code into practice within the research partnership?
- How feasible is the proposed action?
- What resources would be needed to implement the proposed action?
- Should/could this action be implemented within the partnership?
- What does the score achieved for each domain mean? What does the total score mean? Is a score above 50% 'good enough'? Does a score below 50% mean the research is unethical, not equitable, and should not be implemented?
- What else could be done to improve alignment of the research partnership or project with the Equitable Research Partnerships Code of Conduct?

Expected outputs and outcomes from using the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool

Outputs
- Implementing the tool will produce an action plan that details how each of the articles of the Code of Conduct will be translated into practice within the research partnership.

Outcomes
- The tool is designed to develop a shared understanding of the values on which the Equitable Research Partnership Code of Conduct is based.
- Using the tool should foster a sense of commitment in the research partnership to address a range of areas that impact on equity.

Completed example of the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool

Download the completed example of the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool checklist.

The completed example illustrates a partnership, between a European and an African university, to develop pharmaceutical products based on Indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants. The partnership scores highly because actions to address most articles of the Code of Conduct will be taken. The actions taken to adhere to the Code of Conduct are detailed in the 'Descriptions' column of the tool.

Despite the overall high score, a closer look at the descriptions reveals some potentially problematic actions. For example, in the first domain, 'Fairness', participants will not be

informed about the potential monetary benefits because they are not yet known. However, if monetary benefits are likely, it would be inequitable not to inform potential participants of the likely benefits, even if the exact monetary amounts are unknown.

References and further reading for the ERP Code of Conduct Checklist tool

The items in the checklist are based on Schroeder, Doris, Kate Chatfield, Michelle Singh, Roger Chennells, and Peter Herissone-Kelly. 2019. *Equitable research partnerships: a global code of conduct to counter ethics dumping*. Springer Nature, which is available open access at: https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-15745-6.