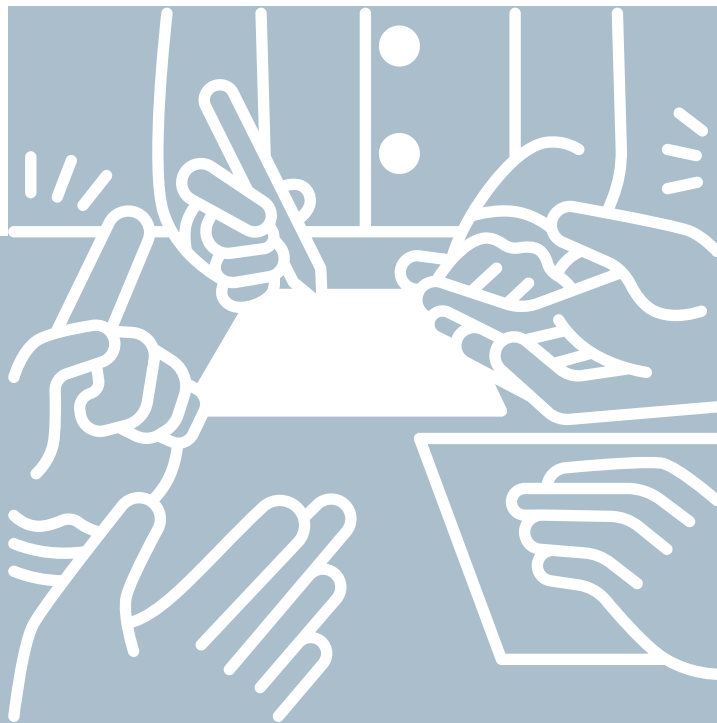




Hunger Free Community Report
Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship

"Build with, not for"

Strategies for Including Lived Experience in Anti-Hunger Work



Written By
Molly Pifko

— HH | **HUNGER ★ FREE**
OKLAHOMA

INTRODUCTION

This Hunger Free Community Report was created at the conclusion of my time working with Hunger Free Oklahoma (HFO) as a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow. During this five-month field placement, I had the opportunity to contribute to the research and planning of a new lived experience cohort which HFO plans to launch in 2023. This included reviewing existing resources, compiling best practices, and being part of listening sessions with members of the Tulsa community and other organizations working to center lived experience. It was a pleasure to work on this important project, and I look forward to watching it launch and grow in the coming years. I hope that this report will be the sort of resource that was helpful to myself and the HFO team in creating our program. I also hope that it will provide useful information and ideas to others as they work to ensure that the knowledge, voices, and ideas of the people experiencing hunger are fully integrated into the movement to end it.

I hope that this report will...

- » Illustrate the importance of lived experience to increasing equity and effectively targeting the root causes of hunger.
- » Summarize Hunger Free Oklahoma's process of creating a lived experience cohort.
- » Summarize a few case studies of existing successful programs centering people with lived experience.
- » Synthesize insights, questions, and major takeaways from the research and program-creation process.
- » Compile information and resources for other organizations working to center lived experience.

WHAT IS LIVED EXPERIENCE, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

When the word "experience" is used in a job posting or the workplace, it often refers to knowledge or skills gained by earning a degree in a subject, working in a position or field for a certain amount of time, or completing professional development programs. However, these are far from the only ways that we gain experience. The term *lived experience* refers to “personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people.”[1] Integrating lived experience into an area like hunger means recognizing that for too long, nonprofits, policy-makers, advocates, and other participants in anti-hunger work have neglected and undervalued the voices of the people actually experiencing hunger and poverty. This exclusion has done a disservice to both people experiencing hunger and those seeking to advocate for and serve them. People with lived experience of hunger have stories, ideas, skills, and first-hand knowledge that cannot be taught through any degree program or years of work experience. Moreover, it is fundamentally unjust that racism, classism, and other systemic barriers have excluded people with lived experience from decisions that directly impact their lives. Shifting cultural ideas of what constitutes experience will take time and intentionality—but by effectively integrating lived experience into anti-hunger work, organizations can make their work more effective, more equitable, and more just.

