

Real partnerships: project management strategies for supporting engaged partnerships

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Collaborative research partnerships between academics and industry, community or government provide opportunities for co-producing knowledge and generating broad engagement. However, the success of collaborative research projects hinges on building trusting relationships, negotiating priorities, communicating effectively and resolving problems. Building broad engagement with research activities and outputs requires skilled planning and execution, capacity to bridge the gaps between organisations and develop empathy for different perspectives. Academics can find managing partnerships and building engagement challenging as it involves considerable time and skills, which are often at odds with traditional expectations of academia. Research managers are involved in supporting these partnerships and advising on project management strategies for engagement, but there are few studies which document successful practices. This presentation provides project management strategies for effective academic partnerships that generate broad engagement. It outlines findings from a case study evaluation of an international, inter-disciplinary collaboration at an Australian university with 17 government, industry and education partners and proposes a framework for developing partnerships. The project management framework provides mechanisms for creating reciprocal relationships that value the input of all stakeholders, enables a shared understanding of the research endeavour and facilitates engagement within the project and more broadly with stakeholders and the public.

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