

The "Nuts and Bolts" of Doing Coproduction: Exploring Implementation Decisions in Climate Adaptation Research with Stakeholders

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Introduction: Community-Engaged Adaptation

Adaptation is fundamentally a locally specific experience, and strong evidence indicates that experts actively engaging stakeholders can advance adaptation planning^{1,2} and that involving stakeholders in the research process will increase the likelihood that research findings are relevant to local decisions^{3,4}. Coproduction represents an opportunity for more relevant research and greater impact with communities, but it can also carry risks in terms of time, career trade-offs, reputational impacts, and damage to relationships if done poorly or without intention^{9,10,11,12}. Furthermore, it can exacerbate existing inequalities and lead to unintended outcomes¹³, and because it asks a lot of partners, it is worth determining what level of engagement is required to meet the project goals^{12,14}.

We identify eight questions that researchers coproducing science with communities will need to grapple with when designing and conducting research. These questions emerged from Western Water Assessment's VCAPS Pilot Project, during which we hosted a series of 5 community climate workshops in Colorado and Utah.

Q1: Community Recruitment

- While it might be easier to recruit communities where researchers already have relationships, it also might overlook new communities and those with higher needs
- Equity and capacity concerns should be considered when determining a recruitment method

Q2: Choosing a Champion

A strong community champion (local leader and partner) is critical for a successful project

Q3: Geography

A "community" is not just one thing and there are implications for different interpretations. Tight bounding provides focus but excludes linkages.

Q4: Who's Involved

Any participant-led process will inevitably be shaped by who is in the room, and their perspectives, knowledge, and experience, so who is in the room critically shapes the process

Q5: Timing Matters

- The timing of the research in relation to local climate hazard events matters for momentum, feelings of salience, and community bandwidth.
- While it is helpful to have workshops after extreme events because they galvanized attention and drew interest in building climate resilience, research teams should exercise caution when approach communities currently or recently experiencing a hazard as they might not have bandwidth to participate.

Q6: Clarifying Expectations

For any engaged process, it is important to clarify roles and expectations of all the parties involved

Q7: Selecting the Top Priorities

The researchers and champions need to decide if the goal of the process is to generate many local strategies or to focus and prioritize the most important strategies.

Q8: Supporting Adaptation Actions

We grappled with a difficult question: When do we as researchers hand off the responsibility to our partner communities?

