

## 10 practical steps to address hierarchies in research projects

1. **Check your representation** - the research community should be represented at every level.
  - Do you have a PGR, technician, or PRISM on your departmental research committee? On your highest level research committee?
2. **Set your team ethos and establish your values.**
  - Use lab handbooks or an initial project kick-off meeting to discuss and set project values and ethos.
  - This will most likely be a work in progress needing ongoing conversation. The important thing is that you've thought about it and discussed it from the start.
3. **Try out different leadership models** - the "PI is king" isn't the only way to do it!
  - Consider delegated leadership. Figure out what skills and knowledge people bring and assign leadership responsibility accordingly.
  - Question whether certain roles have to be taken by certain staff groups. For example, you could take it in turns to lead team meetings or take minutes.
  - Think about whether roles need to be taken by people with a certain level of experience or background - perhaps a fresh face or a different perspective will bring benefits you hadn't imagined.
4. **Try out different management styles**
  - If you can't shake things up with your leadership, [Aspasia Eleni Paltoglou \(2021\)](#) suggests a change in how you manage.
  - A collaborative management style can look like a formal team leader who empowers their team by encouraging collaborative decision-making, all member input and difference of opinion
  - An empathic management style, where managers empathise with their colleagues and aren't afraid to show their emotions. Research shows that this can boost a team's creativity.
5. **Use the right language** - it matters what you call your colleagues.

- “Research support” is going out of fashion because it exposes the hierarchies present in the academic/non-academic relationship.
- Use terms like professional services staff, research enablers, PRISMs etc.
- Or ask staff what terms they would like used and make time to understand why.
- Empower people to be named as co-Is and PIs - recognise their leadership skills and the role they play with the correct title.

## 6. Shout about your team.

- Typically press releases and communications about research focus on the funding award and the superstar PI.
- Recognise and celebrate the contributions of everyone in your team.
- Include every team member’s role on project webpages.

## 7. Value other disciplines - can lead to creativity, innovation, and research that responds to real-world challenges

- Proactively identify gaps in your research which would benefit from other disciplinary perspectives.
- Include scholarship outside of your discipline, especially in initial scoping work like literature reviews and grant proposals.
- Build networks with researchers who are interested in interdisciplinary collaboration.

## 8. Consider who you cite and how you publish.

- Cite researchers from underrepresented backgrounds, for example women, those from the Global South and from BME backgrounds.
- Avatar Matharu, Chemistry professor at York, has developed authorship charts, also known as ‘[Matharu plots](#)’ (2023), to plot the country and institution of the authors you cite to help chart the representativeness of your research.
- Publish in Global South journals.
- Make publications open access.

## 9. Balance out the power dynamics in research partnerships involving Global North and Global South partners.

[Cathy Bollaert \(2023\)](#):

- Recognise the diverse worldviews and knowledge of your partners and centre these ways of knowing.
- Co-design research with local communities, academics, and organisations.
- Involve global partners in decision making processes.

- Agree from the outset to make Global South researchers lead authors on the majority of outputs.
- Decentralise the budget to research partners based in the global south.

## **10. Recognise and reward the contributions of all team members**

[Kramer and Brosman \(2023\)](#):

- Move from research-focused assessment to assessment including all academic activities (including education, professional performance and leadership)
- Reward collaborative working.