



# GUIDANCE ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

Your guide to getting engaged while staying safe

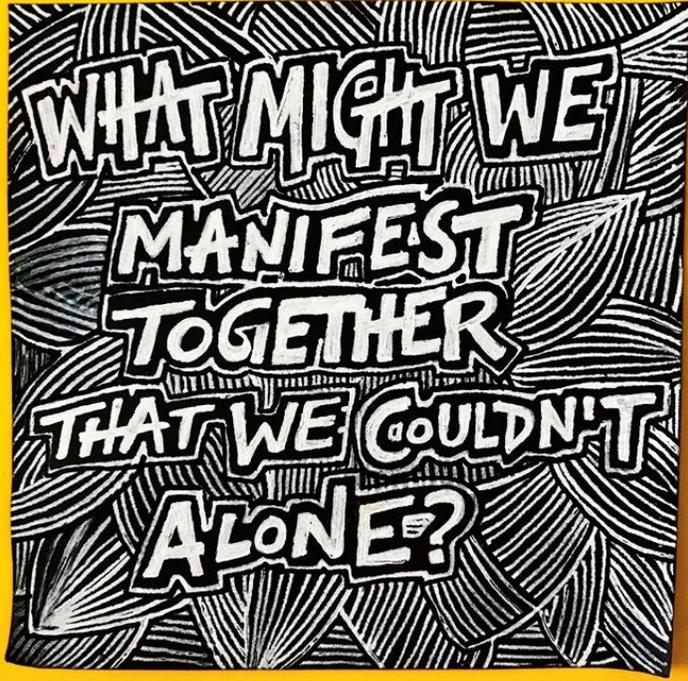


Washington  
University in St. Louis

GEPHARDT INSTITUTE FOR  
CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



[gephardtinstitute.wustl.edu](https://gephardtinstitute.wustl.edu)



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Notes to Self](#)

**GET ENGAGED.  
STAY ENGAGED.**

To prioritize the health and well-being of our communities, the university has created safety guidelines that affect the ways in which we engage in the St. Louis community. The university has indicated that "members of the community are strongly encouraged to limit their off-campus activities as much as possible to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure."

While this affects many of our traditional ways of engaging, we know that civic and community engagement are critical. **Whether you are a student, faculty, staff, or community partner, there is a role for you.** Questions? Needs? Let us know how we can support you! Resources or skills to offer? We would love to hear more. Connect with us during our [Virtual Open Hours](#) or e-mail us directly at [gephardtinstitute@wustl.edu](mailto:gephardtinstitute@wustl.edu).



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# GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS

We know that 2020 has been a whirlwind and you have a lot of ideas, topics, and questions on your mind as you begin the fall semester. This summer, we have spent time preparing for students to engage remotely in the St. Louis community, responding to community needs aggravated by COVID-19 and persistent racial inequities, and re-imagining voter engagement for the November election. All of this has affirmed the importance of civic engagement and community engagement, which are vital—particularly in times of crisis and change. **As you decide how you want to engage this semester, we urge you to prioritize the health and well-being of our St. Louis neighbors.**

## Reminders!

- Students, faculty and staff must follow orders and guidelines that are in place in the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, and other local jurisdictions.
- Members of the university community are strongly encouraged to limit their off-campus activities as much as possible to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure.
- Indoor gatherings are generally discouraged and in most cases will not be allowed. With approval, up to 10 people may be permitted to attend an indoor event. Events with 11-25 people must be held outside or online, or canceled. All events with more than 25 people must be held online.

# *When planning for engagement, consider the following principles...*

1

## **Follow remote engagement and public health guidelines**

We recognize the urgent needs facing our local community and encourage you to find innovative ways to engage remotely in partnership with St. Louis organizations. Check out our ideas and examples of remote engagement on pages 6-10. We can also support you during [virtual open hours](#) by developing questions to ask your community partner and thinking through ideas for remote engagement.

2

## **Put community first**

Community engagement is centered on relationships. Responsible community engagement is led by local residents and community-based organizations, which means it's important to listen and plan based on their priorities and guardrails. Check out our remote engagement reflection guide to support your planning process.

3

## **Be willing to adapt**

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that plans and circumstances quickly change and we need to be prepared to respond with flexibility and sensitivity. If you are working with a community partner, stay in close communication by building in opportunities for weekly or bi-weekly check-ins, and help your peers understand the need to adapt as well.

