

Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience



A framework and assessment for measuring and increasing lived experience leadership across the spectrum of engagement

GLOBAL
FUND
TO
END
MODERN
SLAVERY

NATIONAL
SURVIVOR
NETWORK

Written by: Chris Ash, National Survivor Network - CAST
Sophie Otiende, Global Fund to End Modern Slavery

Original art by Rose Kibara

We would like to express our gratitude to Rose Kalembe, Aquilina George, Rosette Nsonga, and the numerous NSN members and GFEMS staff whose collaborative conversations informed this document.

Table of Contents

Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience	3
Values that inform meaningful engagement of people with lived experience of human trafficking	4
Lived Experience Engagement Spectrum	5
Inform	6
Ask	7
Involve	8
Collaborate	9
Empower	10
Inclusion and Power-Sharing	13
All about inclusion	13
All about power	14
Meaningful Inclusion	17
The Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder	19
Barriers and Opportunities	22
Barrier: People with lived experience may not know if they could do the job	22
Related opportunities	
Barrier: People with lived experience may worry they will not be hired or assessed fairly	23
Related opportunities	
Barrier: Concerns about organizational culture	24
Related opportunities	
Barrier: Cultural Differences, Colonialism, Nonprofit and Funding Power Dynamics	25
Related opportunities	
Barrier: Funding norms and donors' positionality and expectations	27
Related opportunities	
Barrier: Leadership buy-in and evaluation challenges	29
Related opportunities	
A Vision of Hope	30
Tools and Assessments	32

Recommended citation: C. Ash and S. Otiende. *Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience: A framework and assessment for increasing lived experience leadership across the spectrum of engagement.* Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and National Survivor Network- Cast, Washington, DC (2023).

This work is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

For commercial use or licensing of this product, please reach out to GFEMS or the NSN.

Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience



Since the early 1990s, the disability rights movement has rallied behind the slogan: “**Nothing about us without us!**”

What does that mean? It means that people who are impacted by an issue are most likely to know what they need and what kinds of supports would help them. It also means that people who are impacted by an issue are most likely to know whether a program or service is helpful, and how it might be improved.

A number of assumptions have informed typical approaches to lived experience leadership in the anti-trafficking sector.

1. People with lived experience need or can be expected to tell their stories to be lived experience leaders.
2. Increasing lived experience leadership is about having representation in the movement.
3. People with lived experience do not have (or struggle to learn) skills to do other kinds of movement leadership.

OR...

1. There are enough people with lived experience working in the movement now and we have arrived at equity.
2. Having people who work with impacted populations in the room is as good as having people with lived experience.
3. We are now in a place where we no longer need people with lived experience in our work.

These assumptions lead to engagement that is tokenizing, limiting, or ineffective. The alternative is to foster *meaningful* engagement of people with lived experience of human trafficking.

Meaningful engagement means ensuring that people who are or have been impacted by an issue are involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies to address the issue. On an individual level, this approach requires professionals in the field (including those with lived experience) to decenter their own identities and experiences in order to allow the self-determination of the impacted individual engaging in services or advocacy. On an organizational or movement level, this approach requires professionals in the field who do not have lived experience to decenter themselves to make space for genuine movement leadership by people with lived experience, and people with lived experience in the field to always advocate for policies that provide benefit for the greatest number and kind of impacted individuals.

Meaningful engagement of people with lived experience in the anti-trafficking movement begins at the moment you realize someone might be experiencing human trafficking.¹ Someone with lived experience doesn't need to be at any particular stage in their healing to have wisdom and insight about their experiences that you may not have. Without inviting that person to take on any kind of formal leadership position, you can honor their wisdom and feedback by asking: *What do you need right now? What would help you feel safer or supported? How can I support you in removing some of the barriers to safety or support?*

From that initial point of contact, anti-trafficking organizations can set the tone for respectful relationships with impacted people that foster their self-determination and security while recognizing that ultimately **people with lived experience are the experts in their own experiences.**

Values that inform meaningful engagement of people with lived experience of human trafficking



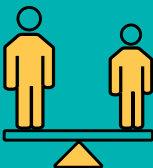
Self-determination: People with lived experience are the experts in their own experiences, and deserve dignity, autonomy, and self-determination. People with lived experience deserve to define safety and leadership for themselves and have support in achieving their goals, whether as a client or as a movement professional, or both in some cases.



Trauma-informed: Trauma-informed means that anti-trafficking organizations are trustworthy, transparent, collaborative, and respectful of cultural and historical trauma's impacts. People with lived experience deserve transparency about how decisions are made that impact them, as well as about how the feedback and expertise they provide will be used.



Dignity: People with lived experience deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. This includes avoiding stereotyping and bias in service provision as well as avoiding tokenism, condescension, or paternalism in leadership opportunities and development.



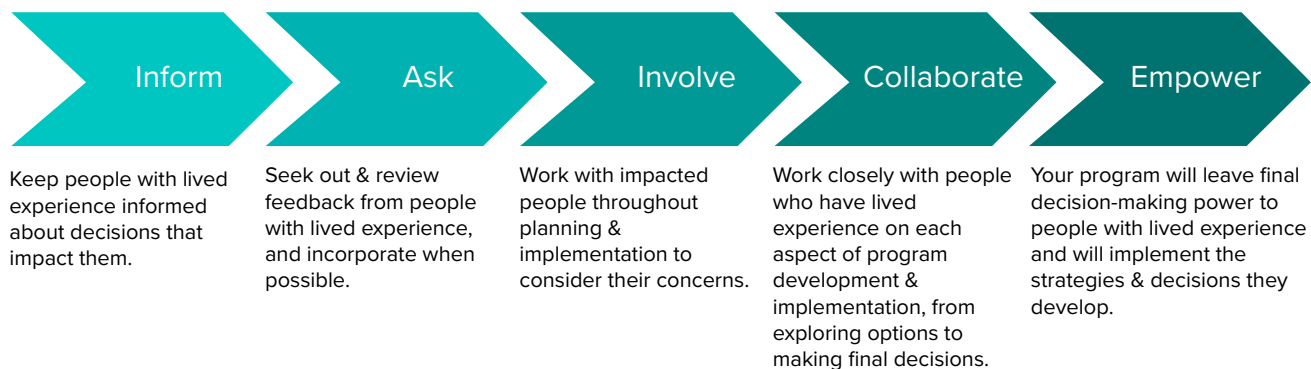
Equality and equity: People with lived experience are essential leaders and equal collaborators in the movement to end human trafficking. In any region, some voices, identities, and perspectives are given more power than others to influence decisions and funding; it is essential to counteract those imbalances in how we do our work.

¹ Ash, Survivor engagement in international policy and programming in human trafficking and modern slavery: North America, Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre, 2022.

Lived Experience Engagement Spectrum

Engagement of people with lived experience in policy, research, and programming to end human trafficking can take many forms, from not involved at all to entirely led by impacted people and communities. We can think of this as a spectrum of different ways to engage people with lived experience. “Spectrum” is a way of thinking of things as existing along a scale, rather than just as an on-off switch. When thinking about color, for example, there is a spectrum of colors between red and yellow which includes different shades of orange. Thinking about engagement of people with lived experience as a spectrum helps us remember that “survivor leadership” is not an on-or-off switch. Lived experience leadership can be thought of as a spectrum of many different levels and kinds of engagement between “not survivor-led” and “survivor-led.”

While consistent inclusion in program development, delivery, and decision-making is essential to a movement that is truly informed by lived experience expertise, it is important to engage people with lived experience at all levels in order to maintain transparency and ensure robust incorporation of diverse voices from impacted communities.



Adapted from the International Association of Public Participation’s [Spectrum of Public Participation](#) by Chris Ash for [Expanding Our Reach, 2019](#).

Empower is clearly the highest level of lived experience leadership and inform is not lived experience leadership at all. That said, each level has unique value toward building a strategy, an organization, or a movement in which impacted peoples’ needs are centered and their voices are valued.



While all levels of the spectrum are essential to a thriving anti-trafficking movement, our ultimate goal is to strive toward higher levels of engagement. Throughout this document, consider which level is the *highest level your organization is currently doing well*, and develop strategies to shift to the next level. Details, tips, and guidance for continually increasing your level of successful engagement will be provided in the *Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder* section of this document.



Inform

At this level, we keep impacted people informed about decisions that impact them. This is not lived experience leadership, but it creates transparency – one of the principles of trauma-informed practice. However, it creates conditions that increase the agency of people with lived experience. When impacted people have access to plain-language, clear, and accurate information about programs, policies, and research, they are better able to form and share their own opinions on both personal and community levels. When impacted people are informed, they are less dependent on third-party supporters to help them make choices about their care and safety. Informed participants can create their own policy recommendations and their own talking points.

INFORM		
<i>Putting it into practice</i>	<i>When is it appropriate?</i>	<i>When is it not appropriate?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that fact sheets, newsletters, and websites are in plain language, disability-accessible, and language accessible. • Ensure that safeguarding and grievance policies are easy-to-find and clear. • Provide transparency in advance about how lived experience feedback is used and incorporated. • Develop and implement feedback loops to follow up and inform impacted individuals of actions taken after complaints or progress on projects they contributed to. • Create an engaging and plain-language impact report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With current clients to ensure they know how to find information, policies, and services that impact them. • To maintain accountability and transparency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a substitute for engagement of people with lived experience in developing and implementing policies, programming, and research.



Ask

At this level, we intentionally seek out and review lived experience feedback and incorporate it when possible. This is a common way to engage people with lived experience in review of existing policies, programs, and research. While many organizations may bring on consultants with lived experience to provide review and feedback of projects in-progress or being implemented, an often overlooked but essential way to seek out crucial feedback is through meaningful and ethical engagement with your current clients. Ask them what they need to be successful, or what the barriers are to their safety and healing. Ask them how your programs are meeting their needs and how they could be improved. Ask current contractors or employees with lived experience about how they experienced your engagement opportunities. Have a plan in place for soliciting, receiving, and acting on critical feedback so that you can continually improve your work. While some engagement at this level may be uncompensated, surveys that take longer than 5-10 minutes, focus groups, and document review should always be compensated.

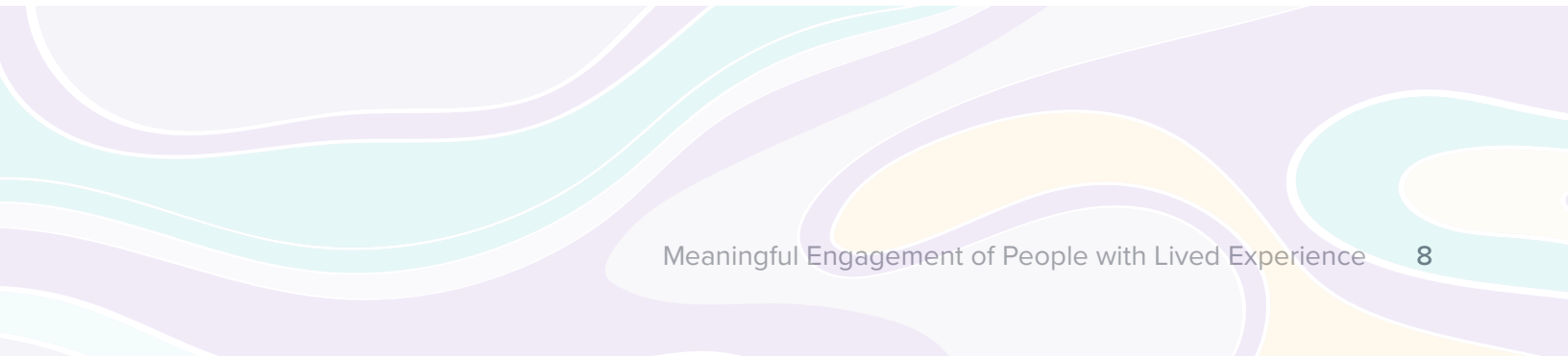
ASK		
<i>Putting it into practice</i>	<i>When is it appropriate?</i>	<i>When is it not appropriate?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently survey people with lived experience in your client base, consultants, and staff about their experiences with those engagements. Conduct focus groups of current clients, contractors, or staff with lived experience regarding their experiences with your organization. Compensate people with lived experience to review and provide feedback into existing documents, plans, policies, or programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain essential feedback from current clients with whom dual relationships may need to be avoided As a means of receiving evaluation feedback from current contractors or staff For existing documents that need review when a complete overhaul is not appropriate or accessible Decisions on kinds of grants to pursue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When there is no intention to hear or incorporate feedback and people with lived experience are expected to “rubber stamp” When you are only seeking feedback that validates your existing beliefs As a substitution for greater levels of lived experience leadership When impacted individuals are asked to give feedback or collaborate on programs without adequate compensation.



