



EPIC-ASIA COMMUNITY GUIDE

A community guide for
university partnerships

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Cities Partnering with Universities: What's possible?

The EPIC Network is a global community of universities and cities working together to address real urban challenges through equitable, long-term partnerships among universities, local governments, and communities.

Across many cities in Asia, local governments face growing challenges—from rapid urbanization and environmental pressures to social inequality and infrastructure demands. At the same time, universities have valuable knowledge, research capacity, and motivated students who are eager to contribute to solving real-world problems.

The EPIC Model connects these strengths by linking university teaching and research to the practical needs of cities and communities.

- 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?

Cities Partnering with Universities: What's possible?

By partnering with a university, you can leverage the knowledge, innovation, and energy of the university to tackle your community's most pressing problems. Communities gain a number of 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:

- Combating Agricultural Waste and Boosting Farmer Income: Sustainable Smart Farming in Permatang Pauh, Penang, Malaysia
- Strengthening Youth-Led Community-Supported Agriculture for a Sustainable Food System in Bandung, Indonesia
- Advancing Climate Change Awareness and Preparedness in the Agriculture Sector of Calamba, Laguna, the Philippines
- Creating an Ecosystem of Support for the Unhoused in Rangsit City Municipality, Thailand



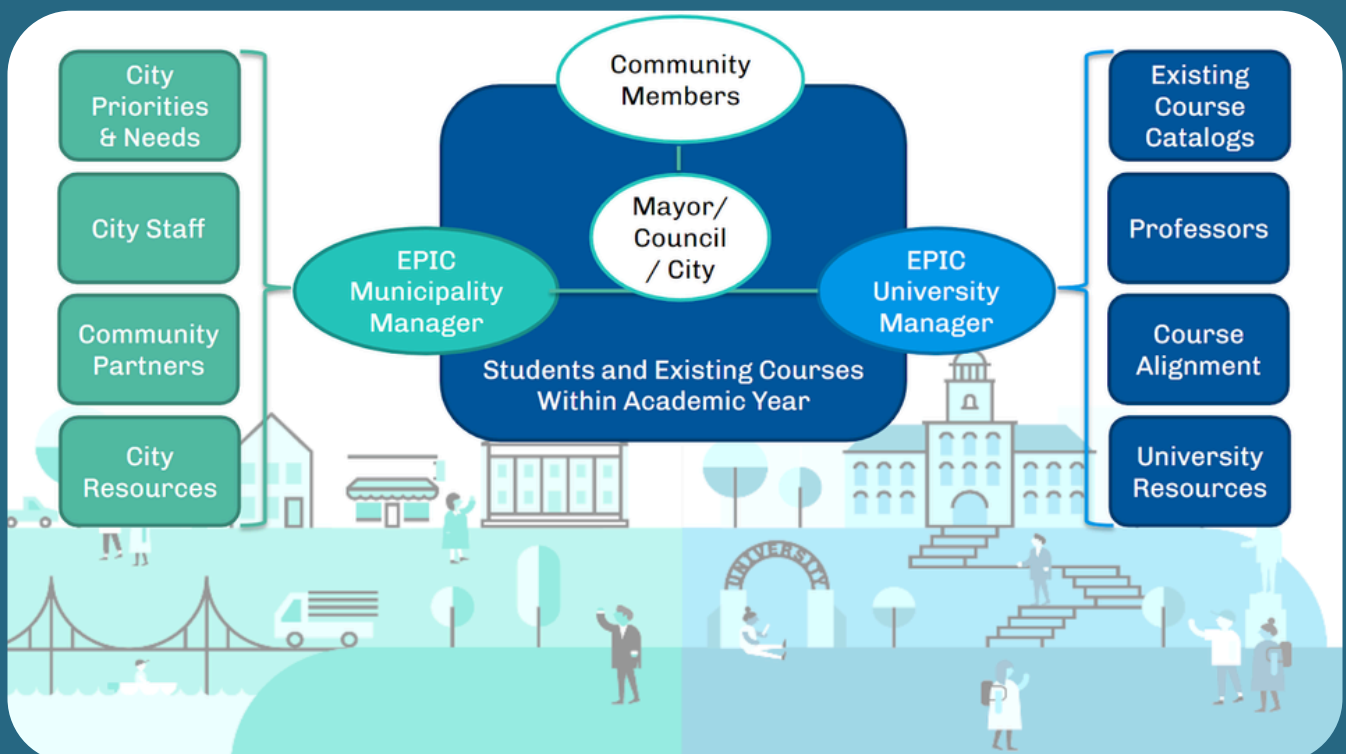
How to Find a University Partner

- Check to see if there is an EPIC Model program on 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 or marginalized communities
- Indigenous peoples or ethnic minority groups
- Community leaders or neighborhood committees
- Residents' associations
- Youth groups and student organizations
- Women's groups
- Senior citizens
- Migrant workers or newly arrived communities
- People with disabilities and disability organizations
- Local schools and vocational institutions
- Universities and research centers
- Local NGOs or civil society organizations (CSOs)
- Faith-based organizations
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and local business associations
- Market vendors and informal sector workers
- Farmers or agricultural cooperatives (for rural or peri-urban areas)
- Labor groups or worker associations
- Public health providers and community health volunteers
- Environmental and conservation groups
- Transport and mobility authorities
- Housing and urban development agencies
- Waste management and sanitation groups
- Water and energy service providers
- Parks, river, and public space community groups

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 a main point of contact who is trusted and respected among staff and community stakeholders
- Provide a project-specific contact person who can dedicate at least one hour per week to the project
- Commit to participating throughout the duration of the project
- Provide funding support if possible (e.g., meeting costs, data collection, community engagement activities)
- Maintain regular communication with the university faculty lead
- Help coordinate and engage relevant community partners and stakeholders
- Co-develop and review the Scope of Work with the faculty partner
- Be available to answer questions and provide feedback to students
- Share relevant data, information, and local knowledge needed for the project
- Support access to community members, sites, or activities when appropriate



Tips from Seasoned Community Project Leads

- Keep your expectations realistic.
- Be as specific as possible about the kind of deliverable 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 city is very useful, as universities are more trusted than city officials .
- Where there is history of successful project implementation, it is easier for EPIC students to add value to existing actions. Looking for such synergies can really pay dividends.
- Sometimes EPIC projects also emerge in response to urgent community needs.