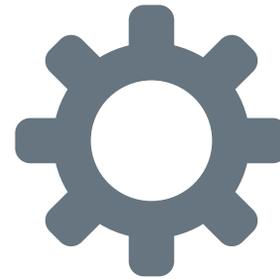
# IDEAS FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

*Organizations are looking for help with efforts like research, resource creation, social media, and phone banking. Student groups are doing on-campus organizing, like Black Student Mutual Aid, shifting to efforts like virtual tutoring, or focusing on learning together as a group. Check out more details on page 9.*



## CHECK-IN

See how your community partner is doing. Are there ways they need support this semester? Are there possibilities to engage remotely? Do your research by exploring their website or reading their newsletter, and then connect. Discuss your group's capacity and plan. If you need help, you can utilize our Remote Engagement Reflection Guide or connect with us through [Virtual Open Hours](#).



## SHIFT YOUR WORK

If there are not opportunities to work remotely with your current partner, consider another opportunity. You can check out our [Opportunities Newsletter](#) or the United Way's [website](#) for remote opportunities, connect with voter engagement efforts through [WashU Votes](#), or help amplify [Census outreach](#). You can also come talk to us in [Virtual Open Hours](#)!



## GET YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER

This might be a great time for your group to do some internal work. Do you have a mission statement? Is your work aligned with your group values? Are you working towards a more equitable St. Louis? What is a discussion you've been meaning to have but been putting off? If you need help brainstorming what's next, we're here to help! Reach out to [us](#), [Campus Life](#), or the [Center for Diversity and Inclusion](#) depending on your needs.

*There is no guidebook on how to do civic and community engagement during a pandemic, but the Gephardt Institute is committed to working with you to find innovative strategies.*



### **PLAN A VIRTUAL EVENT**

Is there a way that your group could raise awareness or host an event to support your community partner? Consider a project-based approach this semester. As always, make sure you have a conversation with your community partner before moving forward. Make sure that what you are envisioning is aligned with their needs and policies and is something your group can follow through with.



### **OTHER IDEAS?**

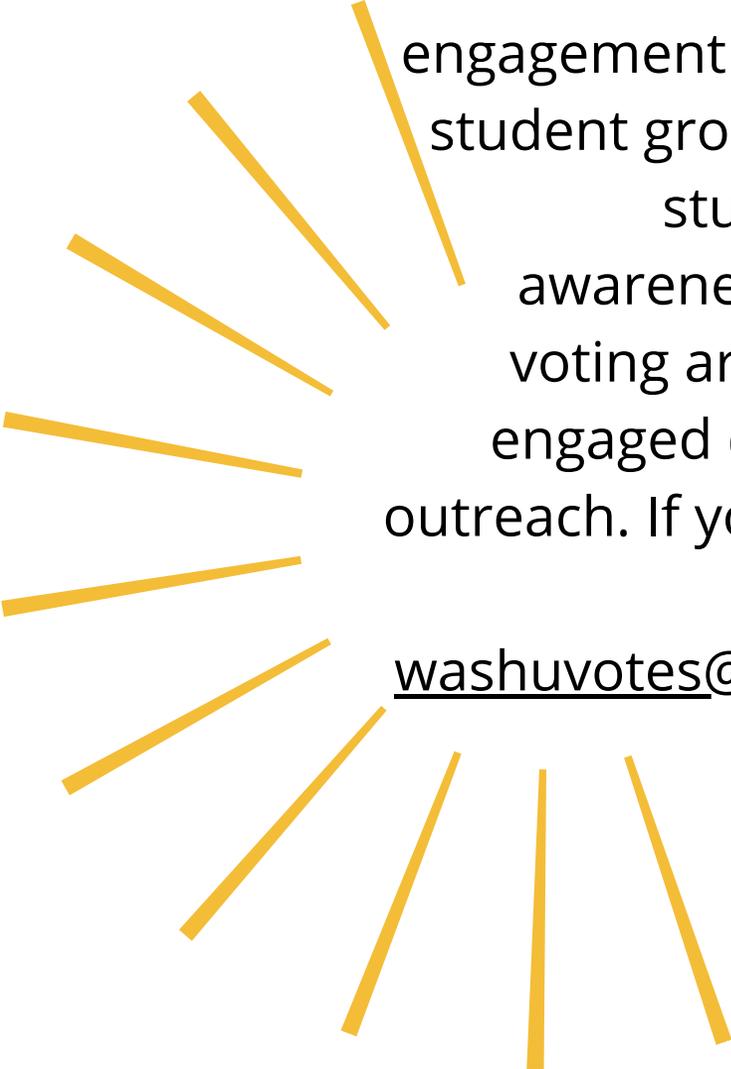
If you have other ideas, we're all ears! Share what your group is doing with the Gephardt Institute. We're happy to serve as a connector or sounding board and we're always here to support and uplift responsible community engagement. Sign up for [opportunities newsletter](#) and submit your own opportunities there!