Involve

At this level, people with lived experience are engaged throughout planning and implementation to consider their concerns and ensure the incorporation of their feedback. This means that impacted people are brought in from the beginning of envisioning the project plan or funding proposal to ensure that the foundations of the work are solid and that there is a process for them to engage with the project team on an ongoing basis to provide feedback on the progress and provide final review. At this level, it is expected and customary to compensate people with lived experience for their time.

<i>INVOLVE</i>		
<i>Putting it into practice</i>	<i>When is it appropriate?</i>	<i>When is it not appropriate?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct focus groups of people with lived experience regarding their needs, experiences of services, and insights before beginning a project or program planning. • Hire consultants with lived experience or consultant review teams that are project or program-specific and have ongoing input throughout planning and implementation. • Establish paid lived experience advisory councils to provide ongoing guidance to organizational leadership. These may be impacted individuals who do not have the capacity, time, or skillset to serve on Boards or as staff, but who have insight that could shape your programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing grant proposals or business development proposals • When you don't have lived experience leadership internally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When there is no intent to incorporate the voices of impacted individuals • When the involvement of people with lived experience is tokenizing

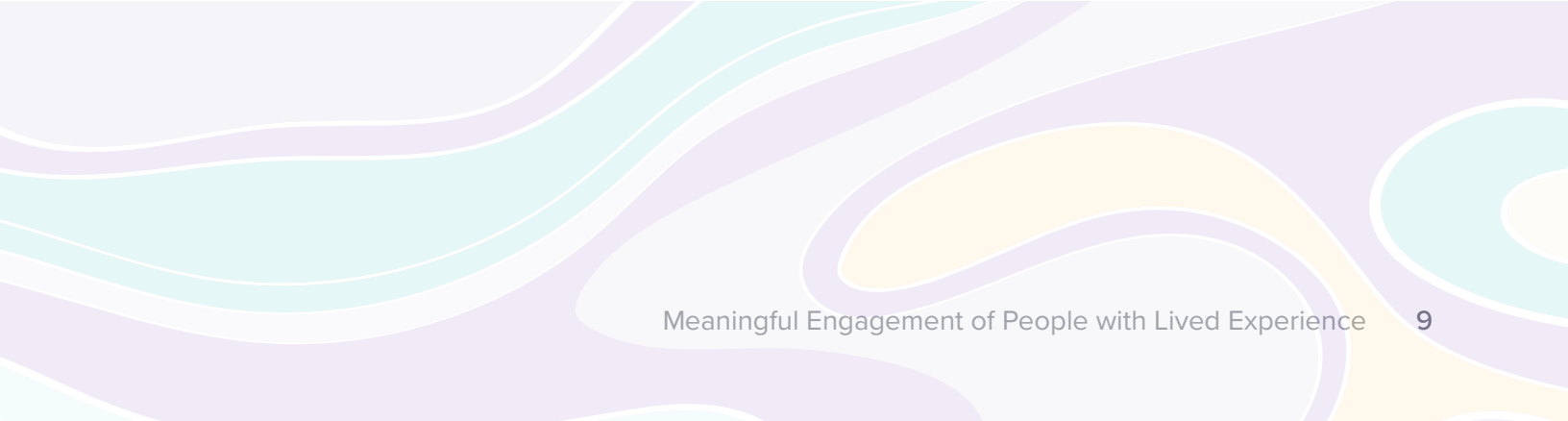


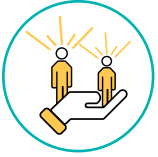


Collaborate

At this level, the organization or movement works closely with people with lived experience on each aspect of program development and implementation, from exploring options to making final decisions. This level of engagement *within* an organization would mean impacted people are well-represented among your employees or regular contractors. At a programmatic, community, or regional level, it means that your organization collaborates with partner organizations or initiatives that are led by people with lived experience and that have a high level of meaningful lived experience engagement.

COLLABORATE		
<i>Putting it into practice</i>	<i>When is it appropriate?</i>	<i>When is it not appropriate?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ people with lived experience on staff or as regular contractors doing programmatic, policy, or research work, without expecting or requiring them to share their stories or to be defined by their trauma. • Develop and implement internal lived experience leadership equity initiatives. Assess your organization for equitable access, upward mobility, compensation, and job satisfaction among staff with lived experience, compared to other staff. Conduct equity analyses of your staff with lived experience compared to the populations you serve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When people with lived experience are well-supported in pursuing the kind of leadership they would like to engage in • When impacted individuals have choices about the kinds of jobs they can do • When funding and power are shared between well-funded organizations and grassroots partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When people with lived experience are being asked to do work they do not have the skills for or are not prepared to do, which is tokenizing • In the absence of internal organizational work and change to build readiness for working with people with lived experience of human trafficking as colleagues • When an organization has not prioritized racial equity, non-discrimination, and trauma-informed organizational practice.



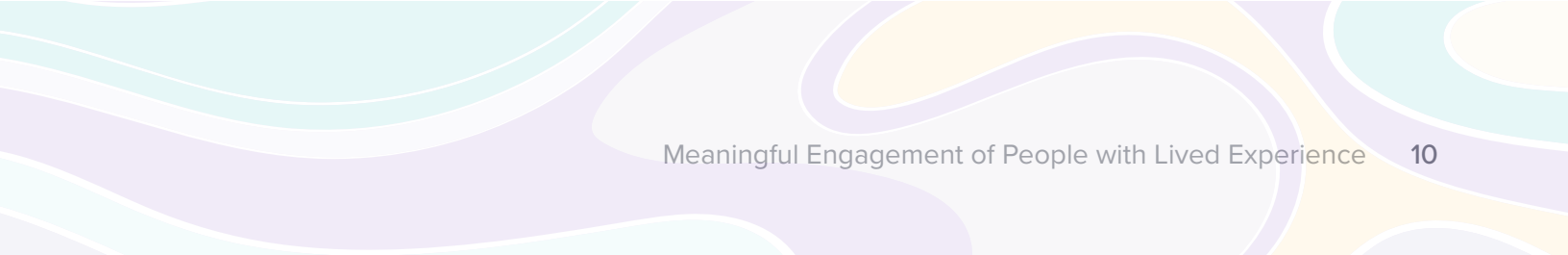


Empower

At this level, people with lived experience have final decision-making power over policies, programming, research, and implementation. Your organization or program will implement the strategies and decisions impacted people develop. While this level of engagement can be ideal, it may not be ideal for every project. For example, we would only want a team of people with lived experience of human trafficking developing a protocol for assessing a medical patient for a traumatic brain injury if they also have healthcare knowledge, training, and skills.

EMPOWER		
<i>Putting it into practice</i>	<i>When is it appropriate?</i>	<i>When is it not appropriate?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this level, organizations will have hired staff with lived experience in a meaningful percentage of managerial, executive, and leadership and decision-making positions For a project or program, the project or program team will be led by people with lived experience, including for decision-making and budgetary concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the impacted individuals are selected for their skills rather than their trauma and are well-supported in their leadership development. When organizations are making meaningful progress on readiness for working with people with lived experience of human trafficking as colleagues. When an organization has made meaningful progress on racial equity, non-discrimination, and trauma-informed organizational practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the organization’s board or executive leadership is not prepared to support, develop, and empower the impacted individuals in leadership positions. When the individual does not have the skills to perform the leadership role and there is no plan in place to build and develop those skills before they are expected to perform.

In all of these levels, people with lived experience should be compensated at least at the same levels as other professionals doing similar work, and generously in order to accommodate for the impacts and unique needs of working as someone with lived experience. Their workloads should be comparable to other employees, and it should never be mandated that staff with lived experience share personal or intimate details of their trauma as a precondition for their work.





Meaningful engagement of people with lived experience means:

- An organization incorporates multiple, layered approaches at all levels of the spectrum;
- With feedback mechanisms in place to receive and act on critical feedback about programs as well as impacted individuals' experiences working with the organization;
- That the impacted individuals engaged represent a diversity of identities, experiences, and perspectives;
- That the values that foster meaningful engagement are sustained by the organization even when people with lived experience are not in the room;
- That the organization strives for the highest level of engagement that is possible for each project, program, or decision;
- And that the engagement is implemented in a way that aims to prevent harm to the impacted people engaged and make repair when harm happens.

“This toolkit is instrumental in ensuring that organizations are putting people with lived experiences engagement at the forefront. *It provides organizations an essential framework to assess their resources, approach, and mindset to engage survivors as leaders from the beginning.*

Tasneem Nahar, Global Fund to End Modern Slavery



Inclusion and Power-Sharing



Meaningful engagement of people with lived experience in communities, organizations, and movements can only happen in environments that share power and are truly inclusive.

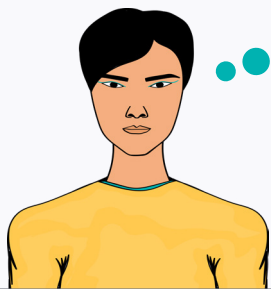
ALL ABOUT INCLUSION

What is inclusion?

Inclusion is the proactive and continuous practice of creating a context where people are embraced in their full and complex identities, given as much access to engagement as possible, and treated with dignity and respect. At its core, inclusion is about sharing power with the aim of creating an environment where all of our identities, experiences, and wisdom shape the outcome.

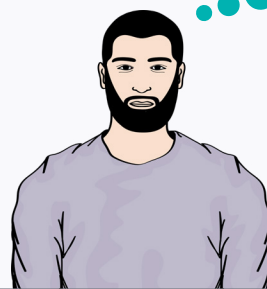
But how might our identities, experiences, and wisdom influence how we participate in the workplace?

Dwi: Nonbinary gender, South Asian family, lived experience of human trafficking, college-educated.





If I remind them to encourage clients to share pronouns will they act like it's personal?

Ben: American man, lived experience of human trafficking, working in an NGO in the Global South.



So they keep talking about violence against women and girls, which is HUGE and very important. I wish we had ideas in mind for how to support men who have experienced human trafficking.

<p>Neema: East African woman, lived experience of sexual violence but not human trafficking, advocate and educator.</p>  <div data-bbox="461 296 779 688" style="border: 1px solid teal; padding: 10px; margin-left: 20px;"> <p><i>I keep hearing them say they support lived experience-led programming, but they keep asking white, Western people with lived experience what they think. Is there a place for me in this movement?</i></p> </div>	<p>Saanvi: Bisexual Indian woman, lived experience of human trafficking, not out as LGBTQ, new shelter staff.</p>  <div data-bbox="1146 296 1464 688" style="border: 1px solid teal; padding: 10px; margin-left: 20px;"> <p><i>Every time they talk that way about an LGBTQ client, I feel even more afraid to tell them who I am. I worry about how they treat LGBTQ clients, but don't want to draw attention to myself.</i></p> </div>
--	--

While these are just a few examples of identities, experiences, and fears that your team members may have, they all reflect our attempts to navigate personal, cultural and structural, workplace, and movement-wide power dynamics.

ALL ABOUT POWER

What is power?

For the purposes of our conversation, we can think of power as: “the ability or capacity to have authority or influence over decisions and outcomes.” These decisions and outcomes can be personal (control over your own agency), cultural and structural, workplace, or movement.

<p>Personal</p>	<p>This includes one-on-one relationships we might have with people, including power dynamics between people who are dating, married, living together, or in shared community. They may be power dynamics based on differences in economic security, family or community support, physical size or strength, willingness to use intimidation, or impacts of prior trauma.</p>
<p>Cultural and Structural</p>	<p>This includes how our access to power and safety are influenced by the beliefs and norms of the culture we’re in or the way our communities or governments are structured. Many of these power dynamics are identity-based. Cultures, communities, and systems may restrict someone’s access to safety and power based on race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or based on other biases and assumptions.</p>
<p>Workplace</p>	<p>This includes how formal and informal power dynamics show up in our organizations, workplaces, and collaborations based on funding, job descriptions, organizational roles, seniority and longevity. For example, CEOs hold more power decision-making power than program managers, and program managers have more decision-making power than advisory councils or contractors.</p>

Movement	Within the anti-trafficking, anti-violence, and international development sectors, different organizations hold different kinds of power. People in different roles also hold different kinds of power. Even among impacted people working in the movement, some may have more formal or informal power than others.
-----------------	--

When we talk about power in the human trafficking space, the discussion can feel abstract because most of the time we do not explicitly acknowledge or analyze the ways in which power is acquired, exercised and asserted . It is also important to note that the understanding of power can be quite subjective, and can take on different meanings depending on the context of the power dynamics.

Social power is the capacity of different individuals or groups to determine who gets what, who does what, who decides what, and who sets the agenda.²

Who gets what?

Obviously, power dynamics can influence who gets access to resources. It also influences other things that are less tangible but equally real and significant. For example, who gets to self-identify whether or not they have lived experience of human trafficking? How does that disclosure impact their experiences in the sector? Who gets to be respected and to have their dignity and privacy honored? Remember: This is not just about resources but is also about fundamental rights and privileges that are sometimes quite subtle, particularly to those who benefit from this kind of power.

