



The Full Comprehensive Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder Survey

Part of The Meaningful Engagement Toolbox by Collective Threads Initiative

This document is part of the toolbox that accompanies *The Meaningful Engagement Handbook: A guide for understanding, measuring, and increasing lived experience leadership across the spectrum of engagement*, written by Chris Ash and Sophie Otiende for Collective Threads Initiative. You can access the handbook and all accompanying tools at www.collectivethreads.org.

The **Full Comprehensive Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder Survey** was originally developed for internal use for the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking. Larger, more established organisations are most likely to find this survey useful. ***This survey includes all questions for the comprehensive ladder, including those that might be separated out for all-staff, human resources, or administration surveys.***

Related tools include:

- **Meaningful Engagement Quick Start Guide** - A tool to determine concrete ways to get started and take manageable steps towards better engagements.
- **Meaningful Engagement Organisational Foundations Self-Assessment** - A self-assessment tool to help your organisation better prepare for responsiveness when impacted people are staff and collaborators.
- **A Note on Evaluation** - A page on the Collective Threads Initiative website that outlines basics of how to use evaluation to improve meaningful engagement.
- **Analysis Tools for the Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder Survey** - Detailed instructions and tools to help you analyse your results on the surveys in this toolbox and develop a plan for next steps. We also have a Google Spreadsheet that can help calculate these more easily for you.
- **The Staff Comprehensive, Full Abbreviated, Staff Abbreviated, Participant, and Human Resources and Operations Ladder Surveys** - Prebuilt surveys to help you assess your organisation's level of engagement and track it over time.

Full Comprehensive Lived Experience Inclusion Ladder¹

Organisation or Team: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: For each, row check circle 0 for no, 1 for some/sometimes, 2 for yes. Circle X for “unknown” if you do not know the answer to this question based on your experiences with this organisation.²

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

Set a regular schedule for re-assessing and developing a plan for improving the areas that are low or stagnant.

INFORM	N	S	Y	U	Note
1. Our public materials (websites, newsletters, social media, and impact reports, for example) are written in plain language, with acronyms or terms explained.	0	1	2	X	
2. Our public materials are language-accessible (alt text, sign language or closed captioning, and relevant translated versions are made available).	0	1	2	X	In lieu of this question, subject matter experts and organisations exist that provide comprehensive accessibility assessments.
3. 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	This indicator may be removed for many direct service and grassroots organisations, but is more relevant for funders, policy or research organisations, and academics.
4. We have safeguarding/protection/complaints policies that are equitable and easy to access externally. They are easy to understand and inform people how complaints are addressed.	0	1	2	X	

¹ 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 organisations will likely find this survey useful, some of the items in this might only be applicable to larger organisations.

² Note to evaluators: Exclude responses with X circled from calculation of average scores.

5. We implement our safeguarding/protection/complaints policies consistently and without bias.	0	1	2	X	Remember that a clear and accessible policy is useless if not implemented. Review past grievances for outcome to determine if they are routinely dismissed or if they typically result in practical organisational changes.
6. We provide information in an easily understandable way about how any reports, positive feedback, or complaints from people with lived experience are used or incorporated, and we communicate updates regularly to our participants.	0	1	2	X	This question is about grievances, reporting poor experiences as a participant or subject matter expert, or offering praise about your experience as a participant or subject matter expert.
7. We have clear feedback procedures to inform impacted individuals of actions taken after receiving their project input and recommendations (such as after focus group discussions or subject matter expert guidance).	0	1	2	X	This question is about people's project or content contributions as subject matter experts, consultants, or staff.
8. Our public materials avoid perpetuating stereotypes or bias against people with lived experience or using sensational imagery that dehumanises them.	0	1	2	X	Remember that repeated violent or frightening imagery may desensitise your audience to the violence of trafficking. In lieu of this question, consider hiring experts from impacted communities to assess.
9. Our public materials use impacted people's stories or images only with the consent and only as necessary to tell the story of our organisation.	0	1	2	X	When possible, use de-identified composite stories to protect privacy and mitigate power dynamics. Remember that written narrative is only one form of storytelling and explore alternative approaches.
10. 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	

