



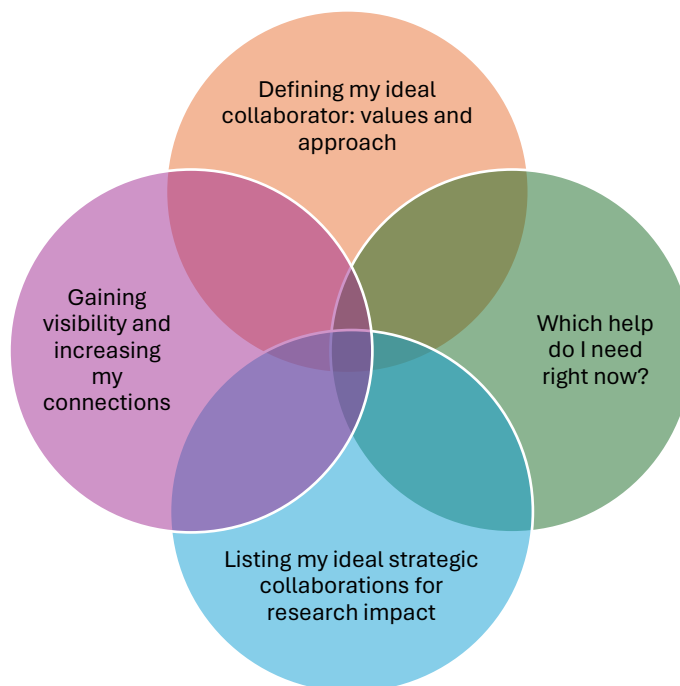
How can you identify collaborators for research impact?

Increasing research impact

Working with collaborators can offer a breadth of perspectives and access to new skills, which can boost your research to the next level. Collaborators can help you gain access to specialised equipment, research facilities and broader networks that would otherwise be out of reach. Funders are also interested in researchers who are working in diverse teams and have experience in collaborating with people and organisations in other fields and sectors.

Work on 4 key questions to help you identify collaboration opportunities.

How do you know who you should collaborate with? This is probably one of the toughest questions to answer. This concise guide will help you prioritise what you need to do identify who you want to collaborate with, and the preparation required for success. By working on the questions below, you should have a clearer idea of the types of collaboration opportunities and collaborators that are right for you.



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Q1 Defining my ideal collaborator: values and approach.

Draw on your past or current experience and describe what makes a good collaborator in the context of your research? Your answer will help you define what is important to you in terms of values as well as skills and knowledge that you expect your collaborators to bring to the table. If you have limited experience, speak with colleagues who can share their collaboration stories and see what resonates with you.

Output: write a short reflective piece on a collaboration project you either led or participated in. Describe what worked well in the project and the qualities of a good collaborator. This will help you identify the shared values and approach you are looking for in a collaborator.

Q2 Which help do I need right now? What would help me boost my research impact? Which skills, knowledge or resources would help me?

Being clear about your current research goals is a good way to start your search for collaborators. Consider your research question, methodology, and the kind of skills and support your project requires. Make a list and prioritise each item by importance and urgency. This will help you identify where a collaborator could add most value and ensure you remain on track with your research work.

Example: In a study examining the impact of climate change on coastal ecosystems, researchers with backgrounds in marine biology, environmental science, and climate modelling might collaborate to provide a comprehensive analysis.

Output: use a simple spreadsheet and list the types of skills, knowledge, and resources that you would need to boost your research. Once you have prioritised the key areas for potential help and support, try to see if you know anyone in your network who could be a potential collaborator.

Q2 Listing my ideal strategic collaborations for research impact.

Working in research requires us to carry on with our live projects as well as seeking new funding opportunities. In this complex process we need to identify possible collaborators who could help us secure new sources of funding and increase our reach and impact. These types of collaboration opportunities are likely to involve collaborators from other disciplines, fields, institutions, and countries. You will need to identify researchers that align to your strategic research goal or ambitions.

Example: The Human Genome Project, a monumental collaboration involving multiple research institutions, had a clear objective: to map and understand all the genes of the human genome. Different teams were responsible for various aspects of this ambitious project, from sequencing to data analysis.

Output: Set aside some time every week to review published articles and journals to identify and reach out to researchers who could a new perspective to your project. Make a list of the potential collaborators you have identified and identify ways how you could connect with them. A really good way to get to know a potential collaborator is to offer support or seek their input. This can help build trust and pave the way for future opportunities.

Q4 Committing to gaining visibility and increasing my connections.

This step requires a level of commitment that will bring many benefits. To find and engage with potential collaborators, you need to increase your visibility and make sure that you can reach and be reached by peers and potential collaborators across sectors and fields. There are three main ways you can do this.

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- 1- **Ask for an introduction:** once you have identified someone who could be a potential collaborator, find out if anyone in your close network knows. Don't hesitate to broaden your horizon by looking at your extended network in and outside Academia. Ask your contact to introduce you by email or through a shared platform such as LinkedIn. Personal introductions speed up the process and makes it easier for everyone to arrange a follow-up call in a timely manner. You can of course do the same for your peers when they ask for an introduction to one of your connections.
- 2- **Participate in conferences:** Being a part of seminars, international conferences, and academic forums give you the opportunity meet and interact with peers and potential collaborators from around the world and learn about their work. If you can, try to choose in-person events as you will have more opportunity to make connections and start meaningful conversations. Digital events are also good as there are often networking sessions set-up for delegates. You can also access the list of speakers and contact details. You will need to prepare for these meetings by finding out more about the person you seek to meet, their research interest and publications.
- 3- **Be visible on relevant online platforms:** it is important to make sure that potential collaborators can find you easily as they may want to find out more information about what you do before agreeing to meet up or connect. Invest time in using digital tools, online platforms such as LinkedIn, and professional organisations and groups that provide access to a network of researchers from around the world as well as wider collaborators outside Academia. Make sure to add a current profile and a link to a page that provides information on your research. You can also be active player by contributing to posts or sharing useful information. This is a good way to engage with people who may have shared interests.

Output: Check your calendar and plan to attend conferences and relevant seminars which will give you the chance to reach potential collaborators. Review this on a regular basis, ideally quarterly, to make sure that you do not miss good opportunities for widening your reach. You can also dedicate regular time to building your visibility on relevant online platforms. You can set a goal of connecting with new contacts every week or month, as well as using the online platforms as a source of information for accessing the latest posts and links added by researchers and potential contacts outside Academia.

Your next step

Communicate and formalise goals and expectations: Once you have established contact, discuss expectations and goals for the possible research collaboration. If your potential collaborator's skills and research interests align with your project goals and needs, formalise the discussion through a written agreement that outlines the terms of the collaboration. Remember to be clear about the deliverables, the potential benefits of collaboration for both parties and the values and approach you will adhere to during your collaboration.

Relevant articles and sources

Finding collaborators: toward interactive discovery tools for research network systems. Borromeo CD, Schleyer TK, Becich MJ, Hochheiser H. ; J Med Internet Res. 2014 Nov

Nature Career column, 13 May 2022 (membership access)

How to pick a great scientific collaborator: A simple framework can help you to identify 'likeable freeloaders' and 'misaligned partners' — and to self-assess. By [Carsten Lund Pedersen](#)

5 types of Research Collaboration

<https://solutions.springernature.com/blogs/visibility/5-types-of-research-collaboration>