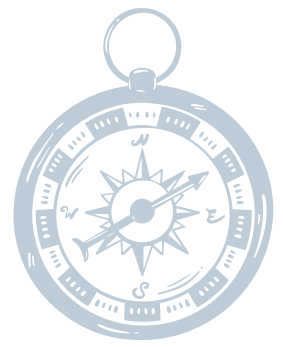
People’s own analysis of their own realities should be respected and inform change.

—ALEXANDRA WANJIKU KELBERT, FROM THE 2018 CITY FOOD SYMPOSIUM [2]

Policy based on partial knowledge will never be truly effective.

—MARYANN BROXTON, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP GROUP [3]

SECTION ONE: CREATE A SHARED VISION OF SUCCESS



As with any project, in the early stages of a lived experience project it is important to assess what resources your organization will commit to the project and what its guiding principles and goals will be.

While goals can and should shift as the specifics of the project are determined, it can be helpful to begin with determining a shared vision of success. What is the ideal outcome for both participants and the convening organization? The answer will vary. For instance, the overarching goal of Hunger Free Oklahoma's Lived Experience Cohort project is to establish a local cohort that engages individuals with lived expertise to better understand how individuals and families interact (or don't interact) with nutrition programs. This cohort will compensate cohort members for their time and work alongside them to develop leadership and advocacy opportunities.


Based on this general mission, members of the HFO team then discussed what a successful cohort would provide to both HFO and cohort members.

For partners with lived experience:

- **Sense of agency**
- **Development of story of self**
- **Comfort with and opportunities to speak to policy makers**
- **Comfort speaking about issues that impact them**
- **Sense of community, solidarity and collective power**

For HFO and our work:

- **Greater inclusion of lived experience in policy advocacy work**
- **Unique perspective/knowledge on how nutrition programs are and are not working in practice**
- **Strong and trusting relationships with our community**



Depending on broader organizational mission and goals, existing connections in the community, etc., another organization's project might have a different focus. You may ask:


- Is the focus of this project primarily external advocacy or informing our programs as an organization?
- What opportunities can we provide for partners with lived experience to use their existing skills and expertise to make change?
- What opportunities can we provide for partners with lived experience to develop new skills?
- How can partners with lived experience provide perspective and guidance on larger organizational goals and decisions?

SOME SUGGESTED GUIDING VALUES

- Relationship and community-building
- Humility and co-creation
- Intentionality
- Taking the time to build trust
- Asset-based thinking
- Focus on advancing racial equity and creating an anti-racist space
- Adaptability and openness to change

WHAT IS AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH?

To take an asset-based rather than a deficit-based approach means focusing on the unique strengths of all people instead of their perceived shortcomings or lacks. This shift was first proposed in the field of education, encouraging teachers to look at diversity and difference among their students as attributes to be celebrated and built upon, rather than issues to overcome.[4] Given the societally entrenched stigma surrounding hunger and poverty, it is especially important for anti-hunger advocates to work from this kind of mindset—focusing on the many valuable insights, skills, and experiences that partners with lived experience bring to the work rather than treating them paternalistically or as if they are in need of “saving.”



SECTION TWO: DETERMINE ASSETS AND OBSTACLES



Initial conversations about the goals of a project should happen in tandem with conversations about what resources are available for an organization to commit to a project. For instance, a statewide organization like HFO aims to engage people with lived experience from across the state; but given our current capacity, we determined that it is more realistic to pilot the program with a small cohort local to the Tulsa area.

Asset-mapping, a process of assessing a community or organization's resources and connections, can be a helpful way to determine the possibilities and boundaries your project is situated within.[5] It may be helpful to work outward from internal resources, to existing partners and potential connections in the community, to any applicable models for success that you might learn from. The grid below suggests a few possible areas for brainstorming assets, barriers, opportunities, and next steps.

Hunger Free Oklahoma's Lived Experience Cohort

HFO plans to launch its first lived experience cohort in September of 2023, though this timeline may shift as the team continues to gather internal and external feedback about what the cohort will need to thrive.

This six-person group will convene in-person once a month, and each member will have an additional short monthly call with an HFO team member, for a total of 3 hours per month.

The cohort will last 8 months: from September to April.

Two staff members will provide the bulk of support and facilitation for the cohort, with support from additional team members. This should add up to about 40 hours a month of dedicated staff time.