11. 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 and can leave audiences less able to understand your content.
12. 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	

ASK	N	S	Y	U	Note
13. Our organisation scored well on the “Inform” section of this assessment. (0=up to 50%, 1=50-75%, 2=over 75%) <i>Organisations may exclude items from the Inform section that they can and will correct within 1-2 months.</i>	0	1	2	X	
14. We regularly offer surveys or other opportunities for our existing participants or partners to share both positive and critical feedback.	0	1	2	X	Offer options for participants to share feedback anonymously. This question can be left off the staff survey if it is included in the HR/Admin survey.
15. We have a process for incorporating that feedback for continuous quality improvement.	0	1	2	X	
16. 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	
17. We have a method for tracking and monitoring patterns and responses to both positive and critical feedback.	0	1	2	X	For example: How many critical responses a programme receives in a year compared to how much meaningful change has occurred to address them.

18. All existing documents, plans, policies, and programmes that were created without collaboration with impacted people have been reviewed by multiple subject matter experts with lived experience of our issue(s) and (ideally) familiarity with policy or programming.	0	1	2	X	
19. All existing documents, plans, policies, and programmes that were created without collaboration with impacted people have been reviewed by multiple subject matter experts to ensure representation from all identities or forms of exploitation or abuse that our organisation works in.	0	1	2	X	For organisations working in multiple forms of abuse or oppression, or exploitation in different forms of labour, ensuring that all forms are represented strengthens the feedback provided.
20. All existing documents, plans, policies, and programmes that were created without collaboration with impacted people have been reviewed by multiple subject matter experts with lived experience who have both domestic and foreign-national perspectives.	0	1	2	X	This question may be excluded in organisations that do not work with migrant participants.
21. All existing documents, plans, policies, and programmes that were created without collaboration with impacted people have been reviewed by multiple subject matter experts with diverse lived experiences and perspectives (experienced abuse as adults, experienced it as minors, 2SLGBTQ+ people, etc.).	0	1	2	X	Note: Each organisation will have its own policies around ages they can work with. Youth input is essential to the development of youth programming.
22. We incorporate feedback from subject matter experts with lived experience and/or responses to surveys of current clients in deciding what kinds of funding to apply for and we inform them about how and why their feedback is reflected.	0	1	2	X	

INVOLVE	N	S	Y	U	Note
23. Our organisation scored well on the “Ask” section of this assessment. (0=up to 50%, 1=50-75%, 2=over 75%) <i>Organisations may exclude items from the Ask section that they can and will correct within 1-2 months.</i>	0	1	2	X	
24. We engage organisation, programme, or project-specific lived experience advisory teams that provide input at key stages throughout the work, programme, or project, including conception, design, implementation, and evaluation.	0	1	2	X	For grassroots organisations or organisations that have lived experience embedded throughout every level, this question may be less relevant as your advisory group may be internal and embedded among your staff.
25. People with lived experience participate in reviewing proposals or applications for funding before approval and in Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications to review any research partnerships or plans for ethics.	0	1	2	X	This question can be adapted. It is currently written for funders or researchers (who may choose to have impacted people review IRB applications before submission).
26. Participants with lived experience are offered ample, meaningful opportunities to learn skills they might need to have more opportunities to participate at the “Involve” level.	0	1	2	X	Note: If administration indicates that this is offered but staff indicate it is not available, this points to a need to explore barriers to participation or access.
27. Participants for advisory positions are selected/invited based on both knowledge and interest, rather than solely because they have lived experience of human trafficking.	0	1	2	X	Remember that knowledge, skills, and experience can come from unpaid experience, professional development, and education outside of formal degree programmes.
28. Advisory teams receive appropriate and sufficient onboarding to their projects to provide meaningful, realistic, and actionable feedback.	0	1	2	X	

