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# Challenges and barriers to interdisciplinary research.

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# Challenges and Barriers to Interdisciplinary Research

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## Why Interdisciplinary (IR) Research Matters

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**Definition?** Combining knowledge, methods, and perspectives from different disciplines to address complex problems.

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Current societal challenges require an **intersection of disciplines** and **integrated solutions**. However, numerous challenges exist.



# Barriers Encountered/Observed as an Interdisciplinary Researcher

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## 1. Institutional

- ✓ **Situations where departments are siloed**, each with its own set of priorities, resources, and administrative protocols

## 2. Method

- ✓ **Communication and Language barriers.** Here, this could be discipline-specific jargon and terminology and/or differences in fundamental concepts and approaches
- ✓ **Collaboration Challenges** from differing expectations and outputs across disciplines, power dynamics, poorly understood roles and responsibilities or juggling individual career goals with collective project goals



# Barriers Encountered/Observed as an Interdisciplinary Researcher

## 3. Medium

- ✓ **Interdisciplinary Work** may be challenging from a peer review and publication angle. Experts from a single discipline may not fully appreciate interdisciplinary work or difficulty in finding suitable journals

## 4. Audience and Implementation Challenges

- ✓ Identifying relevant stakeholders across disciplines and ensuring their engagement
- ✓ Evaluating the impact of interdisciplinary work in ways that satisfy different disciplinary standards





## Case Example from an International Development Project


- Designing a **new fish smoking stove** under a funded project for fish smoking communities.
- Brought together Engineers, Food scientists, Environmental Scientists, Business Analysts, Policymakers, Users
- **Clear end goal was beneficial in this project.**

# Conclusions

Barriers exist but they are not INSURMOUNTABLE



Solutions require promoting a research culture that values and supports interdisciplinary work. Advocating for policies that address structural and institutional barriers.



Exploring how to facilitate learning and how technology and tools can facilitate communication and collaboration across disciplines.