Who does what?

A solid power analysis will also explore how essential labor is distributed. Consider: What skills are valued in our sector? This often shows up in what we consider to be “unskilled work,” when in reality the work simply requires a different set of equally competent skills. Who gets hired, and into what kinds of positions? What kinds of labor are seen as “productive,” and how is work time structured around “productivity”? What kinds of expertise do we value more or less, and who gets to be seen as an “expert”? What kind of knowledge is seen as “objective,” and where and by whom do we believe knowledge is created?


Who decides what?

Who are the donors and how are decisions made about what kinds of donors and funding will be pursued? Power is not shared when decisions about funding and ethical development practices are not shared. Who receives funding and gets approved for grants? What barriers exist that make it difficult for grassroots and/or lived experience-led organizations to receive and maintain funding? Who are the policymakers who determine our local, national, and global policies, and how do they balance political influence with accountability to impacted communities? How are decisions made within organizations and programs, and who is consulted within the program when those decisions are being made? Who sets the agenda, and decides what is a priority and what is not? How do those decisions intentionally incorporate the experiences and needs of impacted people?

Remember: People’s experiences of power dynamics are intersectional.³ This doesn’t mean that each of their identities either adds or subtracts a point from how much power they have. **Intersectionality means that the combination of certain kinds of identities or experiences creates an entirely different form of power dynamic.** For example, a Black woman doesn’t just experience racism plus gender discrimination – she experiences specific kinds of gender discrimination due to being Black, and specific kinds of racism due to being a woman. Similarly, impacted people who hold other marginalized identities will experience unique kinds of power dynamics in the workplace, and not all people with lived experience have the same experiences of exclusion or inclusion.

² S.Batliala, All About Power: Understanding Social Power & Power Structures, New Delhi, CREA, Apr 2019; <https://reconference.creaworld.org/all-about-power/>

³This term was coined by American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw.



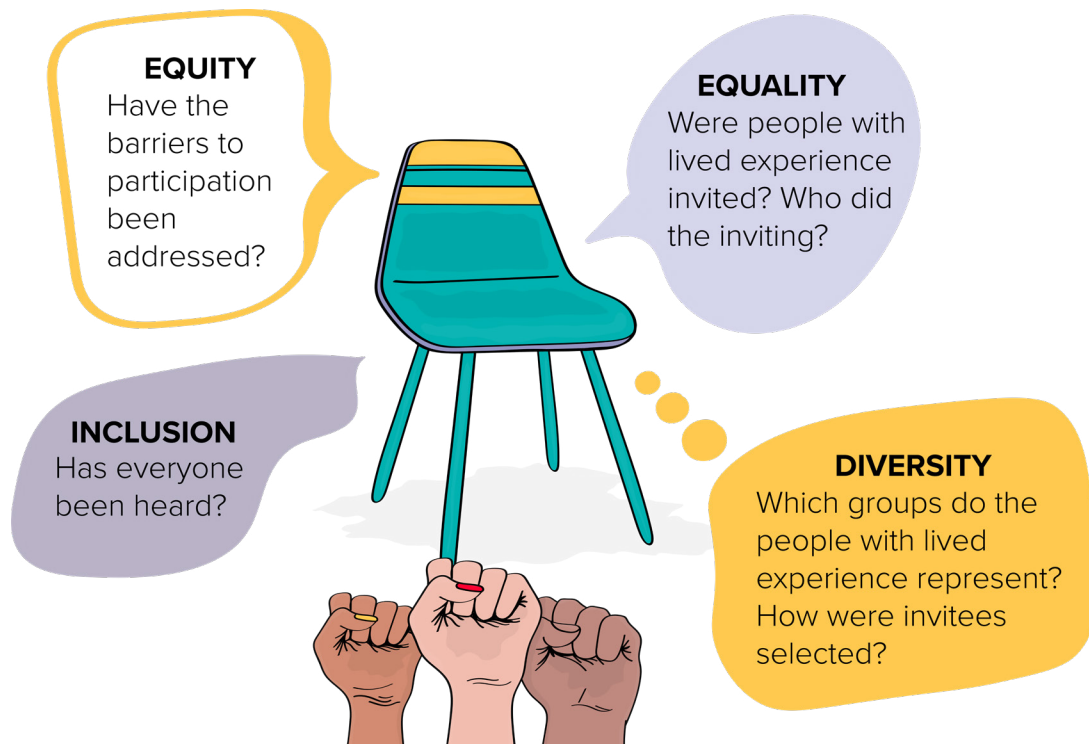
When dealing with power in an organization, movement, or any social place, it is important to not only look at the obvious ways that power operates but also look at the invisible ways in which it moves and it is asserted. By looking at the invisible ways that power operates, it is possible to promote equity at work without making marginalized people feel like we are doing them a favor by addressing the fundamental issues of equity and inclusion at work.

MEANINGFUL INCLUSION

It is impossible to talk about inclusion in any context without thinking about power dynamics and how they impact cultural, workplace, and movement-wide decision-making as well as personal agency. People have many identities and experiences, and they navigate multiple contexts and communities. Power looks and operates very differently in different contexts. Even one person with lived experience might have more power in some spaces in their lives and less in others. For example, someone can be valued as an elder and organizer in their culturally-specific community but have little economic and social power in their workplace. Someone may have very little institutional or community power but be seen as a role model within the anti-trafficking movement.

Inclusion doesn't just mean having representation from diverse identities, including people with lived experience of human trafficking and modern slavery, in the room.⁴ You can create a diverse team, but if they are still expected to operate with the existing values, processes, and programs that were created without them it is not sincere and equitable inclusion. If they do not share in the decision-making power, it is not sincere and equitable inclusion.

Sincere and equitable inclusion of impacted individuals' voices means having diverse perspectives, identities, and experiences at the table; sharing in decision-making power; and acting from our values around lived experience inclusion even when the people who have disclosed experience of human trafficking are not at a table with us, and when we are not talking specifically about lived experience inclusion. This means that organizations that did not have this level of inclusion in place from their beginnings might need to do some organizational readiness work to prepare for meaningful inclusion and engagement.



⁴“Human trafficking” and “modern slavery” are not synonymous. “Modern slavery” is not defined by law and there is no single globally agreed-upon definition, but most definitions of modern-day slavery are adapted mainly from the 1956 UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery. Modern slavery is an umbrella term to encompass human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, forced child labour, and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Not all forms of modern slavery are human trafficking, and not all forms of human trafficking are universally considered to be slavery. Readers in the US context are encouraged to be intentional around their use of language that mirrors chattel slavery.

“ Historically, much of the work surrounding survivor advocacy has not properly valued our firsthand feedback. To borrow a phrase originating from the disability rights movement - ‘Nothing about us without us.’ *I cannot stress enough the importance of meaningful rather than patronizing engagement of survivors, and am so grateful to have collaborated on a project that will help organizations to put this into practice.*

Rose Kalemba, National Survivor Network



The Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder

The Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder is a way to envision and affirm a commitment to increasing the highest levels of meaningful (rather than tokenizing) lived experience engagement in decision-making and leadership that are possible and realistic for people with lived experience. While the Lived Experience Engagement Spectrum ensures that we are acting ethically and thoughtfully in every level we use, the Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder reminds us that we must move beyond tokenizing impacted people if we want a truly lived experience-centric sector and lived experience-led movement. While it is important to engage people with lived experience in a variety of ways, we can also measure the degree to which impacted people were included in the decision-making.



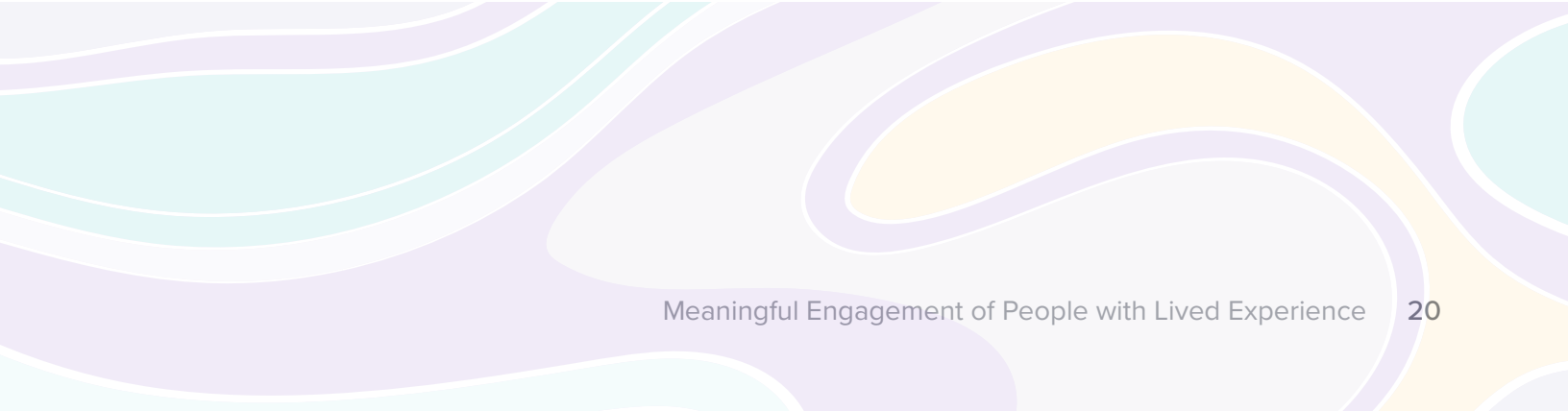
If people with lived experience are only informed of decisions being made by people without lived experience, they are participants, not leaders. Organizations (and ideally, the anti-trafficking sector) should strive to implement the highest level of non-tokenizing engagement that is accessible and sustainable, while intentionally working to address concerns around accessibility and sustainability.

<i>Accessibility</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having impacted people in your community interested in and capable of doing (or learning how to do) your work. • Grant funding that allows for equitable compensation and benefits. • Not expecting staff to pay upfront for work-related expenses such as travel. • Disability accessibility prioritized, including for different learning styles and mental wellness. • Parent-friendly and family-supporting workplace policies. • What else would make higher levels accessible in your work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma-informed organizational practices and emotionally-intelligent leadership. • Commitment to avoiding overwork and burnout. • Willingness to incorporate regular and ongoing leadership development as a routine part of all employees' compensation and time. • Culturally-inclusive and racially equitable workplace practice. • Adequate funding to support workplace supports necessary for people with lived experience to thrive. (See FreeFrom for ideas.)

You move your organization up the ladder by assessing and building your organization’s capacity to support higher levels of organizational engagement of people with lived experience while remembering that not all programs or projects must have the same level of engagement. Inclusion looks different from one task to the next and also from one project to another. For example, it is possible to have a finance department with no staff who have disclosed lived experience of trafficking but still to have financial processes that are inclusive of common lived experience needs.

In our space, this means that each project, each task, and each program eventually has to design and think about what appropriate meaningful inclusion looks like. Within one organization, different departments and teams may be on different rungs of the ladder.

Due to the unique nature of trafficking’s traumatic impact, restriction of agency, and economic exploitation, an inclusive organization will always remember that Western models of professionalism and knowledge are not the only models. Similarly, formal education or degrees are not the only way skills can be developed. Honor indigenous and culturally-specific ways of knowing, facilitation, and healing. Create reciprocal relationships by offering professional development to support your staff in their unique career goals. Recognize the trust that develops when your team has the opportunity to see people who look like them, have similar life experiences, or come from their communities succeeding in the organization, particularly among leadership.





Definitions

- ▶ **Lived Experience-Informed:** This approach meaningfully engages a diverse community of people with lived experience and incorporates their input and expertise at all stages, from start to finish of all efforts, including development, implementation, and evaluation. In asking for meaningful input, we must be aware of unequal power dynamics and remain vigilant against tokenism.
- ▶ **Meaningful engagement of people with lived experience** means ensuring that people who are or have been impacted by an issue are involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies to address the issue.
- ▶ **Lived Experience-Centered:** This approach places the rights, needs, resources, strengths, dignity, and experiences of people with lived experience or their community at the forefront of all efforts, over those of any intervening or supporting individual or organization. This approach prioritizes the voices of people with lived experience in all decision-making as full collaborators in transforming the conditions that allow exploitation, prioritizing healing, connection, and long-term, sustainable wellness of the individuals and communities.
- ▶ **Lived Experience-Led:** This approach values people with lived experience' unique expertise and thus actively positions and supports them in all levels and kinds of leadership and decision-making positions to transform the conditions that allow exploitation.
- ▶ **Allyship:** Allyship is an ongoing reflection on one's own privilege, actions, and biases that further systemic oppression; it is an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating. Allies share power with and take direction from many diverse people with lived experiences to break down systems that contribute to marginalization. Allies acknowledge that prior practices have caused harm to those with lived experience, and take accountability. Allies hold space and make space by decentering themselves so that people with lived experience can reach their individual goals, and work in solidarity to promote their well-being



Barriers and Opportunities

Well-intentioned organizations seeking to successfully move toward higher levels of meaningful engagement of people with lived experience may encounter barriers. Barriers may come from a place of fear, and require letting go of perfectionism and committing to repair. They may come from an unwillingness to let go of power, ego, or fragility, and require that staff, leadership, board, and funders learn to decenter themselves and show up with personal and professional humility. They may involve a perception of scarcity (of impacted people with skills to engage in leadership, of funders willing to support a transformative vision), requiring creativity around development and networking. Following are some common barriers to increasing your overall levels of engagement and some opportunities to intentionally address those barriers. With creativity, we can anticipate, reduce, and overcome these barriers.