29. In addition to compensation, we provide advisory teams and other subject matter experts opportunities to receive certificates for their professional development, suggested resume language for consultancies, co-authorship, and other support.	0	1	2	X	
30. We create project team practices and procedures that are trauma-informed and reduce the risk of re-traumatizing participants.	0	1	2	X	Note: This question is about team practices on advisory groups, boards, etc., not about service delivery to current programme participants.
31. We evaluate participants' experiences of working with our organisation at the "Involve" level.	0	1	2	X	
32. We have clear procedures in place for using the feedback for continuous quality improvement.	0	1	2	X	

COLLABORATE	N	S	Y	U	Note
33. Our organisation scored well on the "Involve" section of this assessment. (0=up to 50%, 1=50-75%, 2=over 75%) <i>Organisations may exclude items from the Involve section that they can and will correct within 1-2 months.</i>					
34. People with lived experience are regular staff or paid team members in multiple departments or programmes. (0=less than 25% of our programmes, 1=25-50% of our programmes, 2=over half of our programmes)	0	1	2	X	This question is about the different kinds of programmes or departments people with lived experience work in. Please note: Trauma-informed organisations do not mandate disclosure; if included in your survey, answer this question to the best of your ability.

35. People with lived experience are in leadership positions in our teams and/or organisation, such as programme/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 organisation has people with lived experience in decision-making positions. Please note: Trauma-informed organisations do not mandate disclosure; if included in your survey, answer this question to the best of your ability.
36. People with lived experience work in our organisation or programme 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 work only in positions designed specifically for people with lived experience. Please note: Trauma-informed organisations do not mandate disclosure; if included in your survey, answer this question to the best of your ability.
37. Staff with lived experience of trauma 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	Because of the traumatic impacts of recounting one’s prior trauma, positions that are based primarily on sharing a trauma story (whether as a public speaker, subject matter expert, or peer mentor) can lead to unethical or economically-pressured engagement.
38. 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	
39. We compensate applicants for any project work they are required to do as part of their application.	0	1	2	X	
40. We hire for skills, knowledge, and experience, rather than just for trauma history.	0	1	2	X	

41. Our team members and staff with lived experience of our issue hold a variety of identities, types of experience with our issue, and perspectives on work to address our issue.	0	1	2	X	Consider: Race/ethnicity, global region, gender/orientation, adult/child engagement with the issue, type of engagement with the issue, etc. Please note: Trauma-informed organisations do not mandate disclosure; if included in your survey, answer this question to the best of your ability.
42. Our organisation has advanced equity in our work and has demonstrated a willingness to change the way the organisation 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	By “equity” we mean the full range of diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice initiatives that strive to ensure that staff and potential hires have a fair shot at hiring as well as fair workplace experiences.
43. Our organisation has incorporated principles of trauma-informed organisations, 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	Trauma-informed organisations implement practices to support employee wellbeing and reduce primary or secondary traumatisation.
44. All staff have paid access both to adequate onboarding as well as to ongoing mentoring and professional development to build their competence towards their professional goals.	0	1	2	X	If leadership says this is available and frontline staff say it is not, consider exploring what the barriers to access are.
45. 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 workplace policies that support caregivers.	0	1	2	X	See FreeFrom for an example of what is possible. https://www.freefrom.org/about/

46. Our organisation considers potential power imbalances that may exist with organisations we partner with, and has ways of working together fairly to share decision-making and financial power.	0	1	2	X	
47. Staff with lived experience are not held to different standards or expectations than other staff, such as mandated therapy.	0	1	2	X	Note that some survivors of exploitation or abuse may have criminal convictions due to their abuse, as may individuals who live in areas with disparate rates of identity- or politically-based policing. Consider a case-by-case evaluation during hiring processes rather than blanket policies.