**Sometimes the best action is pausing, reflecting, and learning and that's okay!** How can you learn more about the systems impacting your community partner and the St. Louis community? Ask us about our Community Engagement Training and other workshops offered this semester by reaching out to Colleen Smyth at [colleen.smyth@wustl.edu](mailto:colleen.smyth@wustl.edu).

- **Partners in East St. Louis** has moved to virtual sessions and is developing a volunteer training that includes ongoing small-groups this semester.
- **Campus Y** is helping students with virtual learning through Learning Lodge that help students with tutoring around the country. This program was started specifically for remote volunteering in light of the pandemic.
- **Students Teaching AIDS to Students** is pre-recording lessons and sending them to teachers for asynchronous learning.

### *Examples of Engagement*

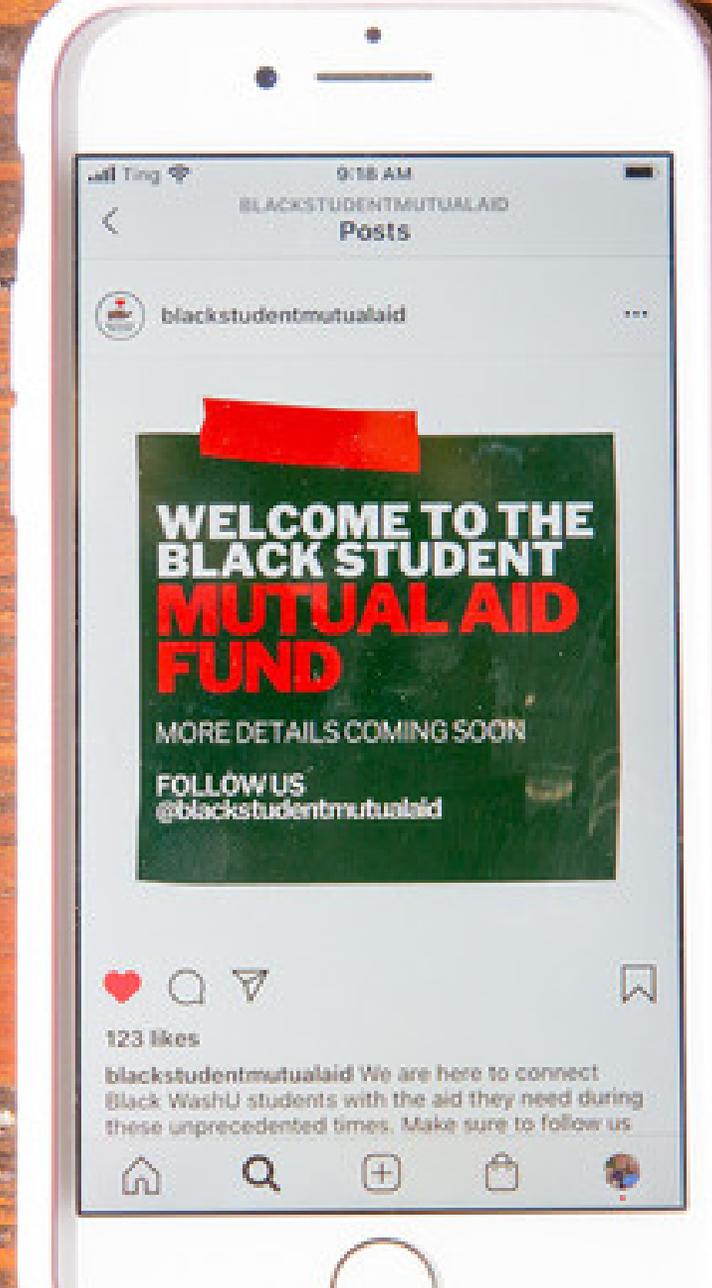


WashU Votes is a student-led voter engagement initiative that partners with student groups to register and educate students across campus, raise awareness about the importance of voting around campus, and catalyze engaged citizens through events and outreach. If you want to join in on efforts this semester, e-mail [washuvotes@wustl.edu](mailto:washuvotes@wustl.edu) and follow them on instagram.

