



It's Time for TANF to Engage Lived Experience Experts in More Than Just Their Case Plans

2021 National TANF Directors' Summit



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Agenda

- Learn about literature and examples of lived experience expert engagement in human services
- Hear from lived experience experts on how to engage them in program design and implementation
- Learn strategies on how TANF programs can increase authentic engagement with lived experience experts

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Introductions

→ What is Lived Experience?

“Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people.”

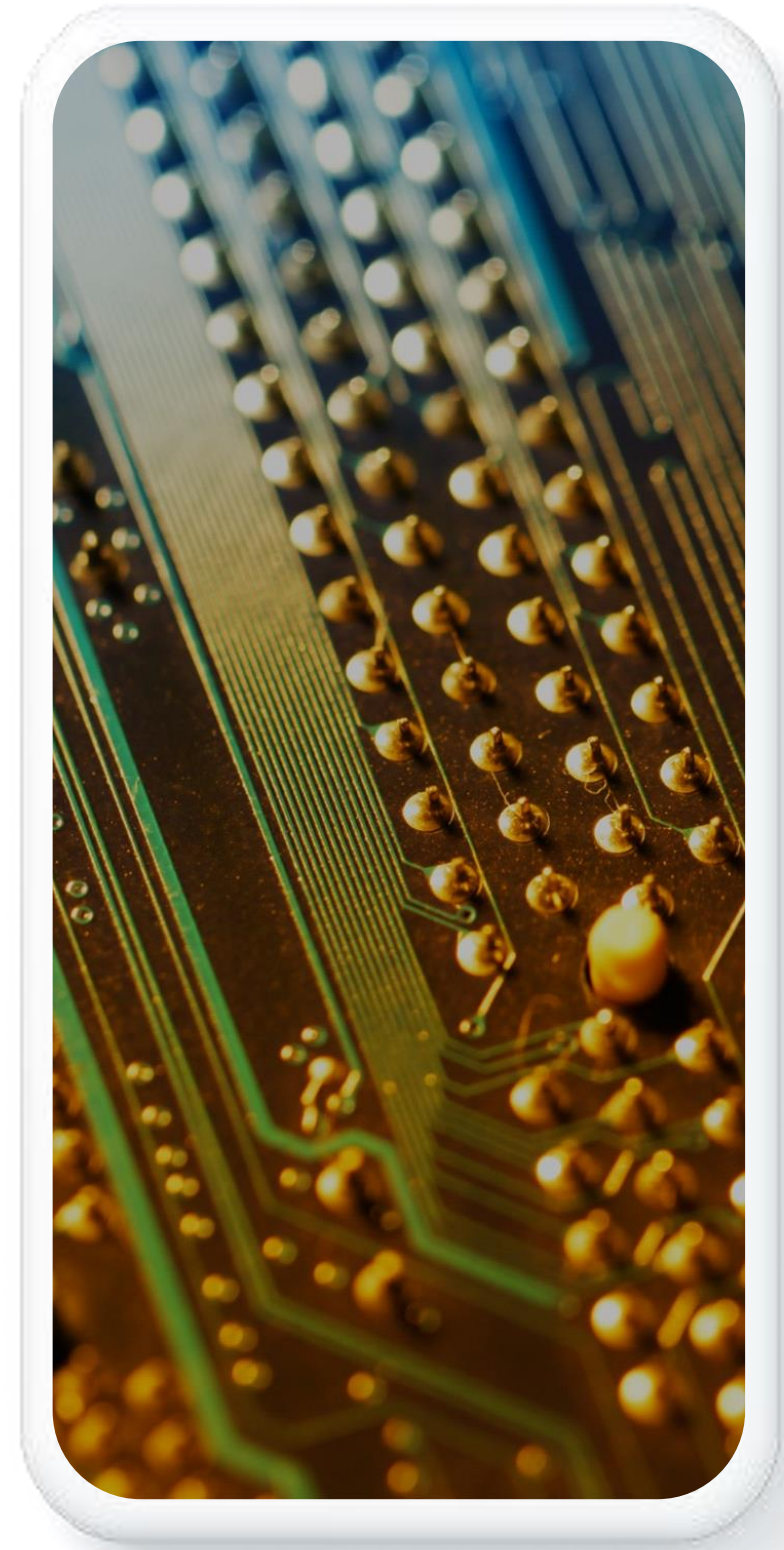
Or “the experiences of people on whom a social issue or combination of issues has had a direct impact.”

