https://www.osi-ngo.org/agir-vous-memes/centre-de-ressources/communautes-de-pratiques/article/creation-et-direction-d-une-recherche-fondamentale-propre-a-une-ong-ou-a-une

Objectif Sciences International
Since 1992 - Special Consultative Status to United Nations (ECOSOC)

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH:
THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE EDUCATION
AND ACHIEVING THE SDGs

Creation and management of fundamental Research specific to an NGO or nonprofit Association

...self - Resources Center - Communities of Practice -

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Since launching its first [Participatory Research](#) project in 1992 (monitoring water quality in Lake Geneva, France-Switzerland) with young people aged 15 to 18, the NGO Objectif Sciences International has developed [Participatory Research](#) Programs initiated both by the NGO itself and by public Research Laboratories or Centers.

For example, in 2006, a Participatory Research project was launched to monitor and protect the Snow Leopard population in Central Asia, based on a decision by the NGO's founder, Mr. Thomas EGLI, in 2004. In this project, the NGO connected with scientific institutions that subsequently joined the project initiated by the NGO. Multiple projects (Applied Biodiversity, Fundamental Biodiversity, Fundamental Physics, Applied Electronics, Astronomy, Archaeology, etc.) have been launched by the NGO independently, after which it established valuable partnerships with interested Research Centers for collaboration with OSI as a non-governmental scientific institution.

Conversely, numerous projects have also taken shape as part of an NGO Participatory Research Program based on existing scientific research within a research institution, which proposed that the NGO extend their initiative through a participatory citizen approach. These projects emerged either from a proposal by the NGO to the Research Center or from an invitation from the Research Center or scientific association to Objectif Sciences International.

[Also check out the training on the design and facilitation of a Participatory Science project](#)
[https://training-for-development.com/-Sciences-Participatives-Step-1-?lang=en]

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We will rightly recall here that a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) exists when it takes on a mission to carry out a project typically considered a public service provided by the Government. There are several types of NGOs. Among those with an institutional role, an operational role, or both, there are activist stances, partnership stances, and a range of approaches that combine these two perspectives in various ways.

This article focuses on the methodology that enables a nonprofit association or NGO to independently decide on conducting Fundamental Research, Applied Research, or an Engineering Project, making such a decision legitimate.

We hope to address the increasing number of requests we receive from Governments, Permanent Missions to the UN or UNESCO, and other associations and NGOs, all eager to advance [Participatory Research](#) projects.

[Participatory Research]{.underline} as a Tool

Participatory Research as a tool enabling nonprofit associations or NGOs to conduct original, fundamental research independently of government or corporate influence, or in partnership with States eager to address new priorities.

Participatory research is a research approach that actively involves community members or stakeholders in the research process. This method allows nonprofit associations to conduct original, fundamental research independently of governments or corporations in several ways.

Stakeholder Involvement: Participatory research enables the direct involvement of community members, beneficiaries, local experts, and other stakeholders in defining research questions, data collection, and result analysis. This ensures that research is relevant, tailored to community needs, and reflective of local concerns.

Access to Local Knowledge: Nonprofit associations that adopt a participatory research approach have access to local knowledge, practical expertise, and community wisdom, not only as information sources willing to share but also as direct participants in the project's design. This approach can yield valuable insights that might be overlooked by other research actors. While it's not meant to replace traditional research forms, participatory research complements them, expanding the range of discoveries and methods.

Accountability and Transparency: Participatory research promotes transparency and accountability in the research process. Community members can follow and participate in the process, which builds trust in the research results.

Independence: Nonprofit associations are often free from government influence and commercial motivations, allowing them greater freedom to conduct fundamental research without conflicts of interest. Deciding on their own to conduct Fundamental or Applied Research, or an Engineering project, enables them to fulfill their core mission.

Research Capabilities: Some nonprofit associations develop their own research capacities by training staff, recruiting qualified researchers, or partnering with academic researchers, allowing them to carry out high-quality research independently.

Diverse Funding Sources: NPOs (Non-Profit Organizations) can mobilize funds from various sources, including grants, private donations, philanthropic foundations, or direct support from citizens eager to contribute financially to ensure the project's progress and their own involvement, thus overcoming the organization's limited resources without reliance on government or corporate funding.

Promotion of Empowerment: Participatory research often aims to build the capacity of local communities to actively participate in research, understand results, and use them to make positive changes in their lives, promoting autonomy and empowerment among stakeholders.

It is important to note that participatory research requires careful planning, open communication, and fair knowledge-sharing mechanisms. It may be slower and demand more resources than other research approaches, yet it can yield more relevant and lasting results for communities and nonprofit organizations that adopt it.

Legitimacy of an NGO to Decide on and Conduct Research

Why and how can a nonprofit association or NGO decide to undertake fundamental research on its own, carrying it out without seeking authorization or legitimacy from any other entity? In other words, what about Citizen Research?

Nonprofit associations (NPOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can conduct fundamental research without needing permission or legitimacy from other entities for several reasons. Here's why and how they can do so.

Autonomy: NPOs and NGOs are independent entities, separate from government and private business. They often have a specific mission to serve the public interest, which may include fundamental research in areas related to their mission.