**WASHU**  
**VOTES**

## Examples of Engagement

# BLACK STUDENT MUTUAL AID FUND



***"It's hard to fall through the cracks when everyone is connected. Mutual aid creates a network to try and keep that from happening."***

*Team member, Aaliyah Allen*

When news about the housing changes broke, sophomore Aaliyah Allen became concerned about her junior and senior friends. "It made me anxious hearing about their situations," she shared, "And it made me think, we have to do something." That's when the idea for Black Student Mutual Aid fund was born. Aaliyah and five other WashU students put their heads together to work out the details. "We really wanted to stay true to mutual aid models and make decisions together. We know that our networks are stronger together." She shared that black students across campus have a general network across campus, sharing things like meal points. This platform, however, creates a bigger, broader impact where more people can tangibly support black students across campus.

# NEW STUDENTS



**Whether you're a first year or transfer, there are plenty of ways to get connected and engaged!**

1. Sign-up for our [Opportunities Newsletter](#) to stay up-to-date on remote opportunities and events like New in the Lou
2. Check out community service groups on [WUGO](#)
3. Find out how to register to vote and connect with local voter engagement efforts through [WashU Votes](#)
4. Come to [Virtual Open Hours](#) to connect with a Gephardt staff member about specific interests or questions
5. Follow our us on [instagram](#), [facebook](#), and [twitter](#)
6. Learn about St. Louis through an equity lens with this [self-study guide](#) from the [Center for Diversity and Inclusion](#)
7. Explore St. Louis history through the countless resources at the [MO History Museum](#)
8. Learn about the history of race in St. Louis and local racial equity efforts by subscribing to [We Live Here](#)

## ASK

- What are community needs right now?
- Who should I be asking?
- Have I had a conversation with our community partner
- Who else is doing this work?

## ANSWER

- What is my capacity?
- What is my group's capacity?
- What skills and/or resources do we have to offer remotely?

## CONSIDER

- Is this project sustainable?
- What are all possible outcomes of this initiative (good, bad, or in-between)?
- How are we continuing to build community as a group?

## CHECK

- Do our policies and procedures need to adapt for online engagement?
- If we are working with youth, have we completed all necessary training?

## COMMUNICATE

- Have I shared my project/idea with the necessary WashU staff?

## REFLECT

- How did the engagement activity go?
- Is there anything I would change next time?
- Have I scheduled regular check-ins with all parties involved?

# Remote Engagement Reflection Guide

**This process is not always linear. Enter in where you are and adapt as necessary.**

# GUIDANCE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

*We welcome your questions to our Associate Director for Faculty and Academic Engagement, Cassie Power, at [cpower@wustl.edu](mailto:cpower@wustl.edu) or during virtual open hours.*



In alignment with the university's Fall Campus Plan, the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement recommends remote, virtual, or alternative engagement in lieu of in-person community engagement for the health and security of the campus and broader community. **Not all engagement is necessary in this moment. You may use this semester as a planning period with your partner.** However, the following are a set of considerations as faculty and staff transition their projects to remote engagement. For more information, see the schema [Teaching and Learning for Social Impact: \(Re\)designing Your Course](#) developed by the Gephardt Institute, Center for Teaching and Learning, Arts & Sciences, and University Libraries.



### Take a pause and check-in with yourself:

How are you?  
What are your constraints?  
What are your capacities?  
What are your project goals?  
What is the relevance of your project in the context of COVID-19?  
Can this project be delayed until the spring, using the fall to plan?

### Check-in with your campus and/or community partners:

How are they?  
What are their constraints?  
What are their capacities?  
How could you all work together to adapt or re-imagine the project for remote engagement?

### Start small:

Everyone is adjusting to different ways of partnering, using new technologies, and learning different workflows. Small, manageable projects will allow everyone to make adjustments, learn more, and ultimately achieve greater successes.

# GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Discuss the project goals, relevance, and considerations for remote engagement with your partner. Other discussion considerations include but are not limited to:

- Project adaptation
- Your capacity for the project duration
- How this project meets partner goals
- How COVID-19 has impacted partner organizations and/or initiatives
- How often you will check-in with each other during the project duration
- Technology infrastructure for remote engagement

If you and your partner(s) decide to proceed with a project, how can you **co-create** the adapted project?