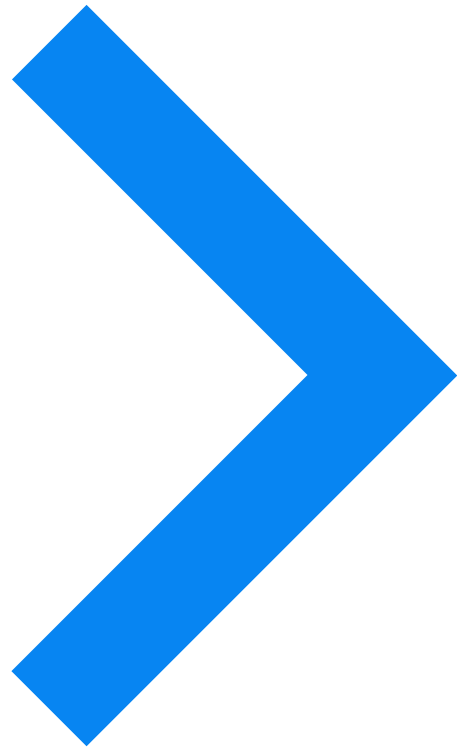


Poll #1

Have you attended training before on how to engage lived experience in your programs?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Other, please specify





Nothing about us
Without us

How did we get here?

There has been a long history of lived experience engagement in human service programs, policies, and research.

Here are a few highlights...

1912

Children's Bureau research



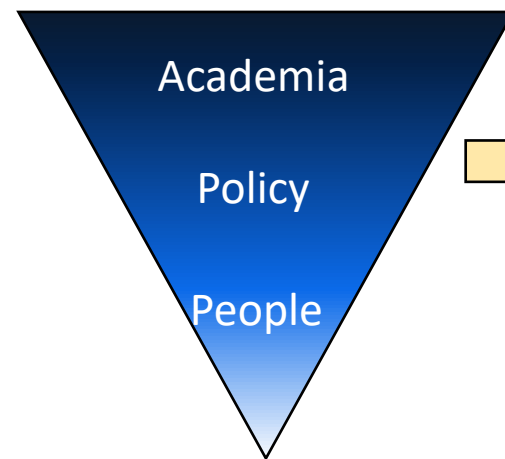
1964

Head Start

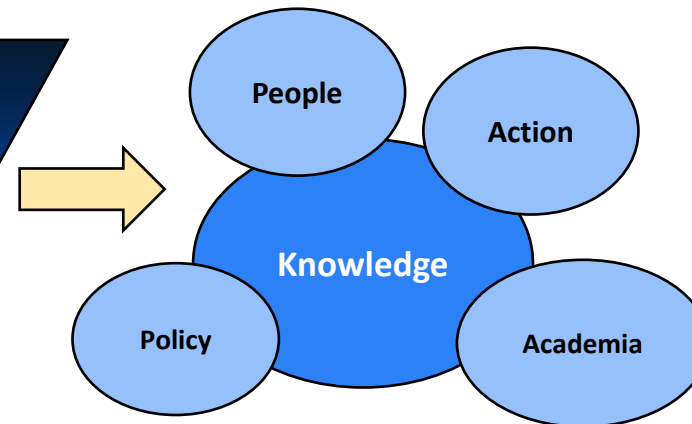


1980s

Traditional Research



Participatory Action Research



1992

Harts Ladder



Family engagement:

Hart's ladder of participation

Why is this important?