Barrier: People with lived experience may not know if they could do the job

People with lived experience may worry that they need every single skill and experience listed on the job posting, or be afraid of failure if they do get hired.

Related Opportunities

Job Descriptions

- Ensure that the job description is written in accessible language, and in the appropriate language for the population we are hiring from. Include clear, plain language specifics of what the job actually entails.
- Consider including a “learn more about this job” link in the job description that leads to a page that offers an idea of the kinds of day-to-day tasks that are part of this job, and the kinds of support, professional development, and mentoring that are part of your traditional onboarding processes.
- Consider including this or similar language in job descriptions: “Don’t meet every single qualification? Studies have shown that women and people of color (and often people with lived experience of human trafficking) are less likely to apply to jobs unless they meet every single qualification. At (our organization) we are dedicated to building a diverse, inclusive, and authentic workplace, so if you’re excited about this role but your past experience doesn’t align perfectly with every qualification in the job description, we encourage you to apply anyways. You may be just the right candidate for this or other roles.”
- Consider linking in the job description or “learn more” page to associated professional development opportunities for the skills listed. This may help applicants get context for some of the skills that may help them recognize how their prior work utilized similar skills. It also might help them begin planning for future job applications in their field of choice by using vetted sources from trusted organizations.

Information Sessions

- Consider hosting an information session or providing an FAQ on how to apply, what we are looking for, and what the hiring process will entail.

Hiring Process

- Include and evaluate work experience (including grassroots and informal work) as well as training and mentoring experience in place of formal educational experience.
- Offer compensation for any work that is required as part of the interview process, and ensure that applicants maintain ownership of work products, trainings, or work plans developed as part of the hiring.
- In rejection letters, consider including an opportunity to meet and go through the scoring process and why they were not selected and respond with compassionate transparency and resources.

For New Hires

Provide mentorships, and ensure that your staff is diverse and inclusive.

Barrier: People with lived experience may worry they will not be hired or assessed fairly

Even when people with lived experience feel confident that they can do the job, they may worry that they will not be hired or assessed fairly due to bias. They may worry that their qualifications will not be considered official enough, or that their practical, on-the-job experience or learning will not be assessed fairly. They may worry that they will not be able to perform well during cumbersome or frightening interview processes.

Related Opportunities

Job Descriptions

- State in the job description that lived experience doesn't mean your story is what the hiring organization is looking for. Consider: "While we prioritize hiring applicants with lived experience, you will be assessed based on your skills and wisdom, and your story is not what we are hiring you for."
- When listing required skills, consider including examples that may not come from prior paid work. For example: "Experience managing workplace or community projects, such as an outreach project, awareness campaign, or community social event"

Information Sessions

- If you offer an applicant information session, include information about how applicants and interviews are assessed, and how you intentionally strive to use inclusive criteria that is broader than a traditional workplace.

Hiring Process

- Let applicants know in advance if there is something on their resume that you might want clarification on during the interview.
- Consider providing applicants with an agenda for their interview in advance with tips for interviewing well.
- Ensure that any technical assessments (having the applicant prepare a document or presentation, for example) are the last step in the hiring process rather than the first. If you use technical assessments as part of your hiring process, consider compensating applicants for their time, giving them ample time to complete it, and ensuring that they still have rights to use work created after the hiring process (regardless of whether or not they were hired).

Barrier: Concerns about organizational culture

People with lived experience may worry that they will feel or be treated like an outsider, or not really integrated into an organization that is not otherwise very diverse. They may fear that they'll be tokenized or not have the support of the staff who do not have lived experience. Organizations may fear failure: "What if we mess up with the impacted people we do hire, and they leave traumatized or angry?" While many organizations have done work to address these concerns by implementing trauma-informed workplace practices, many of these practices do not account for cultural, historical, collective, and intergenerational trauma.

Related Opportunities

Pre-hire and Public Communications

- Ensure that your public resources (website, communications, social media) highlight the ways in which you are doing internal work to prepare for increasing meaningful engagement of people with lived experience. Highlight the work you are doing on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Justice, becoming a trauma-informed organization, and building out trauma-informed supervision and mentoring practices.

Internships and Learning Placements

- Consider opportunities for paid internships that rotate through different departments to explore different kinds of work opportunities within your organization while learning new skills.

Hiring Process

- Incorporate coaching as a regular part of hiring and interview processes on questions applicants may not already be thinking of asking about workplace culture and dynamics.
- Be cautious of the ways gatekeeping, unnecessary barriers, and bias are often framed as "not being a good fit" in hiring decisions. Instead of asking the applicant and hiring team about whether someone is a good fit, ask what would be the cultural add of hiring diverse populations.
- Consider asking applicants to share what things about other places they've worked made it a good fit for them.

For New Hires

- Ensure that all staff onboarding includes education and mentoring about what a lived experience-centric workplace involves and how to be a good colleague to (other) people with lived experience.
- Be more proactive during onboarding about getting feedback about what that process might look like, collaborating with new hires to develop a customized, lived experience-centric onboarding.
- Set up opportunities to learn from new and continuing staff what is important to them in a workplace so that we can model care.

Barrier: Cultural Differences, Colonialism, Nonprofit and Funding Power Dynamics

Often, nonprofits may work in populations where there are inherent cultural differences or power dynamics. For example, GFEMS is a Western-based nonprofit working in the Global South. Many nonprofits were started by (and continue to give decision-making power to) people who do not have lived experience of the challenges these nonprofits address, or who do not come from the same regions or communities where they do the bulk of their work. This can lead to a lack of organizational inclusion of people who know the problems and are close to the solutions, or a lack of awareness of variance in how different regions frame trauma and support healing. Even within regions, power dynamics from oppressive systems can lead to paternalism in anti-trafficking strategies. When you take the history of Western colonial interventions into account, the power dynamics and potential for paternalism significantly increase.

Remember: These power dynamics that treat one set of cultural norms as “right” and other cultural norms as “wrong” can show up in interactions between Western agencies and other regions, as well as interactions between people, populations, or communities within one region.



What do we mean by “Western colonial interventions”? What does colonialism have to do with our efforts to address global violence? Colonialism is the “domination of a people or area by a foreign state or nation [in order to extend and maintain] a nation’s political and economic control over another people or area.”⁵ It relies on “the subjugation of one people to another,” which means forcing one group of people to submit to the control of another group of people.⁶ Many problems in areas that have experienced colonization (such as poverty, famine, or violence) are not inherent to those regions, but were created by and are the lasting impacts of Western colonial violence. For this reason, we should be conscious that our approaches to addressing poverty, violence, and human trafficking do not exacerbate or replicate colonial patterns of power and control.

In order to meaningfully engage lived experience leadership, we must be aware of and take steps to mitigate or strategically leverage power dynamics to uplift the needs and leadership of those closest to the issue. While some of the opportunities in this section directly address how we engage with impacted people as leaders, most address rethinking the assumptions that are the foundation for our work.

⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/colonialism>

⁶ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/>



Why is it important to rethink our assumptions about how trafficking happens and what healing means? *We create prevention programming, policy recommendations, and interventions based on our assumptions about how trafficking happens and what people with lived experience need. When we hire people with lived experience to work with us, they may notice the ways in which our assumptions do not reflect the fullness of how trafficking happens or what impacted individuals need. Often, we lack the cultural humility to recognize how our assumptions are subjective and reflect our culture and identities. For example, we may see an intervention as standard practice without recognizing the ways that intervention was normed and tested on only one population. While staff with lived experience can educate us, they may feel as if they regularly get pushback, which is exhausting and can lead to burnout. We can alleviate this burden by doing our work in advance to learn about and mitigate these power dynamics.*

Related Opportunities

Internal Organizational Priorities

- Meaningful work requires meaningful relationship-building. Prioritize intentional people-first relationship-building. Your leadership, staff, funders, board members, stakeholders, partners, and participants are all people with hopes, dreams, and values.
- Prioritize getting feedback from the local regions and populations you're working with in the development of your internal processes to ensure you have their buy-in and support and that the way you do your work reflects an understanding of their needs.
- Have diverse board members, but work on creating a safer, braver space so that their participation can be equitable and meaningful, which might require mentoring board members on power dynamics, privilege, and positionality.
- Local grassroots organizers, staff with lived experience, and recipients of your work often feel like they are "on display" for staff, board, or funders. Shift toward meaningful relationship-building by developing mutually beneficial relationships. For example: If your board or staff from other programs want to get to know the recipients and see the work in action, rather than inviting them for a walkthrough or to just "come and observe," find out how they can engage in some of the program's work. If a board member has skills in public speaking, consider having them engage folks who do public speaking to provide tips on dealing with nerves. If your human resources staff wants to meet the impacted individuals contracting with you, see if they can spend time helping some of those contractors develop their resumes and learn how to interview well. Find ways to engage that benefit the impacted individuals without putting them on display.
- When offering people with lived experience opportunities to provide feedback, remember that people may be more engaged in some spaces than in others. Consider offering multiple ways to provide feedback (meetings, surveys, document review) that ensure people have ways to participate that work well with their communication style and comfort level.
- Develop and implement participatory design

processes to hear what implementers hope to do and how, and then work with them to co-create and refine programs together.

- Maintain humility around Western frameworks for nonprofit organizational operations and global development best practices.

Partnerships

- Conduct stakeholder mapping for your organization to identify who is doing the work on the ground in areas you hope to support.
- Build relationships with people doing grassroots work on the ground in the region or population you plan to work with. Assist them with conducting stakeholder mapping so that they can build existing partnerships and shared power with other grassroots groups on the ground to align strategies and share resources.
- Any organizations that will be funding projects in specific regions or populations should conduct a “scoping process” during which they can conduct meetings to hear from folks doing the work on the ground about needs and service gaps before launching funding solicitations for research projects or grant programs. Working with local research and programmatic partners can support this.
- Remain mindful of sustainability. Many communities or populations have been harmed by outside organizations coming in to do work during a grant project, setting up systems and resources that individuals then come to rely on, and then leaving when the funding or grant period ends, with no plans for sustainability. Partnerships with local grassroots organizers can ensure continuity; ensure that building grassroots organizers’ capacity to continue or expand their work is a priority of any program you do in populations your organization does not belong to.

Programmatic Concerns

- Maintain humility around Western frameworks for healing, mental health, trauma, poverty, and root causes.
- Remember that the communities you are working with may process grief or experience trauma differently. While trauma creates a physiological response when an experience is deeply distressing, some communities may find certain things to be deeply distressing that others do not, and vice versa. Let go of your assumptions about how people process and heal from trauma, and remember that using different approaches doesn’t mean someone is “doing it wrong.”
- Be conscious of some of the harmful history of the US exporting mental health categories and treatment practices that do not reflect or incorporate different cultural perspectives. See: [Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche](#)
- Similarly, do not assume that the communities you are working in use the same definitions and frameworks for understanding “survivorship” or “lived experience.” See [Engagement of lived experience in international policy and programming](#) for specific guidance.

Barrier: Funding norms and donors’ positionality and expectations

Funding for non-governmental human rights, social service, and community development work relies on funding from donor organizations. The distance between funders (including donors as well as fund/grant managers) and impacted people is often a barrier to increasing meaningful engagement. The closer one is to impacted people and targeted problems, the more insight one has into the effectiveness of solutions. Funders may prioritize programs based on their own assessments of importance and urgency, rather than long-term impact. Additionally, assessments of importance often don’t consider cultural differences in priorities and needs, and outside assessments of urgency often lead to short-sighted solutions that do not address root causes. These challenges mean that organizations often struggle with a lack of dedicated re-

sources for the visions they're trying to implement. Funders may want to support actions that create quick results that can be reported ("low-hanging fruit"), or may not understand the need to support ongoing relationship-building. Organizations may feel pressured to justify the need for infrastructure expenses (staff salaries and benefits, for example). An emphasis on numbers served may mean minimally-impactful interventions are prioritized over the higher quality engagement of fewer people.

