

# Worthy of Trust

When a large organization partners with community – particularly people with lived experiences in the issue areas for which you advocate – building and maintaining trust is paramount.

## There is no hierarchy here.



People with lived experiences bring valuable insight into social issues and potential solutions. Historically, they have not been meaningfully included in policy decisions that directly impact them. Treating community members as partners looks like:

- Including them in decision-making processes and creating intentional space where they feel welcome to share openly.
- Acknowledging that both academic knowledge and lived experience bring their own unique value.
- Remaining transparent about how you plan to use their feedback and ideas.
- Pursuing with curiosity, rather than defensiveness, when they may challenge your ideas or ways of doing things.

## Use institutional power for good.

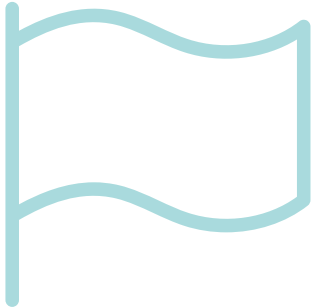


Institutional power is the ability to decide who gets access to resources and what those resources look like. People who have experienced socioeconomic hardship and structural discrimination likely have had negative encounters with institutions that promise to help but instead exploit, dismiss, or fail to meet their needs. Using your institutional power for good looks like:

- Compensating individuals with lived experience for the expertise and time they give to your organization's mission.
- Ensuring that people do not face unfair consequences to sharing their feedback openly and honestly (i.e. access to services or opportunities does not hinge on a person's "good testimonials").
- Realizing that there will always exist a power dynamic between institution and individual, and to mitigate it, the institution's staff must be earnest in developing transparent, non-hierarchical, and trust-based relationships with the community.
- Using your resources to create inclusive opportunities that support and uplift community-led solutions.

# Worthy of Trust - Continued

## Call out the red flags.



Organizations may be eager to involve people with lived experiences simply to legitimize their platform, reach specific audiences, or escape scrutiny for their policies and practices. Thought leaders in this space have the power to challenge their partners and encourage change when they see this happening.

### **This is what tokenism looks like:**

- Using a person's likeness or story on public-facing communications but not including them in decision-making processes. (i.e. *A company has diversity representation on their comms materials and website but not actual diversity on their staff or board.*)
- Inviting people with lived experience to spaces but dismissing them when they are actually in the space, or failing to create intentionally inclusive dialogue. (i.e. *A company invites a person with lived experience to be on a panel but provides little time or floor space for them to speak openly.*)
- Involving people with lived experience in listening sessions and research studies yet still implementing exclusionary hiring practices that tamp out diversity. (i.e. *A company conducts research on community housing issues, but their own hiring practices reflect unchecked biases toward unhoused individuals.*)
- Involving community only when it's desirable or convenient, and failing to consider their impact on community in other areas of their work. (i.e. *A company uses community whenever they need to conduct their research, but is simultaneously supporting policies, corporations, or political movements that harm or exclude that same community.*)