- **Potential impacts on individuals**
 - People with lived experience:
 - Increased self-determination and empowerment
 - Increased leadership and workforce skills and experiences
 - TANF program staff:
 - Increased understanding of target population needs
 - Increased understanding of cultural, community, and accessibility needs and challenges
- **Potential impacts on TANF programs**
 - Improved practices and policies that address customers' real-world challenges
 - Enhanced infrastructures to engage customers meaningfully
 - Increased adaptability to meet evolving customer needs and economic shifts
 - Widened network of potential community partners
 - Improved strategies for resource allocation

What does it look like today?



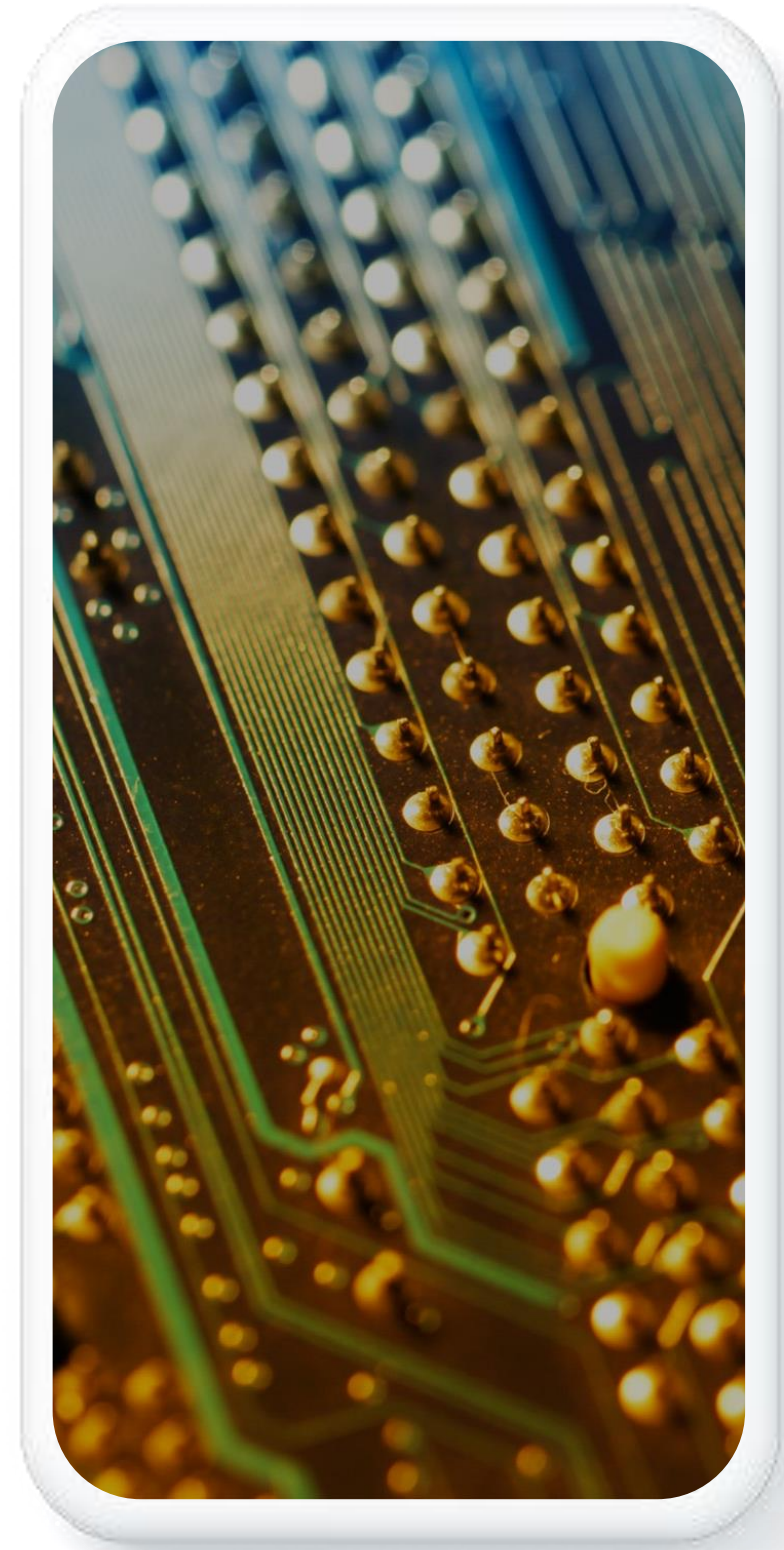
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Diverse engagement of people with lived experience across federal, state, and local human service and justice programs.