Related Opportunities

Donor Selection

- Identify and build relationships with donors who align with your organization's approach to funding norms and engagement of people with lived experience.
- Learn and understand where donors are coming from in terms of their political guidelines and funding limitations, and cater your pitch to their needs.

Donor Engagement

- Showcase some of the work you hope to do in the future, and how you are using in-person, on-the-ground engagement in those regions or communities to build relationships.
- Ensure that donors have opportunities to talk to program staff along all levels of the organizational hierarchy to understand both the broader vision and the day-to-day work.
- Build relationships between donors and impacted communities in ethical ways that support programmatic goals. For example, rather than have donors come to observe the work on the ground, ask donors how they might contribute meaningfully to it. A donor with a background in finance could co-facilitate a budgeting session for grassroots organizations. A donor with art as a hobby could co-facilitate an art workshop for people with lived experience alongside a clinician.
- Engage in regional movement-building to integrate community development efforts across multiple movements and sectors, using shared risk and protective factors as a model for sharing power, funding, and programming to increase the impact of funds received.

Ethical Storytelling

- If using quantitative data is necessary, add qualitative aspects to humanize and individualize the numbers we're presenting.
- Be clear on your approach, structures, and values so that you can convey this with ethical storytelling in donor communications.
- Create compelling stories about how funding focused on relationship-building, capacity-building, and lived experience leadership transforms local organizations, shares power more equitably with lived experience-led organizations, and makes our work more effective by increasing our capacity to create lived experience-centered solutions.
- Use different framings and talking points with different donors to highlight how meaningful engagement of people with lived experience aligns with their funding priorities.
- In standardized donor communications, highlight the unique elements of your approach.
- Develop talking points about the ways your strategies are also building the capacity of people with lived experience to engage in our sector in power-sharing and decision-making ways, and of local grassroots organizations to strengthen their organizational infrastructure. Both of these build organic sustainability of both lived experience leadership and community development interventions.
- For more information, see [A toolkit for ethical antislavery work](#) by the Anti-Slavery Knowledge Network or [Trauma-Informed Storytelling](#) by the National Survivor Network.

Barrier: Leadership buy-in and evaluation challenges

Often, there is a lack of dedicated resources for the visions we are trying to implement. We may experience challenges when leadership is not fully aligned or bought-in to the changes that are necessary to increase meaningful engagement of people with lived experience. When this happens, it can increase the emotional labor expected of participants, consultants, and staff with lived experience of human trafficking. Additionally, current funding structures often reinforce an obsession with numbers, leading organizations to want to stretch resources farther at the risk of harming people. It can be challenging to get leadership (or funders) to understand the value of deeper quality engagement and ongoing relationship-building with a smaller number of people over superficial engagement with a higher quantity of people.

Related Opportunities

Funding Concerns

- Many leadership concerns revolve around the financial health of the organization, which can often be addressed through funding. See the section on funding for opportunities for overcoming this barrier.
- Have strong, concrete monitoring and evaluation of internal processes to ensure and demonstrate that your organization is careful with unrestricted funding. A move towards unrestricted funding (which is essential for relationship-building and supporting lived experience-led initiatives) shifts the burden of accountability and proof to the organization receiving the funds and requires having adequate guidelines and transparency in place.

Evaluating the Success of Our Efforts

- In older models for funding, evaluation was aligned to donor expectations, leading to donor-driven evaluation. Work on building buy-in from donors from bottom-up, community-driven evaluation. Getting buy-in from donors (and, by extension, your leadership) requires clarity on what your organization is doing and who your organization is becoming.
- What do impacted communities, our project partners, or people receiving services see as success? Consider collaborative development of evaluation criteria and reporting. A co-creation process of indicators and evaluation means that even though your organization (or your funders) may have some of your own indicators, you can also track progress on meeting your participants' primary concerns.
- Evaluate processes as well as impact and outcomes, and include lived experience engagement processes in your evaluation.
- Guide project partners and different organizational departments on how to do a qualitative evaluation to highlight how de-emphasizing numbers does not mean we cannot evaluate the impact of our programming or funding.
- Work with project partners to support them in developing their own internal evaluations as part of building the capacity of grassroots organizations to evaluate and plan for continuous quality improvement.
- Evaluate the success of your organization's collective efforts toward goals (including lived experience engagement goals) using organization-wide assessment.

Board Engagement

- Have set criteria for the board that aligns with what your organization is trying to accomplish, aligning board members' passion and interests with how they show up in the role.
- Work toward a shift from top-down to bottom-up leadership. Find ways for the board to engage beyond the leadership team, with opportunities to interact with organizations, partners, and staff doing the work. This allows them to better understand what the work looks like on the ground.
- Similarly to donors, find appropriate opportunities for the board to engage with the work beyond observation. When appropriate, facilitate mutual (rather than observational or extractive) learning opportunities between the board and participants. For example, a board member who is also a licensed clinician might lead a workshop on how to offer support to peers in crisis.



A Vision of Hope

People who are directly impacted by human trafficking – whose lives and communities have been disrupted by extreme exploitation – understand the problems best. They know how trafficking happens, and what it can do to an individual's sense of safety, economic security, health, and relationships. They know what trafficking can do to entire families or communities.

Luckily, they are also closest to the solutions. They can understand how best to translate evidence into action for sustainable impact. They know what their communities need, what their communities will resist, and what needs to change in their communities.

Any efforts to end human trafficking or modern slavery will be bound by the degree to which they embrace meaningful lived experience leadership. The best efforts to address human trafficking will view impacted individuals and communities as full collaborators and will maintain the trust of their participants, which means they must be centered on the needs of people with lived experience at all levels of the organization, policy, or program. An effective infrastructure to address human trafficking will be developed, and a powerful sector to end human trafficking will be led by people with lived experience.

Transforming our anti-trafficking organizations, sector, and work to be lived experience-centered, using meaningful engagement of impacted individuals and communities, and moving towards becoming lived experience-led is not small or easy work. Our allies will have to decenter themselves as they learn to share power in new ways. Our funders will have to rethink their role, and what “success” genuinely means. Our organizations, government agencies, and leadership will have to remove barriers to meaningful engagement that may be embedded in their practices, norms, and biases.

This transformation will not happen overnight. We all must work to advocate for meaningful engagement of people with lived experience in our professional and social spheres of influence. We must critically examine what barriers we unintentionally place in impacted individuals' paths and commit to removing those barriers. Together, we will be successful in our shared vision: ending human trafficking.

“

For allies, our first priority should be to decenter ourselves. We've talked around these concepts for years, but if we really want to meaningfully change the power paradigm, *we have to ensure “survivor leadership” isn't just a buzzword and sincerely pursue what it takes in practice.*

Grace West, Global Fund to End Modern Slavery



Tools and Assessments

The following is a series of tools, surveys, and analysis frameworks you may use to track and evaluate your progress at continually increasing your level of effective, meaningful engagement of people with lived experience in your work. **Not all tools will be appropriate or effective for your particular organization.**



At the simplest level, an organization could start working through these surveys as a checklist to increase their level of meaningful lived experience engagement, before even beginning to use it for evaluation. The benefit to conducting a “baseline” or initial survey is that you can then measure (and report) your improvement!

▶ Paper vs. electronic

We have provided a series of tools that can be easily adapted into online surveys if your organization has the funding and ability to translate. Online surveys may allow easier visualization and mathematical analysis. Simple surveys can be done with Google Forms, and services like Survey Monkey allow for analysis that is somewhat more complex. Software like Qualtrics allows for complex analysis but requires both a greater financial investment and specific training and onboarding to use it. Remember: there is no need to make this more complicated than you need or have the capacity to implement. We have given you everything you need in this toolkit to make an impact on how your organization shows up.

Reminder: Not all organizations are working in areas where internet access is reliable or widely available; and different people (including staff, consultants, and program/project participants) have different levels of comfort with online programs.

▶ Why do we evaluate?

Evaluating your organization’s lived experience engagement strengths and areas for growth will help you assess how you are doing, determine a plan for continuous quality improvement, and track your progress over time. Organizations can evaluate their programs by tracking progress on “indicators,” which means measurable categories that indicate your strength or weakness in a given area. We assess how an organization is doing on any one indicator by developing an “instrument” (a survey, for example) that asks about each indicator. In the survey itself, there are questions that are meant to measure each indicator (or components of the indicator).

Organizations can use the instrument to assess how they are doing and what still needs to be done. “Data analysis” means looking at the survey responses thoughtfully in a structured way to see “trends”⁷ and findings that can be used to make decisions. Analysis typically also includes suggestions or a protocol for prioritizing needs and developing an action plan for improvement of current services based on the data, and then the action plan is implemented. After a period of time to allow for meaningful work on the action plan, the assessment will be repeated so that progress can be tracked and a new action plan for the next steps can be developed. ***This repeating process of assessment → analysis → action plan → improvement is often referred to as “continuous quality improvement” or CQI.***

Often, organizations or their staff may view data collection as something that is done primarily to appease funders and stay in grant compliance. When done well and thoughtfully, data collection and analysis for CQI can be one of the most valuable and essential processes an organization can engage in. It is important to incorporate evaluation into your budgets, staffing capacity, and timelines when developing funding processes.

What are the tools?

Lived Experience Engagement Spectrum: This is a planning tool to help you think through how to incorporate meaningful engagement of people with lived experience from the beginning of any new project or program. It facilitates a plan for thinking through your processes, programming, tools, supports, and products to ensure a wide spectrum of engagement.

Comprehensive Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder: This is a longer survey that was developed for internal use for the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking. Larger, more established organizations may find this survey useful.

Abbreviated Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder: This is an abbreviated version of the comprehensive survey that we developed so that smaller or

newer organizations that wish to evaluate their progress will have a more accessible survey instrument they can use.

Participant/Client Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder: This is a parallel survey that was developed for organizations to survey the participants of their work or clients who they work with to assess their perceptions of the organization’s progress. This can be helpful if you want to compare your internal results with what your participants/clients experience to address gaps or differences.

Average Score Chart: This is a condensed version of the survey to align responses from the above three surveys so that you can identify priority tasks for specific improvement.

Ladder Results: This is a chart for identifying your overall percentages in each category.

Priority Matrix: This is a tool for prioritizing which tasks to begin with.

Who should we survey?

This will differ from one organization to the next. Consult with a program evaluator or technical assistance provider for detailed assistance in developing an evaluation plan that works for your organization.

A few relevant considerations: If only leadership fills it out, or only your human resources person, you will have an incomplete picture of your organization. Especially as organizations move toward fine-tuning their work at the Involve, Collaborate, and Empower levels, having a broad picture of how different departments and levels of the organization view the work is critical. If capacity allows, consider having multiple staff complete surveys, and from different departments or levels in the organization. Regular contractors, frontline staff, human resources, directors, and middle management may all provide different insights. Calculate percentages based on averages. Note any trends you observe among different departments or levels.

⁷ “Trends” in this case does not mean something is trendy or fashionable. It means that the data from responses show that multiple people or groups of people reported something similar.

Have a representative sample of your recipients/stakeholders complete the Participant/Client Ladder. If their perceptions and scores differ considerably from your staff's in any area, this is an opportunity for further exploration and development within the organization.

Program and organizational evaluation are new to us. Where can we learn more?

For introductory information about program evaluation, see:

[The Basic Principles of Program Evaluation by Nonprofit New York](#)

[A Framework for Program Evaluation: A Gateway to Tools from Community Toolbox](#)

[Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide by the Centers for Disease Control](#)

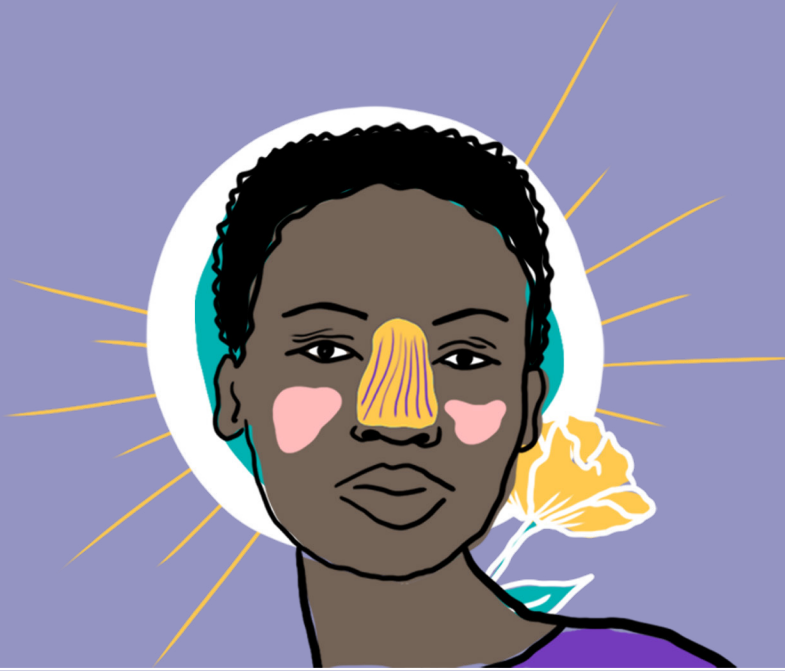
For more information about how to use equitable evaluation practices to ensure your evaluation methods do not unintentionally replicate problematic power dynamics and bias, see:

[Full Frame Initiative's Tradeoffs Analysis Tool](#)

[The Equitable Evaluation Initiative](#)

For more resources about planning and decision-making:

[Decision-Making with Pros, Cons, and Mitigations](#) from The Management Center



“This toolkit is a wake-up call to all stakeholders in the movement, that people with lived experience have firsthand information that can inform better measures to end human trafficking.