EMPOWER	N	S	Y	U	Note
48. Our organisation scored well on the “Collaborate” section of this assessment. (0=up to 50%, 1=50-75%, 2=over 75%) <i>Organisations may exclude items from the Collaborate section that they can and will correct within 1-2 months.</i>	0	1	2	X	
49. Our organisation’s top paid leadership (CEO or Executive Director) has lived experience of our issue.	0	1	2	X	This question is specifically about the senior decision-making position in your organisation. For organisations with a single lead executive, please select only 0 or 2. Organisations with a co- leadership model may select 1 if some but not all have lived experience. Please note: Trauma-informed organisations do not mandate disclosure; if included in your survey, answer this question to the best of your ability.

50. Our organisation has staff with lived experience in a high number of managerial, executive, and decision-making positions, <i>including in multiple departments or programmes and on the board</i> . (0=up to 25%, 2=25-50%, 3=over half)	0	1	2	X	Please note: Trauma-informed organisations do not mandate disclosure; if included in your survey, answer this question to the best of your ability.
51. 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	This question should be included only if the survey is administered anonymously to the majority of staff, and the results should only be included in the results shared with staff (including leadership) with a high enough level of participation to ensure anonymity.
52. All staff have ongoing paid access to further develop their role- and leadership-specific skills and knowledge.	0	1	2	X	
53. All staff, including those with lived experience, are expected to learn trauma-informed and compassionate organisational practices.	0	1	2	X	
54. Programme staff with lived experience report similar levels of job satisfaction compared to those who do not disclose lived experience.	0	1	2	X	Please note: Trauma-informed organisations do not mandate disclosure; if included in your survey, answer this question to the best of your ability. In larger organisations consider using demographic data from staff satisfaction surveys to respond to his question rather than asking it in the meaningful engagement survey.
55. Programme staff with lived experience report compensation <i>and job mobility</i> comparable to those who do not disclose lived experience.	0	1	2	X	Please note: Trauma-informed organisations do not mandate disclosure; if included in your survey, answer this question to the best of your ability. In larger organisations consider using demographic data from staff satisfaction surveys to respond to this question rather than asking it in the meaningful engagement survey.

STRUCTURES	N	S	Y	U	Note
56. Our organisation plans funding in alignment with our commitment to prioritising lived experience-led organisations and research partners.	0	1	2	X	This can include the release of RFPs, how you fund community projects, etc.
57. Our organisation or programme uses the highest level of lived experience engagement that is possible for each programme or project based on staffing and the interest, expertise, and strengths of the people with lived experience in our networks.	0	1	2	X	
58. When a programme 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 <i>Ask</i> or <i>Involve</i> level to bridge gaps in knowledge.	0	1	2	X	
59. When the people with lived experience on a project team or programme do not reflect a diversity of identities, experiences, or perspectives, people with lived experience are engaged at the <i>Ask</i> or <i>Involve</i> level to bridge gaps in knowledge.	0	1	2	X	
60. People from impacted communities 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	Even among people with lived experience, some have more privilege in some areas of their lives and less in others. Thus, some have more or less privilege and power in their issue's sector or movement.

61. Lived experience expertise is engaged in the development of initial programme/project design.*	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.
62. Lived experience expertise is engaged throughout programme/project implementation.*	0	1	2	X	
63. Lived experience expertise is engaged in planning and conducting evaluations of the programme/project.*	0	1	2	X	Lived experience insights are key to developing effective evaluations and interpreting results.
64. Our organisation ensures staff who have disclosed lived experience have workloads similar to those who have not disclosed lived experience in similar roles and are not expected to take on extra work or unpaid overtime.	0	1	2	X	
65. All employees and contractors are educated on their workplace rights and know who to ask if they have additional questions.	0	1	2	X	
66. Our organisation has a set plan for reviewing our outcome on this assessment, identifying actionable, realistic targets towards progress, and a planned schedule for re-evaluating every ____ years to track our progress.	0	1	2	X	This question is intended for human resources or operations staff to record the plan for reassessment. Remove (or use the staff survey) if administering in written or electronic form to all staff or a large portion of the staff.