Poll #2

Has your TANF program engaged lived experience experts in policy, research, or program design?

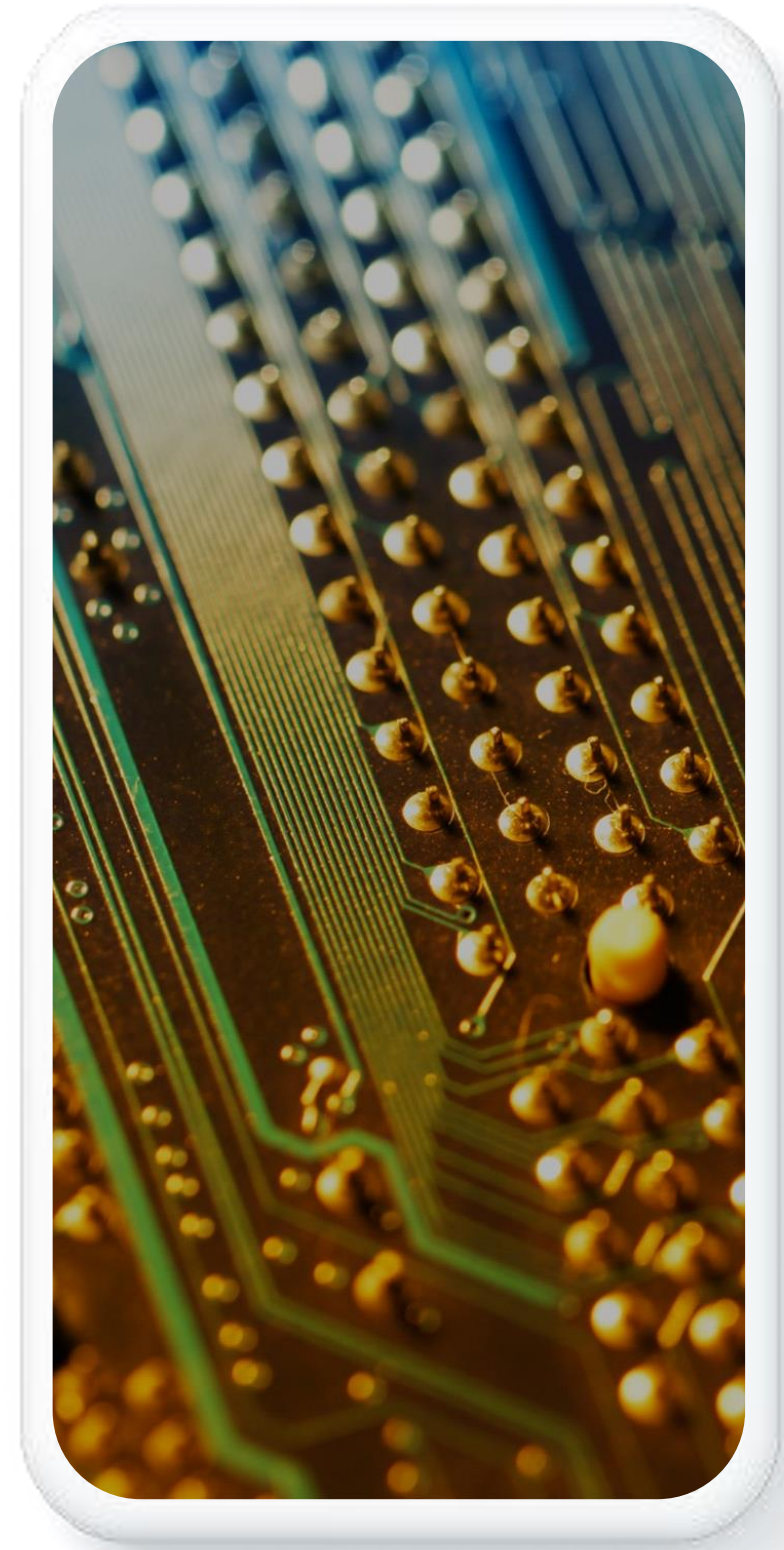
1. Yes
2. No
3. Other, please specify



Poll #3