Asset mapping grid

	Assets	Barriers	Opportunities	Next Steps
Staff Capacity				
Funding Sources				
Community Connections				
Partner Organizations				
Models for success				

Questions to consider:

- How much dedicated staff time will a successful program require?
- Are there any opportunities to partner with other organizations to bring greater capacity to the project?
 - For instance, when launching a new Youth Advisory Council, HFO was able to partner with Tulsa Changemakers, which recruits college students to lead and facilitate local youth programming.
- In what ways are we already interacting with people with lived experience in our community? How can we deepen those relationships?
- Do we have partners who interact with members of our community who we do not currently have relationships with?
- Do we have relationships with legislators or policy-makers who would benefit from the perspectives of people with lived experience?
- Are there existing programs with similar goals or structures to the one that we envision? Can we set up a time to speak with their members and/or organizers?

Case studies



Much of HFO's research for this project involved locating other local and non-local organizations who are working to integrate lived experience into their work. HFO team members had opportunities to speak with members of several organizations with successful lived experience projects, a few of which are outlined below.

These conversations were helpful in determining best practices for logistics such as compensation, structure, and curriculum, as well as broader guiding goals and values. By considering the similarities and differences between other organizations' lived experience projects and the one that we are building, we can learn from and replicate their successes and avoid redundancy while building upon existing work in our area.

Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma:

In 2022, The Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma launched their lived experience project, a capacity-building, advisory, and advocacy group similar to the cohort HFO plans to launch in 2023. This project was supported by a grant from Feeding America.

- **Creating the group:** The project began when the food bank received a grant to hold listening sessions with community members experiencing hunger. They also asked partner organizations to nominate community members, and hope to launch a wider, more formal application process for the next group.
- **Compensation:** Participants are paid a living wage for their time, and provided with laptops, hotspots, and additional stipends for transportation and childcare.
- **Goals:** RFBO is currently exploring options for members of their program to continue to act as advocates and advisors in partnership with the food banks after their time in the cohort is over.

Case studies



Capital Area Food Bank:

Capital Area Food Bank convened their first Client Leadership Council (CLC) in 2020 after realizing that decision-making with the greatest consequences for their clients and historically underrepresented communities was frequently excluding their own voices.[6]

- **Creating the group:** The CLC has 24 members each year. Applications are distributed through CAFB's non-profit partner network, and members are chosen through a two-part interview process.
- **Compensation:** Members are paid a living wage of \$30/hour for time invested in training, external meetings, press appearances, and feedback sessions—about 5 hours a month. CAFB also provides transportation reimbursement to and from meetings and events.
- Members participate in monthly skills training and three day-long convenings. CAFB has developed a workbook that coincides with these trainings, broken up into three stages of development: the heart, the head, and the hands.
- **Goals:** The food bank supports CLC members in developing and using their public narrative to shape public policy, influence the press, and bring insights to the food bank's programming.

"Over the course of the program, CLC members engage in a curriculum based on a model of leadership that builds out a story of self-narrative to influence the hearts and minds of policymakers and the general public. There is power in the stories of our clients, and the curriculum encourages members to employ the authenticity and emotions of their own lived experience to influence change, change perceptions, and drive progress."

--Client Leadership Council final report

Case studies



California 100 Days Initiative:

In May of 2020, four counties in California came together to focus on helping individuals experiencing homelessness move into safe and stable housing. They Partnered with the Rapid Results Institute's 100 Day Challenge Initiative, a program designed to help frontline teams to set and achieve ambitious goals on a variety of societal issues. LA County focused in particular on engaging people with lived experience of homelessness as equal partners in their work.[7]

- **Creating the Group:** From the beginning of the project, LA County used a network of community partners to reach out to people with lived experience of homelessness and invited them to participate as team members.
- **Goals and achievements:** Team members with lived experience spearheaded the development of housing fairs and branding/communications around existing rehousing efforts.
- The 100 Day Challenge also created spaces for advocates with lived experience to have open conversations with local leaders and service providers.

Lessons learned from the LA County 100-Day Challenge Report:

1. Be intentional in engaging persons with lived experience.
2. Provide space to ask questions and gain knowledge.
3. Create opportunities to challenge norms and existing work culture.
4. Provide appropriate support for persons with lived experience engaged in the work.
5. Understand that authentic engagement of people with lived experience is a systems change process.