Rosette Nsonga, National Survivor Network

Lived Experience Engagement Spectrum

Organization and/or Team: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Under each level of engagement, list ways you can ethically incorporate multiple ways to meaningfully engage people with lived experience. Consider completing for different departments, teams, or even individual projects during the planning process. You may not have something in every block.

Structure	Inform	Ask	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
What are the processes that support this level of engagement?					
How can we incorporate this level of engagement into our programming ?					
What are tools we may need to implement this level of engagement?					
What are the supports we can put in place to be successful at this level?					
How can we incorporate this level of engagement into our products ?					

Comprehensive Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder⁸

Organization and/or Team: _____ **Date:** _____

Instructions: For each, row check circle 0 for no, 1 for some/sometimes, 2 for yes. Set a regular schedule for re-assessing, and develop a plan for improving the areas that are low or stagnant. Circle X for “unknown” if you do not know the answer to this question based on your experiences with this organization.⁹

** Indicates a reminder to check for diversity of people engaged, not just the same two or three lived experience leaders you regularly partner with.*

INFORM	N	S	Y	U	Note
1. Are our public materials (websites, newsletters, social media, and impact reports, for example) written in plain language, with acronyms or terms explained?	0	1	2	X	
2. Are our public materials language-accessible (alt text, sign language or closed captioning, and available translated)?	0	1	2	X	
3. Do we create accessible outputs (fact sheets, white papers, or blog posts) for our projects or products that are necessarily academic or complicated?	0	1	2	X	
4. Do we provide information in an easily understandable way about how any lived experience project input and recommendations (i.e. focus group discussions, consultant guidance) is used or incorporated, and communicate updates regularly to consultants?	0	1	2	X	
5. Do we have safeguarding/protection/complaints policies that are equitable and easy to access externally? Are they easy to understand and inform people how complaints are addressed?	0	1	2	X	
6. Do we have clear feedback procedures to inform impacted individuals of actions taken after receiving their reports, positive feedback, or complaints?	0	1	2	X	

⁸ Note: The comprehensive survey was developed for internal use at the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and the Coalition to Abolish Slavery or Trafficking. While other organizations will likely find this survey useful, some of the items in this might only be applicable to larger organizations.

⁹ Note to evaluators: Exclude responses with X circled from calculation of average scores.

7. Do our public materials avoid perpetuating stereotypes or bias against people with lived experience or using sensational imagery that dehumanizes them?	0	1	2	X	Be sure to consider both sensationalized imagery as well as imagery that perpetuates bias; you may have different levels of success in these two categories. Remember that repeated violent or frightening imagery may desensitize your audience to the violence of trafficking.
8. Do our public materials utilize impacted people's stories or images only with the consent and only as necessary to tell the story of our organization?	0	1	2	X	Consider using de-identified composite stories when possible to protect privacy and mitigate power dynamics.
9. Do we have a process for people to revoke consent later on if they no longer want their stories or images used?	0	1	2	X	
10. Do we use trauma-informed storytelling?	0	1	2	X	Remember that excessive detail in trauma stories may make it difficult for people with lived experience to engage with your content.
11. Do we encourage any subrecipients and sub-contractors and grantees to move along the continuum to become lived experience-led, and share lessons learned from our own internal processes to do so?	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Inform: ____/____ (____%)

ASK	N	S	Y	U	Note
12. Do we regularly survey our existing participants or clients for both positive and critical feedback?	0	1	2	X	Offer options for clients to share feedback anonymously
13. Do we have a process for incorporating that feedback for continuous quality improvement?	0	1	2	X	
14. Do we have a clear and accessible grievance policy and protocol for reviewing and addressing grievances from current participants, employees, and partners?	0	1	2	X	
15. Do we have a method for tracking and monitoring patterns and responses to both positive and critical feedback?	0	1	2	X	Example: How many critical responses does a program receive in a year vs how much meaningful change has occurred to address it.
16. Have all existing documents, plans, policies, and programs that were created without collaboration with impacted people been reviewed by multiple consultants with lived experience of both sex and labor trafficking?*	0	1	2	X	
17. Have all existing documents, plans, policies, and programs that were created without collaboration with impacted people been reviewed by multiple consultants with lived experience who have both domestic and foreign-national perspectives?*	0	1	2	X	
18. Have all existing documents, plans, policies, and programs that were created without collaboration with impacted people been reviewed by multiple consultants with lived experience who have both domestic and foreign-national perspectives?*	0	1	2	X	
19. Have all existing documents, plans, policies, and programs that were created without collaboration with impacted people been reviewed by multiple consultants with lived experience from other diverse lived experience perspectives (adults, minors, LGBTQ people, etc.)?*	0	1	2	X	
20. Do we incorporate lived experience consultants' feedback and/or responses to surveys of current clients in deciding what kinds of funding to apply for and/or offer and are they informed about how and why their feedback is reflected?	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Ask: _____/_____(____%)

INVOLVE	N	S	Y	U	Note
21. Do we engage organization, program, or project-specific lived experience advisory teams that provide input at key stages throughout the work, program, or project, including conception, design, implementation, and evaluation?	0	1	2	X	
22. Do people with lived experience participate in reviewing proposals or applications for funding before approval, and in IRB processes to review any research partnerships or plans for ethics?	0	1	2	X	
23. Are participants with lived experience offered opportunities to learn skills they might need to have more opportunities to participate at the “involve” level?	0	1	2	X	
24. Are participants for advisory positions selected/ invited based on both knowledge and interest, rather than solely because they have lived experience of human trafficking?	0	1	2	X	
25. Do advisory teams receive appropriate and sufficient onboarding to their projects to provide meaningful, realistic, and actionable feedback?	0	1	2	X	
26. Do we create project team practices and procedures that are trauma-informed and reduce the risk of re-traumatizing participants?	0	1	2	X	
27. Do we evaluate participants’ experiences of working with our organization at the “involve” level and have clear procedures in place for using the feedback for continuous quality improvement?	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Involve: ____/____ (____%)

COLLABORATE	N	S	Y	U	Note
28. Our organization plans funding in alignment with our commitment to prioritizing lived experience-led organizations and research partners.	0	1	2	X	This can include the release of RFPs, how you fund community projects, etc.
29. People with lived experience are regular staff or paid team members in multiple departments or programs. (0: less than 25% of our programs, 1: 25-50% of our programs, 2: Over half of our programs)	0	1	2	X	This question is about the different kinds of programs or departments people with lived experience work in.
30. People with lived experience are in leadership positions in our teams and/or organization, such as program/project manager or higher positions. (0: 0%, 1: up to 25%, 2: over 25%)	0	1	2	X	This question is about whether or not your organization has people with lived experience in decision-making positions.
31. People with lived experience work in our organization or program in positions that are not solely for “survivor leaders.” (0=no, 1=up to 5% of our staff/team, 2=over 5% of our staff/team)	0	1	2	X	This question is about whether or not your staff/contractors with lived experience only work in positions designed specifically for people with lived experience.
32. Staff with lived experience of trafficking are not required or expected to share personal details of their lives, including their trauma experiences, as part of their job.	0	1	2	X	
33. Our hiring processes use plain-language materials and incorporate lived, informal education, and practical work experience into assessing qualifications, rather than just formal education.	0	1	2	X	
34. We compensate applicants for any project work they are required to do as part of their application.	0	1	2	X	
35. We hire for skills, knowledge, and experience, rather than just for trauma history.	0	1	2	X	
36. Our team members and staff with lived experience of human trafficking hold a variety of identities, types of trafficking experience, and perspectives on anti-trafficking work.	0	1	2	X	Consider: Race/ethnicity, global region, gender/orientation, adult/child trafficking, type of trafficking, etc.

37. Our organization has advanced equity in our work, and has demonstrated a willingness to change the way the organization operates to be inclusive and equitable (to include around disability and language access). (0=No, 1= this is in progress, 2=we are well along our journey)	0	1	2	X	
38. Our organization has incorporated principles of trauma-informed organizations, and all supervisors are thoroughly trained on and regularly supported in these practices. These include proper safeguarding, grievance, and accountability protocols, as well as equitable supervision practices.	0	1	2	X	
39. All staff have paid access both to adequate onboarding as well as to ongoing mentoring and professional development to build their competence toward their professional goals.	0	1	2	X	
40. We provide fair market wages and comprehensive benefits that include affordable health insurance (including for dental, vision, and mental health), adequate personal and medical leave that would allow for people with lived experience of complex trauma, retirement, savings match, and family-friendly workplaces policies that support caregivers.	0	1	2	X	See FreeFrom for an example of what is possible. https://www.freefrom.org/about/
41. Our organization considers potential power imbalances that may exist with organizations we partner with, and has ways of working together fairly to share decision-making and financial power.	0	1	2	X	
42. Staff with lived experience are not held to different standards or expectations than other staff, such as mandated therapy.	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Collaborate: _____ / _____ (____%)

EMPOWER	N	S	Y	U	Note
43. Our organization scored well on the “Collaborate” section of this assessment. (0=up to 50%, 1=50-75%, 2=over 75%)	0	1	2	X	
44. Our organization’s top paid leadership has lived experience of human trafficking (CEO or Executive Director)	0	1	2	X	This question is specifically about the senior decision-making position in your organization.
45. Our organization has staff with lived experience in a high number of managerial, executive, and decision-making positions, including in multiple departments or programs. (0: up to 25%, 2: 25-50%, 3: over half)	0	1	2	X	
46. Our board and executive leadership demonstrate a commitment to support, develop, and empower the people in leadership positions who have lived experience.	0	1	2	X	
47. All staff have the basic skills and knowledge needed to perform and succeed in their roles.	0	1	2	X	
48. All staff have ongoing paid access to further develop their role- and leadership-specific skills and knowledge.	0	1	2	X	
49. All staff, including those with lived experience, are expected to learn trauma-informed and compassionate organizational practices.	0	1	2	X	
50. Program staff with lived experience report similar levels of job satisfaction compared to those who do not disclose lived experience.	0	1	2	X	
51. Program staff with lived experience report compensation and <i>job mobility</i> compared to those who do not disclose lived experience.	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Empower: ____/____ (____%)

STRUCTURES	N	S	Y	U	Note
52. Our organization or program uses the highest level of lived experience engagement that is possible for each program or project based on staffing and the interest, expertise, and strengths of the people with lived experience in our networks.	0	1	2	X	This can include release of RFPs, how you fund community projects, etc.
53. When a program or project does not have people with lived experience on staff as part of the project team, people with lived experience are engaged at the ask or involve level to bridge gaps in knowledge.	0	1	2	X	This question is about the different kinds of programs or departments people with lived experience work in.
54. When the people with lived experience on a project team or program do not reflect a diversity of identities, experiences, or perspectives, people with lived experience are engaged at the ask or involve level to bridge gaps in knowledge.	0	1	2	X	This question is about whether or not your organization has people with lived experience in decision-making positions.
55. People with lived experience who have strong conflict resolution skills and ongoing support participate in grievance review and decisions around conflict between impacted people or between people with lived experience and other members of teams in order to mitigate power dynamics (even power dynamics between those with lived experience).	0	1	2	X	This question is about whether or not your staff/contractors with lived experience only work in positions designed specifically for people with lived experience.
56. Lived experience expertise is engaged in the development of initial program/project design.*	0	1	2	X	
57. Lived experience expertise is engaged throughout program/project implementation.*	0	1	2	X	
58. Lived experience expertise is engaged in planning the conducting evaluations of the program/project.*	0	1	2	X	
59. Our organization ensures staff with lived experience have similar workloads to those without lived experience in similar roles and are not expected to take on extra work or unpaid overtime.	0	1	2	X	
60. All employees and contractors are educated on their workplace rights and know who to ask if they have additional questions.	0	1	2	X	Consider: Race/ethnicity, global region, gender/orientation, adult/child trafficking, type of trafficking, etc.

