



Bonner Center for Civic Engagement

Community Partner Review of Community-Engaged Scholarship

What is it?

The community partner review is a process designed to provide supplemental information for assessing a scholar's community-engaged work by soliciting feedback from community partners. These partners can speak directly to the core component of partnership creation and practice. Moreover, they are experts of their community and are best positioned to discuss the impact of the scholar's community-engaged work. Similar to an external reviewer who speaks to the scholar's impact on their academic discipline, the community partner can speak to the impact on the community.

Why is a community partner review useful?

Community-Engaged Research is a rigorous approach to scholarship structured around mutually beneficial partnerships with community partners and the answering of questions meaningful both to academia and the community (see "[Key Terms and Definitions for Community-Engaged Faculty Activity at UR](#)"). Because of its focus on community impact, the products of community-engaged research often take forms beyond the traditional academic monograph or journal article. Thus, assessing the rigor and quality of such research is difficult within the confines of traditional metrics of scholarship.

The development of collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships is time intensive, and these partnerships are essential to maximizing the quality and impact of the work. Scholarship on community-engaged research demonstrates that this work achieves its best results when communities are engaged as mutual partners through trusting, equitable relationships, when community knowledge systems are recognized, valued, and incorporated into research and courses as appropriate, and when the collaborators are invited to reflect on the place of their work within the broader community. A key way to solicit rigorous reflection on these characteristics is via a review from collaborators.

This review *does not* serve as a substitute for other forms of review nor replace external reviews of scholarship or creative activity. Community partner reviews are supplemental material designed to support a thorough, holistic review of a scholar's work.

The process

The Bonner Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) has a template of a letter that can be used to solicit a review from community partners (see below). This template can be amended by the chair, or by the CCE in consultation with the chair. The CCE will identify relevant community experts in consultation with the candidate and chair.

Letters can be solicited by the chair of the department or by the CCE. In either case, the letters become part of the candidate's file and are not seen by the candidate before the candidate's materials are submitted for review. Before letters are sent to community reviewers, the candidate signs a memo of understanding agreeing to this process. Review letters will be sent directly to the Chair, with copy to the CCE.

The CCE is available to discuss the letters with members of the department's review committee if the chair feels greater context concerning community-engaged scholarship or the criteria for rigorous and mutually beneficial partnership would be helpful.

Statement to be signed by the scholar

To gather more information concerning your community engaged scholarship, the chair of your department is working with the CCE to solicit letters of review from community partners, for inclusion in your tenure file. By signing below, you acknowledge that these letters are being sent and will become part of your file without your prior review.

Draft of letter soliciting community partner review

Dear [Name],

In the next few months, [Name] of the [Name of Department] will be considered for promotion to [give rank being promoted to]. This will be an important decision for [Name], the University, its students, and the community.

In arriving at a recommendation regarding promotion, the Department will evaluate [Name]'s scholarship. As part of this evaluation process, we rely on a variety of sources to gain a holistic understanding of [Name]'s work. We are reaching out to you to help us better understand the process and scope of [name]'s community-engaged scholarship. You have been named as a community partner whose expertise and collaborations with this scholar will provide a critical perspective to the committee. Should you agree to provide a review of [name]'s scholarship and collaborations, this letter will be included in the candidate's file and will also be shared with the candidate for learning purposes, after their review materials have been submitted.

The most effective review letters will provide a brief description of the project(s) on which you and **[Name]** have collaborated over **[give time frame]**. In describing these projects, we ask that you speak in detail to these three themes:

- What was the nature of the collaboration? What principles guided this partnership?
- How did the faculty's expertise help shape this project? How was community expertise incorporated into the project?
- What were the community impacts of this project? (Consider these potential impact areas: What questions or goals within the community did the work help to advance; what new knowledge, goals, or questions emerged through the work, that have had lasting impact in the community; how did the work benefit those directly involved; how has the work been recognized, used, or built upon by community members, practitioners, and professionals in the field.)

In recognition of the labor involved in crafting a rigorous review, the University of Richmond's Bonner Center for Civic Engagement [CCE] will offer you an honorarium of \$250. Review letters are requested by **[deadline]**. CCE staff member Dr. Derek Miller is also available to answer questions about the review letter process; you can reach him at dmiller4@richmond.edu or (804) 484-1609.

Please let me know if you will be able to provide a review of **[name]**'s work in the requested time frame.

Thank you,