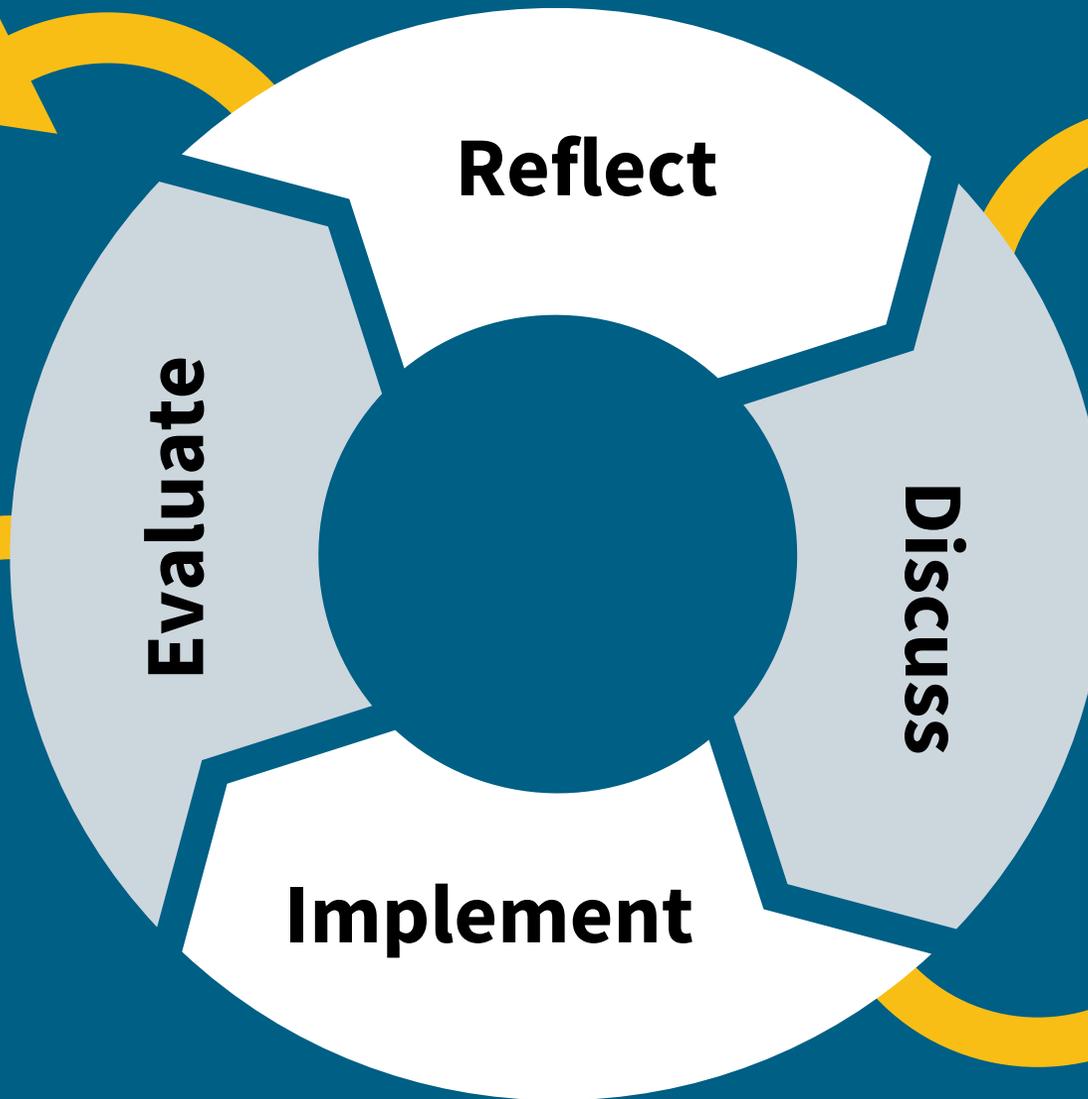


Make sure to create space in your project for students to adjust to the remote engagement environment as well as time for your students to provide feedback to you and your partners.

- What are the goals of your project?
- What elements of your project may need to shift for remote engagement?
- Who can you partner with to think through your project and shift to remote engagement?

## Questions to Guide your Process

- How did the engagement go overall? For students? For community partners? For yourself?
- If you were to do this engagement in the future, what adjustment will you make?
- What was the impact of this engagement for students? For community partners?



- How has your community partner's experience changed given COVID-19?
- What are your partner's goals for the project with COVID-19 considerations in mind?
- How do your goals align with your partners'?
- What changes should be made to the project for remote engagement?
- Does your partner have the technology infrastructure for remote engagement as designed?