If your office has engaged lived experience experts in TANF programs, policy, and research design, in what ways? As a:

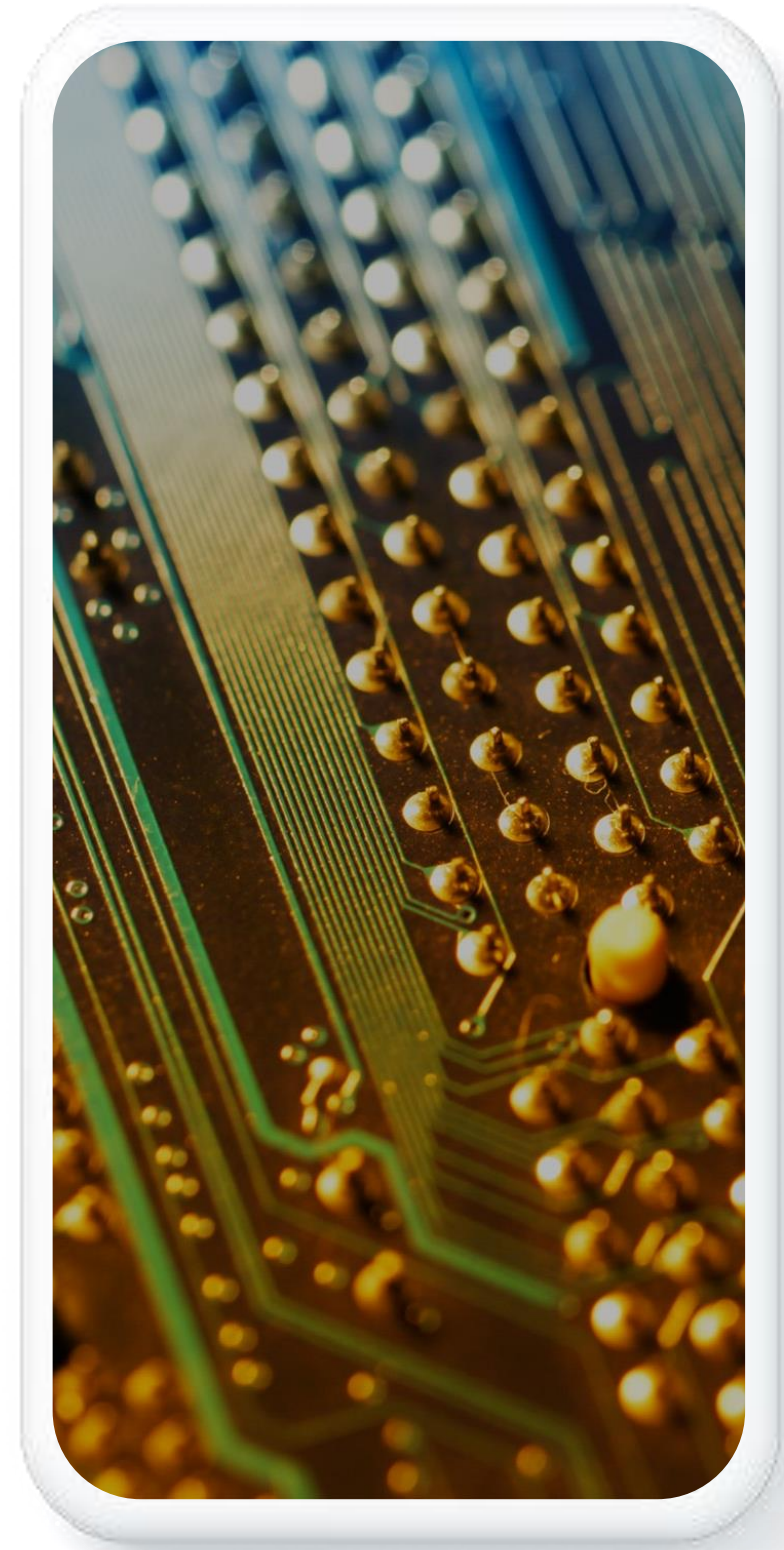
1. Consultant
2. Staff
3. Advisory body
4. Trainer
5. Other, please specify



