

Finding a Research Partner for Victim Researcher-Practitioner Collaborations



This guide offers suggestions to help victim service providers identify potential researcher partners, ask questions to determine the right fit, and set a foundation for a successful collaboration.

Step 1: Identify Prospective Research Partners

The first step is to identify one or more researchers who are qualified and interested in working on victim issues. Consider the following three strategies:

- **Ask for referrals.** A quality referral from someone you trust is one of the best ways to start. You might ask state-level organizations, networks, and coalitions; agencies in your region with a similar mission to yours; and your own personal and professional networks.
- **Search the Center for Victim Research's Researcher Directory.** The Center for Victim Research offers a searchable, publicly available [directory of researchers](#) interested in victim issues. This directory allows you to search for researchers by geographic location, as well as by specialization regarding the type of victimization, special populations, and research methodologies. You may then view their profiles and find contact information.
- **Contact the Research and/or Community Engagement Offices at your nearest university.** Most colleges and universities have research administration offices, and a growing number have an office focused on community engagement. These offices should be well connected across their campuses and able to help you identify potential researcher partners. If they don't have specific recommendations, ask if they could connect you with the leaders of relevant departments (e.g., social work, criminology, psychology, statistics).

Step 2: Ask Questions to Determine the Right Fit

Once you've identified one or more prospective research partners, take time to get to know them to determine if they are the right fit. It is wise to approach this process like a job interview, whether or not any funding will be exchanged. You might ask:

- What experience do you have conducting research with victims of crime?
- How do you (or would you) account for the trauma experienced by victims in designing and carrying out research?
- Have you had any experience working with victims, including volunteering? If so, what did you learn from that experience?
- What experience do you have working in researcher-practitioner collaborations?

- What do you see as best practices to ensure success in researcher-practitioner collaborations?
- How would you use our expertise as practitioners in designing and carrying out the project?
- How would you handle conflicts or differences of opinion that might arise between us?
- What are your areas of expertise with regard to different research and evaluation methods?
(Note: The researcher should be able to describe these to you in language that doesn't require advanced research or statistics training to understand.)
- With respect to our specific needs, what methodologies might you consider?
- If we work together on this project, how would you share the findings with us?
- What ideas do you have for how we might share any findings of this project with others to impact the field?

Take time to ask any needed follow-up questions and be open to answering the researcher's questions. Use the information to inform your decisions about pursuing a collaboration with them, and don't be afraid to trust your instincts if something doesn't feel right.

Step 3: Build the Foundation for a Successful Partnership

Once you have identified a research partner who seems like a good fit, be intentional about starting that relationship in a positive manner. The Center for Victim Research offers [several tools to help researchers and practitioners work together](#), including a guide on [Building Successful Victim Researcher and Practitioner Collaborations](#). One practical strategy to lay a strong foundation for collaboration is to [develop a memorandum of understanding](#) (MOU), which promotes a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities from the outset.

Overall, finding the right research partner can take time and effort. However, intentionality in selecting a researcher who is a good fit for your organization's culture and needs helps ensure that the collaboration will be a success and produce results relevant to victim services.

Additional Resources:



[Guide for Hiring a Local Evaluator](#) from OVC TTAC features a number of helpful tools, including an [evaluation rubric](#) that outlines the research expertise level needed for various projects and a [sample job announcement](#) that serves as a guide to ensure all important requirements are communicated to applicants.



Community Tool Box has a section on [choosing evaluators](#), which addresses why it is important to have the right evaluator partner, what to look for in choosing an evaluator, and much more.

Find us online at [VictimResearch.org](https://www.victimresearch.org) [@VictimResearch](https://twitter.com/VictimResearch) [@CenterVictimResearch](https://www.facebook.com/CenterVictimResearch)