

2023

Engaging with Lived Experience Experts



INTRODUCTION

A lived experience expert is someone who has experienced human trafficking. They bring valuable insight and perspective to our efforts to end human trafficking at all stages of a project. In this document, we refer to them as “experts.”

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Process

The following is a suggested process for working with experts. It supplements other processes for working with contractors, consultants, and vendors.

Pre-Engagement

1. Brainstorm with your team about the project.
 - a. Determine your goals, objectives, and budget.
 - b. Define the expected time commitment, duration, and location.
 - c. Decide how will you compensate the expert. Refer to [Values](#) for more information. Learn more about your internal payment system to set expectations for compensation.
 - d. Determine any criteria that would make an expert eligible or ineligible.
 - e. Decide how you will communicate with the people who respond to your engagement announcement. Consider if you will respond to everyone who contacts you.
 - f. Decide what support you will offer the expert if the project results in emotional distress.
 - g. Decide what interview questions to ask candidates. For examples, see [Suggested Interview Questions](#).
 - h. Determine if your project includes materials that will be published or made public. If it will, then determine whether it will include the names of expert contributors. If it will, prepare a consent document ([see example](#)).
2. Create and distribute an engagement announcement that includes:
 - a. Project goals and objectives.
 - b. Eligibility criteria, including desired expertise.
 - c. Time commitment, duration, and compensation.
 - i. Monetary compensation is strongly recommended. If compensation is not available, be clear that their participation is voluntary.
 - ii. Include if you will reimburse expenses, such as mileage.

- d. Other relevant information to help an expert decide if the opportunity is a good fit.
3. As experts contact you, share information about the project and answer their questions. If they are interested in moving forward,
 - a. Collect their contact information and set a follow-up meeting.
 - b. Send them a list of questions that you will be asking in the follow-up meeting.
 - c. Send them your values for working with experts. For example, see [Values](#).
4. Conduct the follow-up meeting. The goals of this meeting include:
 - a. Answering the expert's questions.
 - b. Learning more about the expert through interview questions.
 - c. Discussing ways the project and the expert's experience, knowledge, and skills might be complementary.
 - d. Explaining compensation, including a realistic timeframe for payment.
 - e. Discussing any potential conflicts of interest. Review impact that the conflicts could have on participating in the project.
 - f. Gathering information for the [Contact Form](#).
 - g. Figuring out when to contact the expert to discuss next steps.
5. Decide if you want to move forward with the expert.
 - a. If you are not ready to move forward, contact the expert promptly to communicate this information. Ask them if they would like you to reach out to them for future projects.
 - b. If you are ready move forward, create an Engagement Agreement and send it to them for review. Give them sufficient time to review the agreement. Reference the [Engagement Agreement](#) for what to include.
6. Contact the expert to see if they are still interested and able to engage with the project. Review the agreement with them and answer their questions. Update the agreement, if needed.

If the expert agrees to participate in the project, proceed with steps below.

7. Forward the [Engagement Agreement](#) to the individuals who handle contracts and payments for your agency. Initiate a contract for the expert.
8. Save the [Engagement Agreement](#) and [Contact Form](#) for your records, ensuring you protect the information.

During Engagement

9. Remember the expert may withdraw from the process at any time. Be flexible and understand that things come up in their lives that prevent involvement.
10. Contact the expert as outlined in the feedback and communication sections of the [Engagement Agreement](#).

Concluding Engagement

11. At the end of the project, review the expert's experience and solicit feedback from them.

Values

The following are values and practices for working with experts.

Inclusion

Practices:

- Input from experts is incredibly valuable to the anti-violence movement. Experts should have their voices sought after and included.
- Every story matters.
- Seek diverse experiences by considering race, ethnicity, religion, language, nationality, socioeconomic status, gender, age, sexual orientation, and/or ability. Avoid tokenizing one expert's experience as representing all experts.
- Include input from experts in various ways like projects, committee meetings, panel conversations, events, conferences, and document or policy review.

