APPENDIX 5: Policies and Practical Considerations for Field and Community-Based Research

Due to travel restrictions and greater potential for exposure to risks, the timing for the resumption of field and community-based research may be different from that of the other phases of research ramp-up. Local, state, and national guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other official public health organizations with regard to travel need to be followed and, where applicable, additional country-specific guidelines for international travel as well as any local health regulations. The policies and practical considerations below are meant to serve as guidelines for researchers, deans, and chairs when submitting and reviewing research operational plans that include travel for field or community-based research. (See Appendix 7 for more information on the research operational plan submission process.) A copy of the research operational plan should also be submitted to the UCLA EH&S Field Safety Specialist (fieldresearch@ehs.ucla.edu) for review and should describe any deviations from the policies and recommendations contained herein and what safety measures are being followed to mitigate risk. A UCLA COVID-19 Field Protocol Worksite Planning Checklist is available on the EH&S Research Safety and COVID-19 website.

1. Research operational plans must be reviewed by all researchers and partners.
   a. The field research plan must spell out potential risks to research personnel, participants, and community partners, and the risk mitigation efforts these individuals can take.
   b. The research plan should describe safety protocols for ensuring that neither the researcher nor members of the community is put at risk by the researcher’s presence. Researchers should describe any local field conditions, such as social or cultural protocols and special circumstances (e.g., working with vulnerable communities), that should be considered and addressed in the risk mitigation plan.

2. No one should be compelled to engage in activities with which they are uncomfortable.
   a. Research personnel must be given a departmental or university officer to contact if they feel that safety considerations have not been sufficiently addressed, or if they feel compelled to participate in the research against their wishes.
   b. The faculty PI/responsible person will inform research personnel and community partners that they have the right to refuse to engage in activities that could expose them to risk, and should obtain positive consent of their willingness to assume the risks involved.
   c. Positive consent should be obtained in writing, either on paper or via email, from research participants and partners as required by the IRB.
   d. For studies involving anonymous subjects or public observation research, the research operational plan should include protocols to be followed for the protection of the general public.

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6 The following write-up integrates guidelines formulated by the University of Toledo.

7 For information on UC policies and procedures, see: https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/coronavirus/travel/index.html
3. Depending on the nature of the research, operational plans should include:
   a. List of all research personnel, their contact information, including an emergency contact.
   b. Location of fieldwork and travel plans for all research personnel.
   c. Description of lodging and meal plans for research personnel staying more than a day.
      (See also guidelines listed in #16 below.)
   d. Justification why delaying the research will have a detrimental impact on the research project, community, or progression towards degree for relevant research personnel.
   e. Description of the research activities, community partners (if applicable), and what precautions are being undertaken to limit potential disease transmission (e.g., personal protective equipment, physical distancing)
      i. for research personnel.
      ii. for research participants.
      iii. for community partners.
   f. Plan for care/treatment if any research personnel become sick in the field. (See requirements listed in #17 below.)
   g. Contingency plan for carrying on research if any personnel become sick or if an individual on the research team is no longer willing or able to participate in research activities.
   h. Contingency plan for medical treatment and potential medical evacuation if an individual on the research team becomes sick.

4. Research being conducted at non-UCLA sites must have written permission for the research to proceed from those that control access to the field site, organization, and/or the funding agency, as applicable.

5. If IRB approval for the research is required because the research involves human subjects, the PI must obtain an updated IRB approval that details the potential risk to the study participants and community partners of being exposed to COVID-19 from being involved in the research.

6. If non-UCLA agencies or research partners are actively engaged in the research, the research should follow the health and safety guidelines that are the most stringent unless expressly permitted by the partner agencies.

7. Before conducting research each day, all UCLA personnel working at the field location must measure their body temperatures. If they have answered yes to any of the questions in the symptom survey, they should not work and should call the Infectious Disease hotline. Personnel should also keep a daily log of COVID-19-related symptoms. Contact fieldresearch@ehs.ucla.edu if you are in need of thermometers.

