



# EPIC-ASIA BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

EPIC-NETWORK



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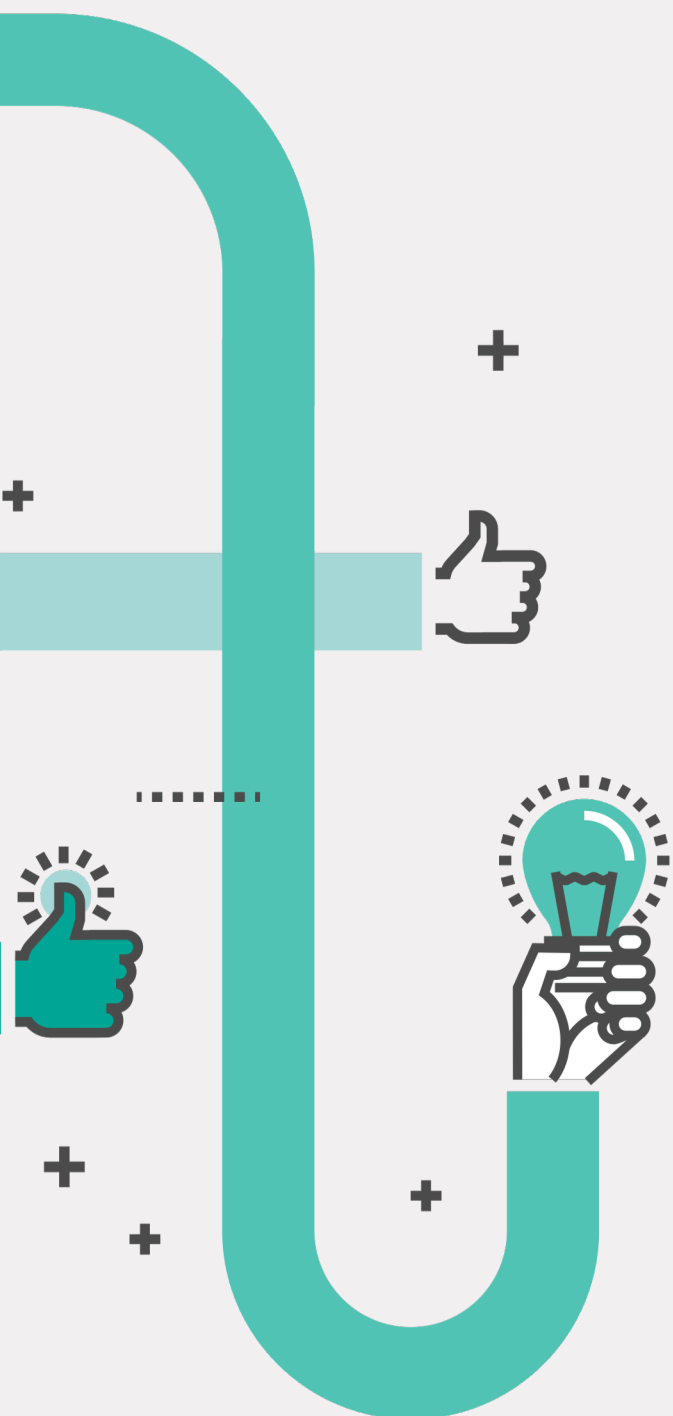
# WELCOME!

Welcome! We are so glad you are interested in university/community engagement work.

This brief best practices guide will provide you with tips and tools to help you navigate your community partnerships. If you are looking for more in-depth guides for faculty and community partners, you can view those below:

- [Asia Faculty Guide](#)
- [Asia Community Guide](#)

This guide touches on important inflexion points within your partnership, including partnership development, project scoping, communication, evaluation and assessment, and more. All information has been gathered by EPIC-N staff and member programs. Interested in learning more about EPIC-N? Visit our website [here](#).



