

**Synergy occurs when two or more people work together to create something that is greater than what each individual member could achieve on their own. When teams have synergy, a team is more creative and efficient, and team members can work together to create a solution that no individual would have thought of. Being able to work together and create synergy is especially important for multi-stakeholder teams because members have different perspectives and experiences.**

### How can research teams create synergy?

- 1 Establish a shared vision and objectives that all team members support.** Team members must be aware of—and agree on—the team’s vision and objectives for the study. Once established, the vision and objectives should be reviewed regularly by the entire team.

**Try this:** Include your team’s shared vision and objectives in every meeting agenda or attach to the meeting invite. Review them at the beginning of each meeting to ground the team in its overarching goals.

- 2 Meet regularly to strengthen relationships among team members.** Teams should meet regularly (e.g., weekly, monthly), even if the meetings are brief. Meeting regularly keeps team members informed and involved. It also helps team members get to know each other and build mutual trust and respect for each other. Team members are more likely to share their ideas when they feel comfortable with each other.

**Try this:** Include time on meeting agendas for team members to check in with each other. For example, each team member can briefly share their “highs and lows” of the week.

- 3 Be transparent in all communications with the team.** Open and honest communication with and among team members can help strengthen relationships and keep team members involved. Providing information and updates on the progress of the study, including challenges or problems, signals that all team members are equal partners.

**Try this:** Send a brief monthly update, via the team’s preferred communication methods, to all team members with specific and timely information about the project including accomplishments and next steps. Invite team members to contribute to updates so that they can also share information.

### How can research teams create synergy? *continued*

- 4 Use technology to collaborate and share information.** Using technology – that is accessible to all team members – can help improve communication and foster collaboration on the team. Examples of technology include videoconferencing, online chat applications, and collaborative web-based workspaces.

**Try this:** Use a web-based collaborative platform to draft team documents. These types of platforms allow multiple team members to write and edit in the same document at the same time. Some platforms also allow team members to communicate back and forth with each other via comments, building upon each other's work and fostering synergy. Other platforms encourage brainstorming with interactive whiteboards to post ideas.

- 5 Encourage contributions from all team members.** Team members should encourage each other to share ideas and perspectives based on their experiences and beliefs (e.g., cultural).

**Try this:** If some team members seem to be holding back, divide the team into small groups or pairs. Ask team members to share ideas with their small group or partner, and then report back to the full team. Speaking in a small group can help team members feel more comfortable sharing ideas.

**Try this:** Some members may prefer to share ideas privately or anonymously. Offer all team members the opportunity to share comments outside of a group setting, such as in a one-on-one call or an anonymous survey. This lets team members know their contributions are welcome and valued.

- 6 Have fun together.** Having fun together can help the team relax, get to know each other, and build trust, all of which help build synergy.

**Try this:** Plan a team-building activity or set aside time during a meeting for members to talk informally over a snack, for example to celebrate a team accomplishment. If team members are unable to gather in-person, organize a virtual gathering in which team members are encouraged to enjoy a snack together.