Poll #4

What may be the biggest challenges to engage lived experience experts in TANF program, policy, or research design?

1. Fiscal resources
2. Staff time
3. Staff or leadership buy-in
4. Concern over re-traumatization
5. Other, please specify



Examples from Other Human Service → Disciplines

Child Welfare

North Carolina Family Leadership Model

The North Carolina Child Welfare Family Advisory Council is a state-level council of parents and youth advising on planning, implementation, and evaluation of child welfare services.

Each county also has its own Family Engagement Committee to advise on improving services for families. Each committee meets quarterly with child welfare leadership to provide ongoing consultation.



Examples from Other Human Service → Disciplines

Housing

Baltimore City Lived Experience Advisory Committee for Youth Homelessness Program

Members sit on city housing continuum of care committees that make decisions about funding and system-wide policies. Members have worked with the city to monitor and reform shelter policies and operations, promote affordable housing solutions, and recommend best practices on engaging people with lived experience.



Moderated Discussion

Why is this important?

What are some ways TANF programs can engage people with lived experience in TANF program design or policies?

What topics should be the focus of lived experience engagements? And why?

How can programs avoid tokenizing? How can they be trauma-informed?

How should TANF programs do this?

- What are the important infrastructure needs that should be in place? (e.g., staff and financial resources)
- What are some common challenges or pitfalls TANF programs should be aware of?

Another Note About Types of Engagement

Consultant

What it is: Hiring an independent consultant or pool of consultants to advise on various aspects of program or policy design.

Things to consider: Could be for short- or long-term initiatives; may include review of materials, products, trainings or grants.

Organizational Partner

What it is: Partnering or contracting with organizations that are run by lived experience experts or that prioritize advising/engagement with lived experience experts.

Things to consider: How do workforce, education, social service, and other partners also engage lived experience?

Staff

What it is: Including lived and professional experience as important qualifications in job requisitions.

Things to consider: HR and employee assistance supports and adopting practices that don't inadvertently 'use' or exploit lived experience.

Advisory Committee

What it is: Empaneling councils, committees, or advisory bodies of lived experience experts to advise on specific or larger TANF initiatives.

Things to consider: Offers diverse perspectives; scope, mandate, and focus are important parameters to set early.

Trainer

What it is: Hiring lived experience experts to train staff on various aspects of customer engagement or program design.

Things to consider: Could be to train, co-train, and/or design or review trainings. May be one-time or multiple engagements.

Storyteller

What it is: Hearing about personal lived experiences to inspire or inform program design.

Things to consider: Anecdotal in nature; be aware of tokenizing or potential re-exploitation; may be one-time or multiple engagements.

Another Note About Being Trauma-Informed

Transparency

Be clear on the purpose(s) of the engagement, roles, responsibilities, limitations, and parameters, including on decision-making authority.