Nonprofit Status: These organizations' nonprofit status often exempts them from certain commercial and tax regulations. This allows them to carry out research activities without the goal of making financial profit, with the potential to mobilize greater resources (no taxes) in exchange for addressing orphaned public service or traditional business areas.

Freedom of Expression and Association: In many countries, NPOs and NGOs have the right to engage in research activities under freedom of expression and association laws. This gives them the freedom to initiate research projects without excessive state interference. It would be unfortunate for citizens to limit their own scope of action by believing they are not legitimate in deciding and carrying out such projects. This article aims to provide you with organizational tools to counter such limitations.

Specific Objectives and Missions: NPOs and NGOs are often created to address social or environmental problems, with fundamental or applied research and engineering projects as means to achieve these goals. Therefore, they typically have the legitimacy to undertake research related to their mission.

Funding: These organizations can raise funds from private donors, philanthropic foundations, government grants, or other sources to finance their research activities. This provides them with a degree of control over their own research projects.

While NPOs and NGOs have a degree of autonomy to conduct fundamental research, they must still comply with applicable laws and regulations in their countries. For instance, they must follow data protection laws, research ethics guidelines, human rights regulations, and so forth. They may also be subject to oversight and accountability obligations to their donors and beneficiaries.

In the end, an NPO's or NGO's ability to conduct fundamental research will depend on its mandate, resources, internal expertise, and commitment to transparency and ethics in its research activities.

This raises the question of necessary competencies.

Stakeholders, Professions, and Decision-Makers to Involve

What stakeholders, professions, and decision-makers need to come together to decide on conducting fundamental research and guide its implementation?

Creation and management of fundamental Research specific to an NGO or nonprofit Association

Over the years, as Objectif Sciences International has developed Research Programs using the Participatory Research format pioneered within the team in 1992, numerous practices have been refined.

The decision to conduct fundamental research and how it should be carried out depends on the specific context of the organization or entity undertaking the research. However, here is a general list of stakeholders, professions, and decision-makers who could be involved in the decision-making and management of a fundamental research project.

Board of Directors or Executive Committee: The Board or Executive Committee of a nonprofit organization (NPO) or NGO may play a key role in deciding to conduct participatory research. They may approve the budget, strategic directions, and provide overall oversight.

Executive or General Management: The organization's leadership is often responsible for its day-to-day management, including overseeing research activities. They may play a central role in deciding to initiate research and selecting the team to coordinate the Research or Engineering Program.

Research Director: The organization may have a Research Director responsible for planning, coordinating, and overseeing research projects. This person may have a background in research and project management, and could be an employee, consultant, volunteer, or even a professional researcher paired with a citizen-researcher.

Research Team: Researchers and experts who will facilitate the fundamental or applied research conducted by non-scientists are central to the process. Positioned as mentors and educator-researchers to apprentice-researchers (participating citizens), they must have expertise in the specific research field. They will oversee data collection and analysis but must also design research projects that are realistic for full participation, taking into account educational and ergonomic considerations.

Advisory Committee, Strategic Committee, Citizen Committee: To ensure the objectivity, accuracy, and quality of the research, some organizations may establish an advisory committee made up of external experts to supervise the project, provide guidance, and review results.

Financial Managers: Those in charge of financial management, including the financial director and treasurer, will play a key role in budget allocation for fundamental research. Just as education vital to development and problem-solving often receives insufficient investment from individuals for their future, solution-oriented research remains underfunded relative to its potential for resolving issues. Participatory Research format proves advantageous for funding as many individuals want to fund serious research in which they can directly participate, engaging in the scientific journey that unfolds before them.

External Partners: In some cases, NPOs and NGOs may collaborate with external partners, such as other research organizations, universities, businesses, and governments. These partners can influence research decisions and contribute additional resources.

Funding Bodies: If the organization relies on external funding, funders may also play a role in deciding to undertake specific research. They may set research priorities or quality requirements in exchange for larger funding. While the association maintains its independence, quality requirements for increased funding allow them to scale productivity to levels comparable to Governments or Public Research Centers.

Stakeholders: Stakeholders, including organization members, program beneficiaries, local communities, or other concerned groups, may have input in selecting research areas or specific research questions. This depends on the

association's or NGO's willingness to involve them in the Research Program's conduct and practice.

Ultimately, the composition of stakeholders involved in deciding and managing fundamental or applied participatory research may vary significantly depending on the organization's size, structure, and mission, as well as applicable ethical and governance standards. Considering all these factors is essential to ensure transparency, integrity, and objectivity throughout the research process.

A Training on the Design and Facilitation of Participatory Science Projects

In collaboration between Objectif Sciences International and Step and Go, this training is specifically dedicated to the techniques for creating and designing a Participatory Science project for Sustainable Development, as well as the techniques for leading and facilitating a Participatory Science project using a Project-Based Learning approach:

https://training-for-development.com/-Sciences-Participatives-Step-1-?lang=en
[https://training-for-development.com/-Sciences-Participatives-Step-1-?lang=fr]

Choose the 3-day residential version or the 4-day non-residential option, in the Alps, Paris, Nice, New York... or request a date specifically dedicated for your team.