SECTION THREE: ENSURE EQUITABLE COMPENSATION AND ACCESSIBILITY



Guiding principles for equitable compensation:

- **Compensation=respect.** Compensating people with lived or living experience of hunger is vital in lowering barriers to participation, and crucial to demonstrating respect and building trusting relationships with community partners. By fairly compensating participants, we demonstrate the value of their time, ideas, and contributions.
- **Transparency.** Before partners commit to participating in any project, they should be given as much information as possible about amount, scheduling, and method of pay, expected number of hours, work roles, and other program expectations. Payment should always be consistent and reliable.
- **Choice.** A recurring theme I encountered in statements from lived experts was "ask what we want, not what we need." By making decisions based on the preferences of our partners with lived experience, organizations can build stronger and more equitable relationships. This means providing as many options as possible for methods of payment, time of payment, etc., and including people with lived experience in the decision-making process as early and often as possible.

“Different circumstances that fluctuate at different times means if I have a variety of options available for payment I am able to assess the best most beneficial method to suit my situation...Flexibility to choose would help to reduce stress and difficulty around earning”

—Respondent, 2021 Parity magazine survey [8]

Determining a fair compensation rate:

- **Living wage:** The living wage model is a method of determining the basic financial needs of a person or family. Unlike the federal poverty threshold, it takes into account costs like childcare and healthcare, as well as geographic variations in living expenses.
- The MIT Living Wage Calculator [9] is a useful tool for determining a living wage based on location and household size/composition.
 - In the technical notes for this tool, MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning clarifies that living wage does not budget for things like pre-prepared meals, vacations and activities, or unexpected expenses, and is therefore "perhaps better defined as a minimum subsistence wage for persons living in the United States." [10] As a result, a living wage rate should be considered the minimum for acceptable compensation.
- Keep in mind that living wage varies based on household size, and consider ways to determine compensation rates without requiring participants to disclose information about their family structure.
- Appropriate compensation may also vary based on the structure and goals of an individual project. For example, The Gluelph Neighborhood Support Coalition recommends \$25/hr for an advisory role, \$30/hr for a peer support worker, \$100/day for on-call support, \$50/hr for presentation and facilitation, and local living wage for task-based work. [11]

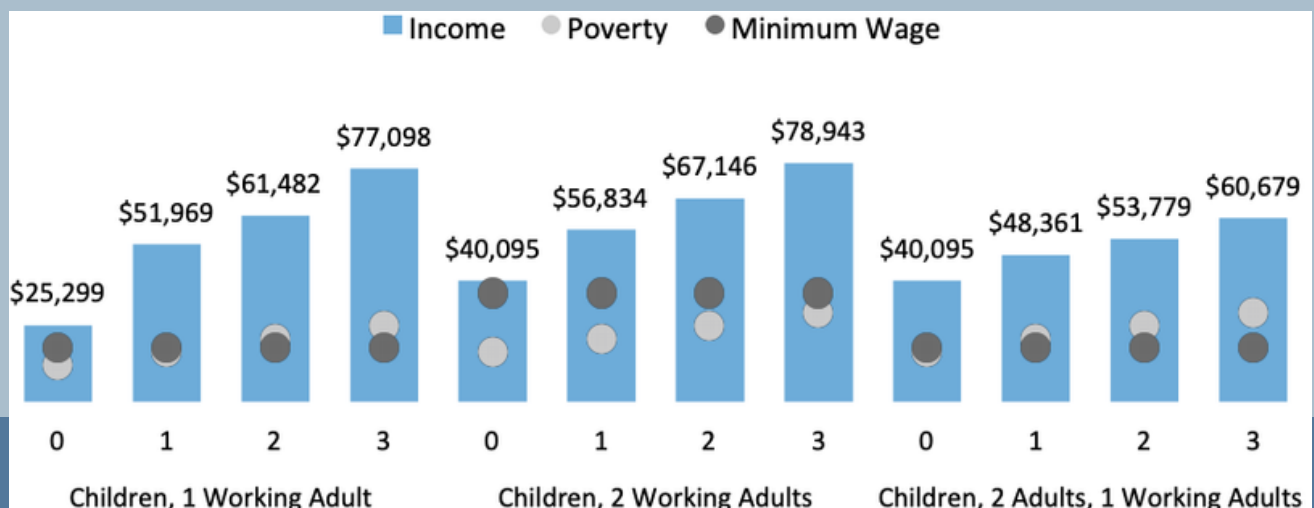


Figure 1 from "Calculation of a Living Wage".
State Average Living Wage Before Taxes, with Poverty Threshold and
Minimum Wage Comparisons by Family Composition.

