

Diversity comes in many forms. There are three dimensions of diversity that are often helpful to consider when developing research teams: diversity in perspectives, skills, and personality.

*Diversity in perspective.*

Diversity in perspective comes from involving people with different backgrounds, cultures and experiences. In building teams, projects can often benefit from including perspectives that differ by political view, socioeconomic status, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. The “real world” often functions in these kinds of teams – learning to work and communicate with diverse groups of people is an important skill for research and life.

*Skill diversity.*

Having a team of members with similar skillsets may help you develop an in-depth proposal but may leave you unable to address other aspects of a research question. A diversity of skills may give you more options, but you may not go down any one route clearly enough. Think about your skills and communicate them with your team. Do you have GIS skills? Quantitative/statistical skills? Interviewing skills? Are you a good writer? Are you a natural leader or organizer?

Not every research question or project has to use all possible skillsets represented in a group. Indeed, it’s often best if a project is focused, only drawing from one or two core methods. Still, you may want options available to you as you form questions, so keep in mind your team's strengths and weaknesses.

Outside the classroom, research teams are often formed by a) someone who comes up with the base question, and then recruits others with appropriate skills to help and iterate with them on their vision, or b) a conversation between a few researchers identifies an interesting topic, then those involved collaborate to conduct the research.

*Personality diversity.*

Personality is important and often overlooked. For instance, in a team it is often productive to have people who tend to sort out ideas *before* they speak as well as people who think through ideas *while* they speak. Too many of one type and teams can sometimes talk up a storm without reflection or be paralyzed by wanting to find a “perfect” idea or comment before trying to communicate it. If you find yourself in a team seems to lean one way or the other, get out of your comfort zone and try on the other hat.