61. Our organization has a set plan for reviewing our outcome on this assessment, identifying actionable, realistic targets toward progress, and a planned schedule for re-evaluating every ___ years to track our progress.	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Structures: ____/____ (____%)

“Organizational readiness and inclusion are critical for a more survivor-centered movement. *This kind of assessment is a must-have for those looking to shift power imbalances and elevate the voices of individuals most proximate to the issues we seek to address!*

Angela Perry, Global Fund to End Modern Slavery

Abbreviated Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder¹⁰

Organization and/or Team: _____ **Date:** _____

Instructions: For each, row check circle 0 for no, 1 for some/sometimes, 2 for yes. Set a regular schedule for re-assessing, and develop a plan for improving the areas that are low or stagnant. Circle X for “unknown” if you do not know the answer to this question based on your experiences with this organization.¹¹

INFORM	N	S	Y	U	Note
1. Are our public materials (websites, newsletters, social media, and impact reports, for example) written in plain language, accessible, with acronyms or terms explained?	0	1	2	X	
2. Do we provide information in an easily understandable way about how any reports, positive feedback, or complaints from people with lived experience are addressed?	0	1	2	X	
3. Do we consistently provide overall project updates to consultants with lived experience?	0	1	2	X	
4. Do we have safeguarding/protection/complaints policies that are easy to access externally? Are they easy to understand and inform people how complaints are addressed?	0	1	2	X	
5. Do our public materials avoid perpetuating stereotypes or bias against impacted people or using sensational imagery that dehumanizes them?	0	1	2	X	Be sure to consider both sensationalized imagery as well as imagery that perpetuates bias; you may have different levels of success in these two categories. Remember that repeated violent or frightening imagery may desensitize your audience to the violence of trafficking.
6. Do our public materials utilize impacted people’s stories or images only with consent and only as necessary to tell the story of our organization?	0	1	2	X	Consider using composite stories when possible to protect privacy and mitigate power dynamics.
7. Do we have a process for people to revoke consent later on if they no longer want their stories or images used?	0	1	2	X	

¹⁰Note: The abbreviated Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder assessment was developed to allow organizations that do not have capacity for a larger assessment to use.

¹¹Note to evaluators: Exclude responses with X circled from calculation of average scores.

8. Do we use trauma-informed storytelling?	0	1	2	X	Remember that excessive detail in trauma stories may make it difficult for people with lived experience to engage with your content.
Totals				X	Total Score on Inform: ____/____ (___%)

ASK	N	S	Y	U	Note
9. Do we regularly survey our existing partners for both positive and critical feedback and incorporate that feedback for continuous quality improvement?	0	1	2	X	Offer options for clients to share feedback anonymously.
10. Do we have a clear and accessible grievance policy and protocol for reviewing and addressing grievances from current participants, employees, and partners?	0	1	2	X	
11. Have all existing documents, plans, policies, and programs that were created without collaboration with impacted people been reviewed by multiple consultants with lived experience of trafficking, diverse identities, and (ideally) familiarity with policy or programming?	0	1	2	X	
12. Do we incorporate feedback from consultants with lived experience and/or responses to surveys of current clients in deciding what kinds of funding to apply for and/or offer and are they informed about how and why their feedback is reflected?	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Ask: ____/____ (___%)

INVOLVE	N	S	Y	U	Note
13. Do we engage organization, program, or project-specific lived experience advisory teams that provide input at key stages throughout the work or project?	0	1	2	X	
14. Are participants with lived experience offered opportunities to learn skills they might need to have more opportunities to participate at the “involve” level?	0	1	2	X	

15. Are participants for advisory positions selected/invited based on both knowledge and interest, rather than solely because they have lived experience of human trafficking?	0	1	2	X	
16. Do we create project team practices and procedures that are trauma-informed and reduce the risk of re-traumatizing participants?	0	1	2	X	
17. Do we evaluate participants' experiences of working with our organization at the "involve" level and have clear procedures in place for using the feedback for continuous quality improvement?	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Involve: _____/____ (____%)

COLLABORATE	N	S	Y	U	Note
18. People with lived experience are regular staff or paid team members in multiple departments or programs. (0: less than 25% of our programs, 1: 25-50% of our programs, 2: Over half of our programs)	0	1	2	X	This question is about the different kinds of programs or departments people with lived experience work in.
19. People with lived experience are in leadership positions in our teams and/or organization, such as program/project manager or higher positions. (0: 0%, 1: up to 25%, 2: over 25%)	0	1	2	X	This question is about whether or not your organization has people with lived experience in decision-making positions.
20. Staff with lived experience of trafficking are not required or expected to share personal details of their lives, including their trauma experiences, as part of their job.	0	1	2	X	
21. Our team members and staff with lived experience hold a variety of identities, types of trafficking experience, and perspectives on anti-trafficking work.	0	1	2	X	Consider: Race/ethnicity, global region, gender/orientation, adult/child trafficking, type of trafficking, etc.
22. Our organization has advanced equity in our work, and has demonstrated a willingness to change the way the organization operates to be inclusive and equitable. (0=No, 1= this is in progress, 2=we are well along our journey)	0	1	2	X	
23. All staff have access to adequate paid onboarding as well as ongoing mentoring and professional development to build their competence toward their professional goals.	0	1	2	X	

24. Our organization considers potential power imbalances that may exist with organizations we partner with, and has ways of working together fairly to share decision-making and financial power.	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Collaborate: ____/____ (____%)

EMPOWER	N	S	Y	U	Note
25. Our organization scored well on the “Collaborate” section of this assessment. (0=up to 50%, 1=50-75%, 2=over 75%)	0	1	2	X	
26. Our organization has staff with lived experience in a high number of director, executive, and decision-making positions, including in multiple departments or programs. (0: up to 25%, 1: 25-50%, 2: over half)	0	1	2	X	
27. All staff, including those with lived experience, are expected to learn trauma-informed and compassionate organizational practices.	0	1	2	X	
28. Program staff with lived experience report similar levels of job satisfaction compared to those who do not disclose lived experience.	0	1	2	X	
29. Program staff with lived experience report compensation compared to those who do not disclose lived experience.	0	1	2	X	
30. Our board and executive leadership demonstrate a commitment to support, develop, and empower the people in leadership positions who have lived experience.	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Empower: ____/____ (____%)

STRUCTURES	N	S	Y	U	Note
31. Our organization or program uses the highest level of engagement that is possible for each program or project based on staffing and the interest, expertise, and strengths of people with lived experience in our networks.	0	1	2	X	
32. When a program or project does not have people with lived experience on staff as part of the project team, people with lived experience are engaged at the ask or involve level to fill gaps in knowledge.	0	1	2	X	
33. When the people with lived experience on a project team or program do not reflect a diversity of identities, experiences, or perspectives, impacted people are engaged at the ask or involve level to fill gaps in knowledge.	0	1	2	X	
34. Lived experience expertise is engaged in the development of initial program/project design, implementation, and evaluation.*	0	1	2	X	Lived experience input must be incorporated in the design, envisioning, and development of programming to prevent an expectation of impacted people “rubber-stamping” the design.
35. Our organization ensures staff with lived experience have similar workloads to those without lived experience in similar roles and are not expected to take on extra work or unpaid overtime.	0	1	2	X	
36. All employees and contractors are educated on their workplace rights and know who to ask if they have additional questions.	0	1	2	X	
Totals				X	Total Score on Structures: ____/____ (____%)

Participant/Client Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder¹²

Organization and/or Team: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: For each, row check circle 0 for no, 1 for some/sometimes, 2 for yes. Set a regular schedule for re-assessing, and develop a plan for improving the areas that are low or stagnant. Circle X for “unknown” if you do not know the answer to this question based on your experiences with this organization.¹³

INFORM	N	S	Y	U	Note
1. This question is about the organization’s “public materials.” This includes websites, newsletters, social media, and impact reports, for example. Are these documents written in plain language that you can understand, accessible for you to use, with any acronyms or unfamiliar terms explained?	0	1	2	X	
2. Are this organization’s safeguarding and complaints policies easy to find and easy to understand?	0	1	2	X	
3. Do this organization’s public materials avoid perpetuating stereotypes or bias against impacted people? (0: their images use stereotypes to 2: their images are great)	0	1	2	X	
4. Do this organization’s public materials avoid using sensationalized, dehumanizing, or unnecessarily graphic images? (0: their images are dehumanizing to 2: their images are great)	0	1	2	X	
5. Do you feel like the ways this organization tells the stories of their work or of people who have experienced trafficking are respectful, ethical, and not retraumatizing?	0	1	2	X	
6. Do this organization’s public materials reflect the community they work with? Do the images and stories reflect the diversity of your community?	0	1	2	X	
Totals (this row is for organizational use only)				X	Total Score on Inform: _____ / _____ (____%)

¹² Note: Organizations who work directly with people with lived experience as participants or stakeholders are encouraged to offer this assessment to those participants to compare how the results compare with the organization’s internal assessment results. People with lived experience who engage with the organization at the collaborate level or higher should be offered the staff survey instead.

¹³ Note to evaluators: Exclude responses with X circled from calculation of average scores.

ASK	N	S	Y	U	Note
7. If you have ever been a client or recipient of this organization's funding or services, did you have opportunities to share your feedback through surveys, focus groups, or other feedback loops?	0	1	2	X	Offer options for clients to share feedback anonymously.
8. If you have ever given this organization feedback through a survey, compliment, or formal complaint, did they later tell you how your feedback was addressed?	0	1	2	X	
9. If you have ever given this organization feedback through surveys, focus groups, or as a consultant, did they tell you at that time how your feedback would be used or incorporated?	0	1	2	X	
10. If you have ever filed a grievance with this organization, did you receive an update about how your grievance was addressed?	0	1	2	X	
Totals (this row is for organizational use only)				X	Total Score on Ask: ____/____ (____%)

INVOLVE	N	S	Y	U	Note
11. If you have been a client or recipient of services or funding, were you offered opportunities to learn skills you needed? Did you feel well-supported?	0	1	2	X	
12. If you have been a consultant or contractor for this organization, were you offered adequate education about what you would be expected to do? Were you given opportunities to develop your skills and grow as a professional?	0	1	2	X	<i>Note:</i> Many organizations will offer stipends or payment at a "learning rate" for your time spent gaining professional development that helps you provide better insights into their work.
13. If you have been a consultant or contractor for this organization, did you feel like the team you worked with was diverse and that different perspectives were welcomed?	0	1	2	X	
9. While engaging with this organization, did you feel that the organization and project team was thoughtful about safeguarding and not re-traumatizing participants?	0	1	2	X	Offer options for clients to share feedback anonymously.
Totals (this row is for organizational use only)				X	Total Score on Involve: ____/____ (____%)

Analysis and Analysis Tools

This section provides our guidance on how to analyze your survey responses. If you feel external support would be helpful, a program evaluation consultant or technical assistance provider may be helpful in determining a “sampling strategy” that will produce meaningful results that reflect the diversity of your workforce. The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, National Survivor Network, your funder, or a technical assistance provider (if you have one) may be able to direct you to appropriate evaluation guidance in your region.

Why do we evaluate our organizations and analyze our responses?

Evaluation is often viewed by organizations as either a funder chore (“We do this to keep getting funded so we must look good to our funders”) or a scary task (“What if we don’t score well? Does that mean we’re bad at our work?”). In reality, your “score” is less important than what you do with the results of the assessment. The scores on the assessments and averages in your analysis do not tell you whether or not you are succeeding or failing, or whether or not you should be proud or ashamed. They give you information that you can use to have a more impactful strategy. The goal is not to compare yourself with other organizations – “Who scored higher? Does that mean they’re better than us?” The goal is to evaluate your own organization, identify and prioritize follow-up actions, and develop a strategy for implementing changes. This is continual quality improvement, and demonstrating a commitment to CQI speaks volumes about the intentions of your work!

Staff Surveys

If capacity allows, survey all staff, including frontline staff, leadership, and contractors. Larger, more established organizations can use the full survey; smaller, grassroots, or newer organizations can use the abbreviated survey. When doing this process internally, the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery team discovered that completing the survey collaboratively over a series of team meetings produced rich insights, dialogue, and staff buy-in.



New organizations can use the survey as a guide for creating sustainable, ethical, powerful lived experience engagement as a foundational part of their organization.) If capacity is low or the organization is large enough to make a full-staff survey unrealistic, the survey should include representatives from HR, executive leadership, program managers, frontline staff, and contractors, with an emphasis on including those who have disclosed lived experience.

Participant/Client Survey

Organizations who work directly with people who have experienced human trafficking can administer the participant survey to current and past clients either at the same time as or after the staff survey. This step would provide meaningful insights into how your team’s assessment of your lived experience engagement aligns with what your recipients are experiencing. Please note: the recipient survey does not include collaborate or higher, as those individuals would be contractors and would thus be surveyed as contractors using the staff survey.

