



EPIC-AFRICA COMMUNITY GUIDE

A community guide for
university partnerships

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Cities Partnering with Universities: What's possible?

The EPIC Network is a collection of universities who want to make cities better through equitable and lasting university/community partnerships.

- Have you ever been frustrated that some projects seem stuck?
- Are there some important, but not urgent, projects that always seem to fall off the priority list?
- Do you wish you had time to think about the future of your city and how to make it better?
- When working with consultants, have you ever wished you had more time to think deeply about what you want?

By partnering with a university, you can leverage its knowledge, innovation, and energy to tackle your community's most pressing problems. Communities gain several benefits from these partnerships, including:

- Increased capacity
- Increased outreach efforts to community members with the participation of students, whose ideas are often received more positively by constituents
- Reinvigorating projects that are “stuck” due to a lack of resources, will, or skill
- Generating material for future grant submissions
- Bringing new energy to your community and improving staff morale
- Providing a coordinated entry point to the university for all future projects
- Increased access to the next generation of workforce and helping to train them for your future needs

Successful Project Examples



EPIC-N member programs have completed more than 2,000 projects in 430+ communities. Here are some examples of successful projects:

- Deepening Urban Resilience: Durban's Multi-Sector Expansion of Flood Adaptation Strategies
- Awareness and Education of Climate Change Effects through Visual Arts in Mombasa
- Waste management for slum settlements in Mbale City: A search for sustainable solutions
- Lusaka's Expanding EPIC Partnerships Look to Solve Capacity Issues
- Brewerville Addresses Waste Management Crisis Through Collective Bargaining Agreement Facilitated by an EPIC Partnership
- Cleaner Waters for Harare: Innovation Through Collaboration