8. No one should participate in any fieldwork/community-engaged research if they are feeling ill, have a temperature of >100°F, or if any members of their household are experiencing flu-like
symptoms. High-risk individuals should be especially cautious about participating in any field/community-based research.\(^8\)

9. A log of each day’s activities should be recorded in a shared folder (e.g., within the onsite network, UCLA Box, a shared Google Drive, Microsoft Teams).
   a. This log will include locations where research occurred, public or private venues accessed or visited, personnel in attendance, and any operational anomalies that may have occurred requiring assistance from persons outside the research team (e.g., mechanical issues).
   b. The log should also include, as far as possible, the name and contact information of individuals involved in the research or daily activities, partners, and participants in the research study.

10. If traveling out of state, express permission must be granted by the supervising dean. A 14-day quarantine may be required upon return and before returning to work on campus.
   a. If permitted to travel, register your travel plans as required by UCLA guidelines.
   b. If traveling long distances, stops should only be made for fuel and restrooms; sanitize hands after these activities.

11. No more than two people may occupy a vehicle to, from, and at the work site. Cloth face coverings are to be worn in vehicles when there are two people. If possible, travel with windows open. High touch areas (e.g., vehicle keys, door handles, steering wheel) must be disinfected before and after the field day.

12. When boats are used, the maximum number of total personnel allowed on the vessel at any one time is dictated by the size of the ship. Outboard vessels that are 21 feet or less will be limited to crews of two. Vessels larger than 21 feet should make determination of crew density based on size and research scope.

13. Unless precluded by environmental conditions (e.g., high altitude, extreme heat), it is recommended that face coverings be worn at all times during field- or community-based research. Face coverings, however, are always required when conducting tasks involving personal interactions at less than six feet distance.

14. For day trips, all researchers should bring ample food and fluids for themselves in their own cooler. No sharing of food or drinks is allowed.

15. Upon completion of research at the end of each day, all equipment must be disinfected.
   a. The level and timing of disinfecting equipment between uses should be determined by the research team. For some, it may make sense to clean after each use; for other teams, it may be understood that the risk of exposure is a daily risk not an individual encounter risk.

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b. PPE (such as masks, gloves, and goggles) should not be shared.

16. Additional guidelines for research that requires lodging and/or long-term stays:
   a. Traveling to a remote work site often brings individuals from multiple locations to the same location, enhancing risk upon arrival, but limiting external exposure after arrival.
   b. Personnel planning to participate in remote work should self-quarantine as much as possible (ideally 14 days), or as much as required by prevailing travel regulations in the origin and destination location, before and after traveling to the remote site.
   c. Research teams should establish protocols to physically isolate individuals, pairs, and groups in a hierarchical fashion. For example, if individuals have to share sleeping quarters, other daily activities should be arranged to maximize these interactions such as scheduled eating times, riding in vehicles, etc.
   d. Purchasing of food and supplies, and contact with the general public outside the research team, should be limited to as few individual interactions as possible. It is recommended to disinfect supplies before storage and use for research or other activities.

17. If a member of the research team presents flu-like symptoms the following steps are required:
   a. The individual must cease fieldwork and self-quarantine. PI should identify contingency funds for a separate hotel room or other measures before research begins.
   b. Seek COVID-19 testing as soon as possible.
   c. Call the UCLA Infectious Disease Hotline for additional instructions.
   d. The remainder of the team may continue their work, but must make extra efforts to isolate themselves from external sources. If possible, everyone in the local research team should be tested. The research team must adhere to local testing requirements and contact tracing policies.
   e. The symptomatic individual should follow the return-to-work guidance offered by the Los Angeles County Public Health Department. Currently, their recommendations are to stay home or isolated until at least ten days have passed from the onset of symptoms AND at least three days since recovery. Recovery means no fever for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications, and respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved.

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9 [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/HomeisolationenCoV.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/HomeisolationenCoV.pdf)