# A QUICK REFRESHER ON THE EPIC MODEL

In case it is helpful, here is the Model in a nutshell. EPIC-N is the nonprofit network of universities, local governments, and community organizations that use the EPIC Model for university-community partnerships. The idea is simple. A community identifies a real problem it wants help with, and the university brings its existing resources to the table, including its courses, students, faculty, and labs. From there, the two sides work side by side toward a shared goal: improving quality of life, guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In practice, a partnership tends to unfold in a natural rhythm. A community partner names a need, faculty connect it to a course or courses they are already teaching, and students take on much of the work over a semester or term as part of their classes. By the end, the partner walks away with something concrete, like a report, a plan, or a set of recommendations. The sections that follow trace this same journey, developing the partnership, scoping the work together, staying in touch along the way, and reflecting on how it went once the project wraps up.

# EPIC-ASIA AT A GLANCE

A quick word on the regional network you are joining. EPIC-Asia is the Asia branch of EPIC-N, hosted by the Urban Futures and Policy Research Unit at Thammasat University in Thailand, with a regional coordinator who supports programs across the region. Member programs span Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam, so you are joining a community of peers working in similar contexts. You can see the full list of members in the [EPIC-Asia handout](#).

Across the region, EPIC-Asia projects often center on themes like climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, water and flood management, urban planning, sustainable agriculture, and waste management. Many programs also plug into regional and global platforms through partners such as ICLEI, UNDP, and the UN Environment Programme. This can open real doors for students: EPIC-Asia students have gone on to present their community work at events like the Asia Pacific Climate Week and UN climate conferences. These are worth keeping in mind as your own partnership takes shape.



# PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Building trust can be hard, but it is essential to a successful university/community partnership. Here are some tips on how to build trust:

- Approach the community where they are: Go to local government gatherings (city council meetings, town halls, festivals, presentations, etc). Showing up where they are, rather than asking them to come to you, demonstrates genuine commitment and interest.
- Ask them what they need help with, what they wish they had more time for, and what work they keep having to push aside.
- Emphasize that you are looking to help them with THEIR challenges, not pursue your own research agenda.
- Showcase the success of these projects elsewhere: Share the [EPIC-N project library](#) with them so they can explore over 2,000 projects completed using the EPIC Model.
- Clearly map out the responsibilities and roles of each partner. This should be written down and formalized within the scope of work agreement signed by both partners. View the EPIC-N Faculty Guide for a more detailed description of the scoping process. ([Asia Faculty Guide](#))

# COMMUNICATIONS

Transparent and frequent communication is important for ensuring the community partner is heard and kept up to date on project developments. Here are some tips to consider:

- Use plain language: it is easy to slip into technical or academic terms, so keep your wording simple and easy to follow.
- Be honest and realistic about the student's work. Do not overpromise on what students can accomplish within the set time period. Community partners should have a clear vision of what the students can reasonably do and what they will need additional support with.
- Set up regular check-ins with the community partner. Meet as often as they would like. Giving them a space to raise questions and concerns is key to building trust.



# EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Conducting comprehensive 360 evaluations after the partnership ends provides you and the community partner with the feedback needed to improve your program. Here are some tips on how to accomplish that:

- After the project is completed, send evaluations to your community partner, faculty, and students. You can find a sample evaluation calendar [here](#). We have provided template evaluations for each group below:
  - [Faculty](#)
  - [Students](#)
  - [Community Partner](#)
- Use the evaluation results to refine and strengthen your partnership approach. Interviews with participating groups after the project ends can also yield valuable feedback.
- If possible, try to approach your community partner 2 to 3 years after the partnership ends in order to assess the long-term impact of the project(s). Doing this can help you determine whether the project recommendations were put into action, how the partnership impacted the community, and what new opportunities emerged as a result. View a template long-term impact evaluation [here](#).

# COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID:

Many programs face similar challenges when engaging with community partners. We have compiled some of their tips to help you steer clear of these pitfalls:


- Come to the community ready to listen. Avoid coming with your own research or publication agenda.
- Avoid overpromising! Be realistic about what students can accomplish within the set time period.
- Bring all affected community groups to the table. It is better to have too many people participating than to unintentionally exclude important groups.
- Treat this partnership as a long-term relationship, not a one-off project. Most programs partner with a community multiple times. These long-term partnerships are important in building the sustainability of your program.