External Analysis

Consider having an external program evaluator collect and analyze your results to ensure the confidentiality of all information collected.

Demographics

When administering this survey, you may wish to collect additional demographic information that is not included in this survey. This will allow you to disaggregate the data, which means seeing if the responses differ among people with different identities or experiences. If you can ensure the confidentiality of the responses, consider including whether or not someone has lived experience of human trafficking in your demographics collected so that you can compare answers between staff with lived experience and staff without lived experience of trafficking.

Initial Analysis

In order to determine your next steps, you will need to first conduct some minimal analysis of your data.

Step One: Average Score Chart

- First, calculate your mean score for each indicator on each survey and record it on the Average Score Chart. Each question has a total score of 2.
- Add up the total of all the scores, and divide it by the number of responses you are including. You should have a number between 0 and 2.
- *Exclude any questions answered with an X, as those represent “unknown” and indicate that the particular person did not have the experience to assess this indicator.*
- After recording the average score for each indicator for each survey, you can then calculate your average score for each indicator across surveys and record these scores in the “Overall average” column of the Average Scores Chart. You will use these scores to identify the specific ways you can improve your overall lived experience engagement.
- Before moving on to step two, use these overall averages to determine your total score for that level of engagement in the bottom right of each section.
- To do this, you will add up all your average scores for each question in a section, and then divide that by the highest possible score for that section.
- These numbers will be transposed into the Ladder Results table.

Step Two: Ladder Results

Next, record your total scores from each section of the Average Scores Chart in the Ladder Results table.

Initial analysis

- Start your analysis with the Ladder Results table.
- Do you have 75% on Inform? If so, look at your score for Ask – do you have 75% Continue through the sections' scores until you identify the first level at which you fail to score 75%. This is your target level for your first actions.
- Now, look at your target level's results in the Average Scores Chart.
- Are there any of these questions that could be brought to a score of two with little or no funding in less than a month? These are your “low-hanging fruit.” You can knock them off the list and improve them easily. Give yourself up to one month to address any low-hanging fruit.
- Are you at 75% now? If so, you can move on to the next level that has a score of lower than 75%. Remember, you can continue to work on any remaining indicators even in levels that you “passed” as ongoing projects.
- If resolving your low-hanging fruit does not get you to 75%, you will need to do a mid-level analysis for that level to determine the next steps.

Mid-level analysis

- Start your analysis with your Average Scores Chart.
- Look at the indicators for your target level. For the indicators that have an average score of 1.5 or less, record these indicators in the Priority Score Worksheet. Indicate a score for each “Priority” criteria: Impact, Resources (time/money) needed. This may be completed by an external evaluator or in group meetings and discussions with key team members responsible for your meaningful lived experience engagement processes (to include individuals with lived experience of trafficking). Discussing and assigning scores in a collaborative process may facilitate new findings and ideas. Remember the importance of sustainability of processes and programs you implement as you consider both impact (long-term) and resources (to include partnerships).
- Place your indicators into the Priority Matrix based on your scores on the Priority Score Worksheet.
 - High Impact, Low Resource: Prioritize for implementation, if you can develop a reasonably secure sustainability plan with your local partners.
 - High Impact, High Resource: Investigate options, potential sustainable funding streams, and potential contracts.
 - Low Impact, Low Resource: Consider as a future project based on capacity.
 - Low Impact, High Resource (or any projects that are not sustainable beyond the initial grant period): Deprioritize.
- Work with project managers, program managers, or technical assistance providers to develop an organizational action plan for implementation of action items based upon your assessment in the Priority Matrix.
- As you address issues in your average scores chart, periodically check how new changes would shift your percentages in each level of the Ladder Results table. Once you are confident you would reach 75% on each successive level, you may move on to targeted results at the next level, while maintaining a commitment to continued improvement on remaining items in lower levels.



Once you get to 75%, take note of any indicators that would still be at 1 or below. Consider engaging in the following values-clarification process with your team. What value does this indicator represent to your team? Is there a population this value leaves behind? For example, if materials are not accessible for blind and deaf or hard-of-hearing people with lived experience, this represents a choice to not make those people a priority. If the people with lived experience that your organization involves (advisory boards, periodic review teams) are not offered opportunities to learn skills to participate more meaningfully, this represents a belief that people with lived experience do not deserve or are not capable of learning and upward mobility. Have the hard conversations about these, and consider developing a plan to address those indicators that are essential to aligning your organization's practices with its values even if you are able to begin work on the next level of engagement.

Advanced Analysis

Consider “disaggregating” results to see if you notice trends. For example, if your middle or upper management thinks your score is higher than your frontline staff, it could be related to a number of factors. Perhaps there are assumptions that things are happening that aren't, or that frontline staff may be aware of challenges that aren't being funneled “upward” or addressed by leadership. If your frontline staff think your score is higher than leadership, perhaps your frontline staff go above and beyond what is procedurally required, which can be recognized or institutionalized.

If people with lived experience think your score is lower than those who do not have lived experience of trafficking, there might be a discrepancy between intent and impact. It might also be a case where tokenization is happening that people with lived experience are more attuned to than other staff, or that these staff are being asked to do additional emotional labor in lieu of education that could be provided in other ways.

Average Score Chart

- For average scores, use the “*mean*” method of calculating the average. Responses can be rounded to one decimal place. For example, your average might be 1.6 or 0.8.
- Disregard columns for any surveys you did not administer, and do not include any responses marked with an X in the calculation of your averages.
- For each item here, the question numbers addressing this issue from the surveys are listed. *For example, for item 1 (Accessible public materials), the abbreviated survey asks this on question one, the participant survey asks this on question one, and the comprehensive survey asks about this on questions one, two, and three.*

INFORM: Indicators and questions on each survey that assess the organization’s lived experience engagement at this level.	Average scores from the abbreviated survey	Average scores from the participant survey	Average scores from the comprehensive survey	Overall average (total of average scores from each of the surveys to the left divided by the number of types of surveys administered):
1. Accessible public materials Abbreviated: 1 Participant: 1 Comprehensive: 1, 2, 3				
2. Transparency about lived experience feedback Abbreviated: 2, 3 Participant: 8, 9 Comprehensive: 4				
3. Accessible, clear safeguarding and grievance policies Abbreviated: 4 Participant: 2 Comprehensive: 5, 6				
4. Bias and sensationalism Abbreviated: 5 Participant: 4 Comprehensive: 7				
5. Ethical use of personal stories Abbreviated: 6, 7, 8 Participant: 5 Comprehensive: 8, 9, 10				
6. Lived experience representation Participant: 6				
Totals				Total Score on Inform: ____/____ (____%)

ASK: Indicators and questions on each survey that assess the organization's lived experience engagement at this level.	Average scores from the abbreviated survey	Average scores from the participant survey	Average scores from the comprehensive survey	Overall average (total of average scores from each of the surveys to the left divided by the number of types of surveys administered):
7. Feedback sought from current participants Abbreviated: 9 Participant: 7 Comprehensive: 12				
8. Grievance protocols, surveys, and CQI Abbreviated: 10 Participant: 10 Comprehensive: 13, 14, 15				
9. Prior programs and documents review Abbreviated: 11 Comprehensive: 16, 17, 18, 19				
10. Lived experience input into funding decisions Abbreviated: 12 Comprehensive: 20				
Totals				Total Score on Inform: _____/____ (____%)

INVOLVE: Indicators and questions on each survey that assess the organization's lived experience engagement at this level.	Average scores from the abbreviated survey	Average scores from the participant survey	Average scores from the comprehensive survey	Overall average (total of average scores from each of the surveys to the left divided by the number of types of surveys administered):
11. People with lived experience engaged at key stages of work Abbreviated: 13 Comprehensive: 21, 22				
12. Participants with lived experience developed toward greater engagement: Abbreviated: 14 Participant: 11, 12 Comprehensive: 23				
13. Non-tokenizing selection Abbreviated: 15 Comprehensive: 24, 25				

14. Safeguarding and trauma-informed engagement Abbreviated: 16 Participant: 14 Comprehensive: 26				
15. CQI for involvement practices Abbreviated: 17 Comprehensive: 27				
Totals				Total Score on Inform: _____/_____(____%)

COLLABORATE: Indicators and questions on each survey that assess the organization's lived experience engagement at this level.	Average scores from the abbreviated survey	Average scores from the participant survey	Average scores from the comprehensive survey	Overall average (total of average scores from each of the surveys to the left divided by the number of types of surveys administered):
16. Advocating with partners for better lived experience engagement Comprehensive: 28				
17. Collaborators with lived experience across departments Abbreviated: 18 Comprehensive: 29, 31				
18. People with lived experience in leadership across departments Abbreviated: 19 Comprehensive: 30				
19. No mandate for trauma or personal storytelling Abbreviated: 20 Comprehensive: 32				
20. Lived experience-friendly hiring practices Comprehensive: 33, 34, 35				
21. Diversity of collaborators with lived experience and equity in the workplace Abbreviated: 21 Comprehensive: 36, 37, 38, 40,				

22. Adequate onboarding, professional development, and mentoring Abbreviated: 23 Comprehensive: 39				
23. Power-sharing with collaborators and stakeholders Abbreviated: 24 Comprehensive: 41, 42				
Totals				Total Score on Inform: ____/____ (____%)

EMPOWER: Indicators and questions on each survey that assess the organization's lived experience engagement at this level.	Average scores from the abbreviated survey	Average scores from the participant survey	Average scores from the comprehensive survey	Overall average (total of average scores from each of the surveys to the left divided by the number of types of surveys administered):
24. Collaborating equitable and fairly Abbreviated: 25 Comprehensive: 43				
25. People with lived experience in decision-making positions Abbreviated: 26, 30 Comprehensive: 44, 45, 46				
26. Lived experience-friendly workplaces Abbreviated: 27, 28, 29 Comprehensive: 47, 48, 49, 50				
Totals				Total Score on Inform: ____/____ (____%)

STRUCTURES: Indicators and questions on each survey that assess the organization's lived experience engagement at this level.	Average scores from the abbreviated survey	Average scores from the participant survey	Average scores from the comprehensive survey	Overall average (total of average scores from each of the surveys to the left divided by the number of types of surveys administered):
27. Highest level of engagement used Abbreviated: 31 Comprehensive: 52				
28. Gaps in internal lived experience expertise addressed Abbreviated: 32, 33 Comprehensive: 53, 54				
29. Conflicts between people with lived experience addressed equitably and transparently Comprehensive: 55				
30. Lived experience expertise access across all stages of work Abbreviated: 34 Comprehensive: 56, 57, 58				
31. Staff or contractors with lived experience have equitable workplace experiences Abbreviated: 35 Comprehensive: 59				
32. Staff educated on labor rights Abbreviated: 36 Comprehensive: 60				
33. Plan to continue tracking and re-evaluate Comprehensive: 61				
Totals				Total Score on Inform: ____/____ (____%)

Ladder Results Table

Record your scores and percentages from each section above into the tally below. Discuss with your team to identify key strengths and opportunities in each section. **What is the highest section at which you are scoring 75% or higher?** This is your current level on the Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder.

Section	Score	%	Strengths	Weaknesses
Inform	<u> </u> Out of			
Ask	<u> </u> Out of			
Involve	<u> </u> Out of			
Collaborate	<u> </u> Out of			
Empower	<u> </u> Out of			
Structures	<u> </u> Out of			

Priority Score Worksheet

Current target level: _____

1. List all indicators that you scored less than 1.5 on in the table below.
2. Assess the potential impact and potential resources required.
3. This activity is best completed in a facilitated team discussion and may require multiple sessions with the investigation of data and resources in between to complete accurately and effectively.

Indicator:	Assessment of potential impact on a scale of 1-5	Assessment of funds or staffing resources required on a scale of 1-5	Is there (or will there be) a plan for ensuring this work is sustainable beyond our assessment period?	Notes

Priority Matrix

Assess your priority items for potential impact and the amount of resources from the Average Score Chart, identify which indicators could come first.

	Low Resource	High Resource
High Impact	Low Resource	High Resource
	<i>Prioritize for implementation if you can develop a reasonably secure sustainability plan with your local partners.</i>	<i>Investigate options, potential sustainable funding streams, and potential contracts.</i>
Low Impact	Low Resource	High Resource
	<i>Consider as a future project based on capacity.</i>	<i>Also deprioritize any projects that are not sustainable beyond the initial grant period.</i>



“

Meaningful inclusion of survivors is not simply providing services to survivors, building capacity of survivors or bringing a survivor to a meeting. Creating leadership positions for survivors is a small part of it. Meaningful inclusion requires a shift in culture.

Sophie Otiende, Global Fund to End Modern Slavery