- What elements of your project may need to shift for remote engagement?
- How will you prepare students for remote engagement?
- How will you check-in with your partner and students throughout the engagement experience?
- How will you create moments of reflection throughout the engagement for students?

# GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

*We welcome your questions  
to our  
Assistant Director for  
Community Engagement,  
Stefani Weeden-Smith at  
[weeden-smith\\_s@wustl.edu](mailto:weeden-smith_s@wustl.edu)  
or during virtual open  
hours.*



The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered how the WashU community will be able to engage and partner with the community at this time. We know that students often participate in community efforts through organizational programs and volunteering that will need to be approached differently, whether based on WashU guidelines or your changing needs. We value your partnership and expertise as you re-imagine your relationships with WashU students, faculty, and staff. We are here, ready to listen, and ready to help think through alternatives. Communication in remote engagement is critical. **If now is not the right time for remote engagement, we understand and support your decision. There is no pressure to continue during these uncertain times.** While you determine what is best for you and your organization, please consider some of the following points regarding working with a WashU partner to transition your project to a remote format.

As the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement continues to navigate these uncertain times, **we want to work through solutions together.** In alignment with Washington University's Fall Campus Plan, students and faculty are strongly encouraged to practice community engagement remotely. Remote engagement, we hope, will help limit transmission as well as protect our St. Louis community from the further devastating impacts of COVID-19.



CHAT WITH US!

**VIRTUAL  
OPEN HOURS**

**WEDNESDAYS, 3-5 PM CT**

**Visit: [tinyurl.com/gephardtdropin](https://tinyurl.com/gephardtdropin)**

We value the wisdom and experiences of our community partners, and some of them are taking the following approaches:

- Considering how volunteers or interns can provide services or support their organizations remotely, such as working behind the scenes, research projects, advocacy efforts, or fundraising support.
- Considering the existing relationships that they want to maintain with members of the WashU community.
- Considering advice on how they can transfer their formal volunteer efforts to a virtual platform with either a video call or online webinar.
- Continuing to seek the latest COVID-19 guidance from local, state, and federal authorities as they make plans around partnership.

For up-to-date information on how WashU is approaching engagement, visit the COVID-19 page or contact Stefani Weeden-Smith, Assistant Director for Community Engagement, at [weeden-smith.s@wustl.edu](mailto:weeden-smith.s@wustl.edu).

# PROJECT ADAPTATION

**As many organizations are adapting to new platforms and new programming to meet the needs of community members, we recognize you are changing very quickly in areas unfamiliar to most. We are able to support some of your shifts as you pivot in these new virtual settings. Our priority is to foster safety and well-being, while continuing to work toward fulfilling your organization's mission.**

- Use the Community Partner Project Design Guide (following) to think through your project goals and outcomes
- Discuss your project, needs, expectations and priorities with your WashU partner. Some examples of your conversation can include:
  - Sharing your project concept with the campus partner, including goals and outcomes
  - Discussing the WashU partner goals and outcomes for the project
  - Discussing how the project will take place in a remote environment
  - Discussing how often you will meet to check-in
  - Discussing expectations and logistics for remote engagement including on-screen professionalism, accountability, and risk management—how will you hold each other accountable for how you show up in remote engagement
  - Discussing project implementation information – timeframe, reporting, check-ins, etc.
- Meet as discussed to check-in with your campus partner through the duration of the project
- Complete a debrief with your campus partner at the conclusion of the project



# COMMUNITY PARTNER DESIGN GUIDE

1

How would you categorize this project?

- Research, assessment, and/or evaluation
- Direct service to community groups/individuals
- Program or event planning, management or support
- Development of policies/procedures for the organization
- Community outreach
- Social media and website support
- Administration of program, service, or initiative
- Organizational strategy and/or planning
- Grant writing and/or fundraising
- Other:

2

How often does this project need to be completed?

- One-time
- Continuously
- Within a specific time-frame

3

When complete, what would you like to see as the deliverable(s)?

- Report
- Website design
- Marketing and communications materials
- Social media presence
- Program implementation
- Resource directory
- Operational plan/policy/manual/handbook
- Infographic/data visualization
- Other:

*Use this guide as a tool to start a conversation with your WashU partner.*





**GET ENGAGED.  
STAY ENGAGED.**



## Questions?

Contact the [Gephardt Institute](mailto:gephardt@wustl.edu) at [gephardt@wustl.edu](mailto:gephardt@wustl.edu)

*If you have concerns specific to COVID-19 and university policies, please look at the official university's COVID-19 website [here](#).*



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