Self-Determination

Practices:

- Experts own their story. They decide when, how, and with whom to share it.
- Experts have a right to privacy and confidentiality. It is essential to their safety and well-being.
- Provide experts with all necessary information to ensure they can give informed consent.
- Recognize the value of professional development in whatever field the expert is interested in. Identify, discuss, and support opportunities for growth.
- Experts may end their participation at any time.

Trauma-Informed

Practices:

- Give experts ample time to review documents and decide how they want to participate. Translate these documents as needed.
- Be transparent with all aspects of the agreement with the expert. This includes reviewing the agreement and contract to ensure mutual understanding of terms. It also includes allowing time for the individual to receive advice on the engagement agreement and contract before committing or signing documents.
- Provide opportunities for the expert to give and receive feedback before, during (if applicable), and after the planned activity.
- Be proactive and intentional to not perpetrate or support further exploitation of experts.
- Experts deserve a safe, trustworthy, and inclusive work environment. Because their experiences are rooted in trauma, it is important to take steps to avoid re-traumatization.

Dignity

Practices:

- Recognize that experts come to the table with professional expertise. Treat them as a professional colleague. Recognize input from experts as professional work.
- Compensating experts is important. Their input and insight are valuable, and we cannot gain it in any other way.
- Whether to share their lived experience is the expert's decision.
- Expert participation should be meaningful and include leadership opportunities.

Equity and Equality

Practices:

- Compensate experts equitably for their time and expertise.
- Compensate experts in a timely manner. Let them know ahead of time what the compensation is and when they will receive it.
- Compensation can vary.
 - Examples of compensation include a set rate per hour (\$50), fair market rate, federal rate per hour (\$81.25), or paying above and beyond based on the expertise provided.
 - If possible, consider compensating for travel, per diem, lodging, or providing a stipend.
 - Experts may contribute their time and expertise while on work time that their employer compensates.
 - Experts may volunteer their time and expertise without financial compensation. Some experts might select this option to gain experience to add to their resume.
- Create an engagement agreement with the expert, regardless of how or if you compensate them.

Suggested Interview Questions

Questions should not center on the expert's trauma. Examples of questions include:

- a. Tell us about who you are – what you enjoy doing, what you are most proud of, what would you like other people to know about you?
- b. Tell us about your strengths and some of the things you love.
- c. What aspects of the project are most appealing to you?
- d. What skills are you looking forward to developing or strengthening while working on this project?
- e. Are there aspects of this project where you think you will need some support? (such as accommodations and/or technology)
- f. This project requires giving and receiving constructive feedback. Tell us about a time when you had to give someone feedback to help improve something.
- g. Engaging in this project may include re-visiting your trafficking experience. We know this can be traumatic. Describe your support system.
- h. Your privacy is important to us. How would you like us to identify you in meetings or published notes / documents?

Contact Form

Contact Information Form

Name:

Phone:

Mailing Address:

Email:

Accommodations: List any assistance and/or accommodations that the expert requests to complete their work (i.e., translation support, sign language or spoken language interpreters, extended time to complete tasks, large font documents, provision of written documents).

Privacy: Determine how the individual would like to be identified and note here for reference. Will their name be published or made public? If so, obtain a consent document ([see example](#)).

Scheduling Needs: Document any specific scheduling needs to consider for the individual.

Engagement Agreement

Expert Engagement Agreement

To: [name of expert]
From: [name of project lead]
Date: [date]
Re: [title of project]

Purpose: The purpose of [insert title of project] is....

Role: You will....

Time Commitment: You will...

Timeframe: You will begin working on this project on [date] and conclude on [date]. You can end your participation in the project at any time.

Compensation: Compensation in the amount of

Feedback: We encourage reciprocal feedback. We will check in [insert frequency or date(s)] to review how the process is going and make any adjustments to workload.

Communication: As stated above, we will check in [select a timeframe] (or more often, if needed). We have discussed a plan for engaging with a support system.

Decision Date: We will review this letter and discuss next steps on [date].