# PRACTICAL TOOLS AND TEMPLATES:

Here are some tools and templates you can use to strengthen your program:

- [Evaluation Tools](#)
- [MOU Templates](#)
- [Sample MOUs](#)
- [Communication Tools](#)
- [Report Writing Resources](#)
- [Project Tracking Tools](#)
- [Funding Resources](#)
- [Project Management Tools](#)
- [SDG Resources](#)
- [Guides for Participants](#)

  
**EPIC-N Assessment Calendar Template**  
*16 Week Semester*  
Created and Inspired by the EPIC-N Assessment Community of Practice

Week	Activity	Assessment/Evaluation	Notes
Week 1	Distribute MOUs for project scoping*	Prepare IRB protocol application or amendment, as necessary*	Hold time for in-class presentations
Week 2	Finalize MOUs for project scoping*	Submit IRB application or amendment, as necessary*	Hold time for in-class presentations
Week 3	Confirm student enrollment for tracking purposes		
Week 4	Confirm student enrollment for tracking purposes		
Week 5	Update project tracking dashboard with MOU and enrollment data	Draft project abstracts	
Week 6	Update project tracking dashboard with MOU and enrollment data	Draft project abstracts	
Week 7		Draft project abstracts	
Week 8		Draft project abstracts	
Week 9			
Week 10		Ensure that survey questions reflect current courses/projects	
Week 11		Ensure that survey questions reflect current courses/projects	
Week 12			
Week 13		Distribute surveys to 1) faculty, 2) students, and 3) community partners	
Week 14		Survey reminder #1	
Week 15	Draft memo for city and university leadership	Survey reminder #2	Hold time for final presentations
Week 16	Draft memo for city and university leadership	Survey reminder #3	Hold time for final presentations
Reflection		Close survey, analyze data	Debrief meeting

\* Activities may refer to any pre-semester actions for programs that need finalization early within the semester.

Memorandum of Understanding  
Between  
The Board of Trustees of the California State University System, on behalf of  
San Diego State University  
and  
The City of National City

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is entered into on this 4<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2014 by and between the City of National City, a municipal corporation (the "City") and the Board of Trustees of the California State University system, on behalf of San Diego State University ("SDSU").

**RECITALS**

WHEREAS, the City and SDSU desire to continue their relationship in which SDSU and the City collaborate on a variety of programs; and

WHEREAS, an example of such a program is the Sage Project; and

WHEREAS, the collaboration between the parties may give rise to specific projects in which SDSU may be able to assist the City with an issue, concern, or problem; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this MOU is to outline the general parameters of the collaboration; and

WHEREAS, the City and SDSU will enter into a separate Project Agreement for each project.

NOW THEREFORE, the City and SDSU agree as follows:

- Project Agreement** The City and SDSU shall enter into a separate Project Agreement for each project. A copy of the template for the Project Agreement is attached to this MOU as Exhibit "A". SDSU and the City agree to each and every provision of the attached Project Agreement.
- General Responsibilities of the City** The City shall:
  - Work with SDSU to develop potential projects;

1

2014 MOU between SDSU and City of National City

DRAFT

COVER  
PICTURE  
HERE

**Main Title**  
**Term Year • Department**  
Student Author • Major Department  
Faculty name • Title • Department

  
San Diego State University

# THANK YOU



Interested in building an EPIC Model program? We'd love to help! EPIC-N provides value to universities by advancing their mission, improving their students' learning experience, and enhancing their reputation with public and private donors. EPIC-N offers an array of resources free of charge to its members with the goal of increasing the number, quality, performance, and influence of EPIC programs globally, and no dues or fees are required to join.

Reach out to us using the contact information below to learn more about EPIC-N, become a member, and get access to a plethora of tools to help kickstart your work!

[info@epicn.org](mailto:info@epicn.org)

[www.epicn.org](http://www.epicn.org)



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