Peer Support

Where possible, offer opportunities for networking and mutual self-help among lived experience expert advisors. This may also include advocacy or support from a staff person 'outside' the initiative.

Choice

To support agency and autonomy, identify opportunities for choice throughout the engagement—whether it be in designing meeting agendas, determining the location or time of meetings, giving options in how to provide guidance or advice or how information will be used.

Cultural Humility

Be aware and respectful of how different cultural or community norms may impact individuals' engagement with government systems and/or advise on how to improve programs or policies.

Empowerment

Compensate lived experience experts for their time and contributions; be clear about how their contributions will be used and attributed; adopt quality improvement processes that improve how you engage and meaningfully incorporate their feedback.

Diversity

Seek diverse perspectives, points of view and experiences to inform services or initiatives.

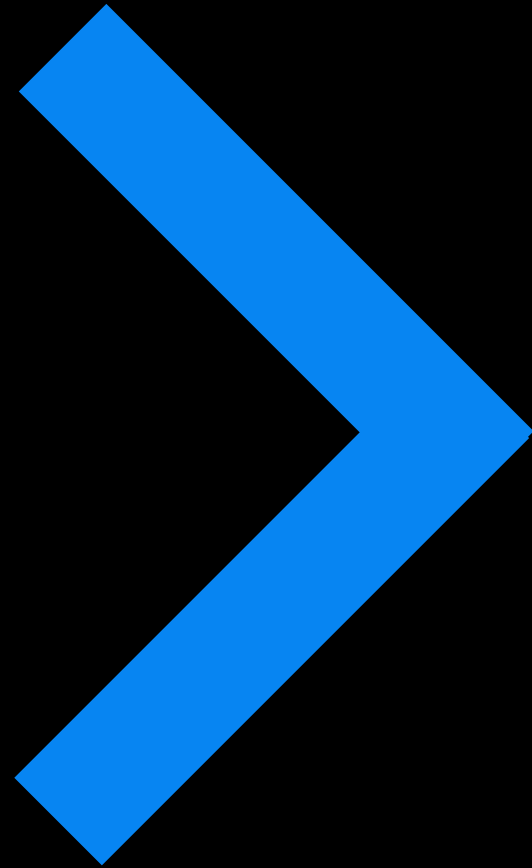
How to get started...

- **Articulate your goals**
- **Explore possible engagement models**
- **Identify resource needs**
- **Be clear on boundaries**

Ask/survey current or former customers—what has been their experience? How can it be improved?

Explore how NGOs or other human service partners do this!

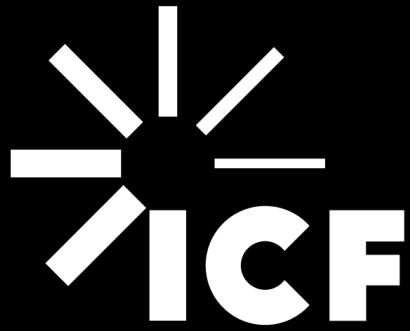
Include lived experience in job requisitions



Questions and Answers

Resources

- Hart's Ladder of Participation: <https://www.cph.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/RogerHartLadderOfParticipation.pdf>
- Participatory Action Research: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203933671-13/participatory-action-research-origins-approaches-methods-sara-kindon-rachel-pain-mike-kesby>
- Building Survivor-Informed Organizations Toolkit: <https://nhttac.acf.hhs.gov/resources/toolkit-building-survivor-informed-organizations>
- Engaging and Involving Youth (multiple resources): <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/youth/engagingyouth/>
- Integrating Persons with Lived Experiences in Efforts to Prevent and End Homelessness: <https://www.hudexchange.info/news/snaps-in-focus-integrating-persons-with-lived-experiences-in-our-efforts-to-prevent-and-end-homelessness/>
- North Carolina Child Welfare Family Leadership Model: https://www.ncacdss.org/wp-content/uploads/Childrens-Services_021319_Handouts.pdf



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