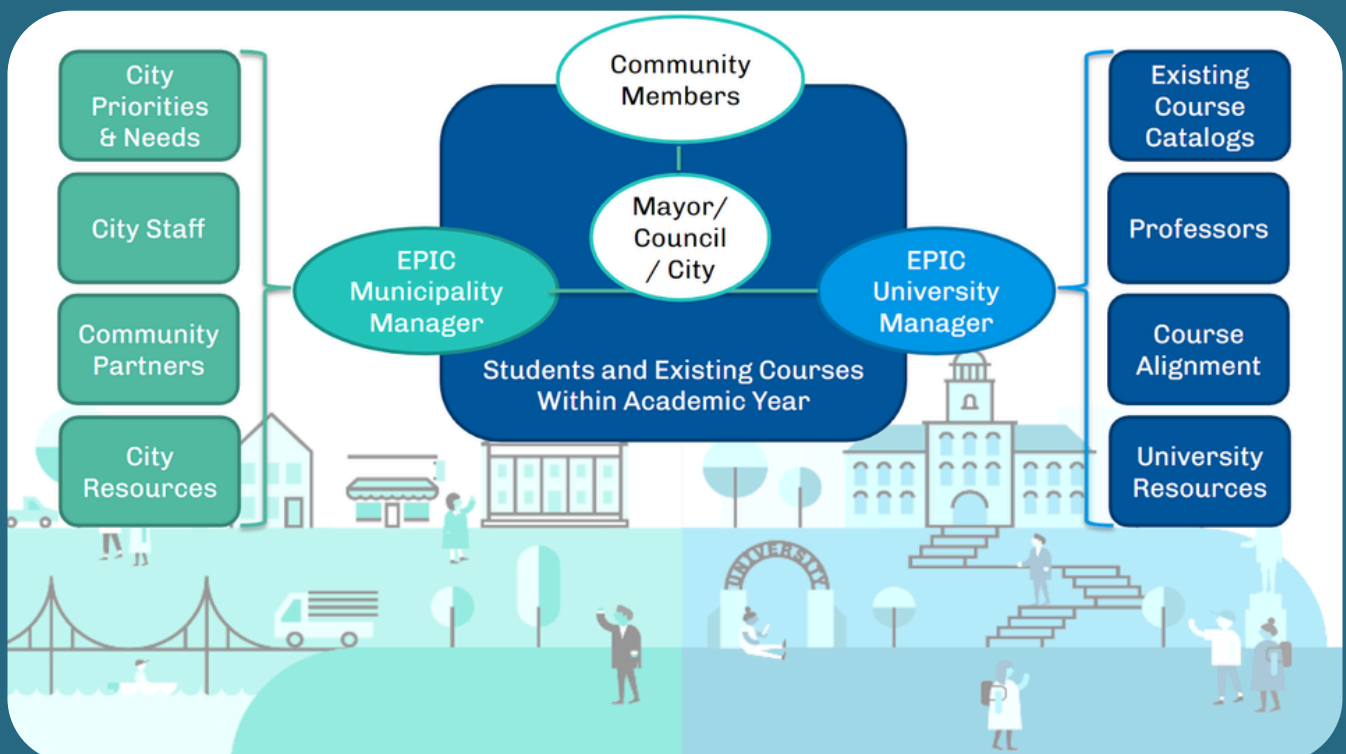
How to Find a University Partner

- Check to see if there is an EPIC Model program at a university campus near you. If so, this is a great place to start.
- Contact EPIC-N to help get you connected with a university partner.
- Get in touch with your local university's community engagement office or center for public service.
- Get in touch with your local university's community or government relations coordinator.

[View the EPIC-N Informational and Onboarding Session here.](#)

[View the EPIC 101 Course here.](#)

[View a webinar on resources for community partners here.](#)



How to Select the Project(s)

EPIC-N encourages community partners to select projects within their existing work plan. Typically, these are projects that the community staff do not have the time or capacity for, or projects that require additional help from outside research or consulting groups. It is important for you and the university lead to discuss what the students can reasonably accomplish, which will eventually be detailed in the Scope of Work agreement.

Here is an example plan for determining the project topic:

1. Review your current work plan
 - a. Look at existing work plans, priorities, and strategic documents
2. Identify real needs- don't look for extra work
3. Break down larger goals into concrete project opportunities
4. Think about what success would look like for those projects
5. Write a short project description



Who to Bring to the Table

It is important to identify who should be brought to the table to provide input on the community project. Here are some groups to consider:

- Underrepresented populations
- Local Indigenous group(s)
- Business associations
- Local school representatives
- Local nonprofits
- Senior citizens
- Newly-resettled communities
- International communities
- Faith-based organizations
- Small business owners
- People with disabilities
- Identity-based groups
- Workforce development organizations
- Labor groups
- Health care providers
- Public transportation authorities
- Environmental groups
- Parks and recreation friends



Partnership Agreements

Once you have decided on a project and it has been matched to a course, it is important to co-develop a Scope of Work with the lead faculty member. It is essential that you include the following items in this scope of work:

- Contact information
 - Faculty
 - Community project lead
 - Program manager (if applicable)
- Course day, time, and location
- Student coordinator information and contact (if applicable)
- Project information
 - Project description
 - Project goals and objectives
 - Final deliverables
 - Project timeline
 - Data needs
 - Anticipated expenses
- Participant responsibilities
 - Community partner responsibilities
 - Faculty responsibilities
 - Program Manager responsibilities (if applicable)
 - Student responsibilities
- Approvals
 - Signatures and time stamp for all participating project leads

See here for example scopes of work.

For additional information on how to scope and scale projects, see this webinar.

Find additional scoping resources here.

Community Expectations

As the community partner, there are expectations for your involvement within the university/community partnership. These expectations include:

- Provide an overall point of contact who is trusted and respected among your staff and community partners
- Provide a project-specific point of contact willing to dedicate at least 1 hour per week on a given project
- A specified time commitment to the project
- Funding commitment (if able)
- Frequent communication with the university lead contact
- Organizing the community partners
- Co-creating and reviewing the Scope of Work
- Availability for questions and feedback from students
- Offering information and resources necessary for the project's success



Tips from Seasoned Community Project Leads

- Keep your expectations realistic.
- Be as specific as possible about the kind of deliverables desired at the end of the project.
- Consider your constraints for each project (e.g., do students need to consider how much community funding might be available for a particular project?) and be honest about them .
- Be open to new ideas: Students will ask you questions that may surprise you. Given that they are removed from the project, they may see things that you don't.
- Bring as many people as possible to the table- diverse perspectives are crucial!
- Keep communication frequent.
- If possible, join the students for one class to present on the project- putting a face to the work is always beneficial.
- Having the university act as a mediator between the community and the city is very useful, as universities are more trusted than city officials.
- When there is a history of successful project implementation, EPIC students are more easily able to add value to existing actions. Looking for such synergies can really pay dividends.
- Sometimes we acted opportunistically to respond to emerging needs, e.g., following the catastrophic April 2022 flood event in Durban, EPIC-N created a project for UKZN counselling graduates on how to provide mental support services to flood victims. The EPIC approach was flexible enough to act on this quickly and effectively.