Choosing a payment method:

Cash and bank orders do not require a bank account to access and provide a high degree of flexibility, but may be more complicated to obtain and track, and/or involve ATM and bank fees.



Direct deposit and checks may require a bank account and be more difficult for organizations to supply to non-employees. However, direct compensation also provides more flexibility and can be seen as more respectful.



Gift cards can be used immediately, are generally easiest for organizations to supply, and do not require a bank account, but they limit how compensation can be used.



- In a survey by Parity magazine, 69% of respondents preferred to be paid via direct deposit, while only 2.2% preferred gift cards or vouchers.[12] Several explained their preference as a matter of respect; organizations don't typically pay employees or contractors in gift cards, so why should we pay people with lived experience that way?
- On the other hand, we also heard from Tulsa community members that gift cards can be "as good as cash" as long as they are to stores like Sam's Club or Walmart and recipients have sufficient notice to plan their monthly spending accordingly.
- The usefulness of gift cards will vary based on location. In a city like Tulsa with several big-box retailers, community members are more likely to be able to conveniently use a gift card to buy food, other products, and even gas at the same store. However, this may not be the case in more rural locations, or for those with limited mobility and/or transportation.

The best practice is to work with your partners with lived experience to determine which payment options are feasible, and then allow partners to choose their preferred option.

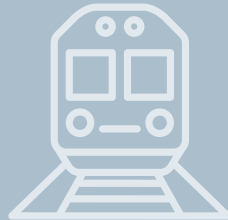
Planning for additional supports:

In addition to fair compensation, lived experience projects should budget for:



Food

Transportation



Childcare

Technology



Some considerations we encountered about these supports included:

- Should childcare be provided at meetings by HFO staff members or others, or should cohort members be provided with an additional stipend to arrange their own childcare?
 - How can we ensure that cohort members feel comfortable bringing children to meetings if needed?
 - Do we have adequate staff capacity to provide childcare? Do we provide childcare for any other programs, and if so, would the same system work well here?
 - Can we provide cohort members with laptops and hotspots for the duration of the cohort, or to keep?
 - Are there local companies, schools, or non-profits who may be willing to donate used technology?
 - Are there grants available for technology?
 - What transportation options are most available and utilized in our community? Can we provide passes for public transportation, gas station gift cards, credits on Lyft, Uber, or other rideshare services? Or should cohort members be provided with an additional transportation stipend?
 - If holding in-person meetings, we should provide food that meets the needs and preferences of all attendees.
 - Once the cohort is formed, there should be space created in both group and one-on-one conversations to discuss any additional support that would make participation in the cohort as easy and rewarding as possible.
-

Many potential partners in long-term lived experience projects express anxiety about how compensation may impact their benefits or taxes; in fact, in Parity magazine's study, 27% of respondents said they had declined opportunities to participate in programs because of this anxiety. Generally, any source of income over \$600 must be reported, even if received in the form of gift cards or cash. In order to minimize potential impact on taxes and benefits, HFO decided to start the cohort in September so that it takes place over two calendar years. Depending on the length, structure, and time commitment of different lived experience projects, it may make sense to use this approach or to discuss other options with participants.

Accessibility considerations:

Providing equitable compensation and financial support is a major step in removing barriers to entry for any anti-hunger project. As you develop your program, it is constructive to consider any additional barriers potential participants may face, especially BIPOC, disabled people, or members of other minoritized groups. Consider:

- Will an online or in-person format lead to the most accessible and successful group meetings?
- What spaces are available for in-person meetings that may already be familiar and comfortable to participants?
- What spaces are available that will be physically accessible to all participants?
- How can we adjust our physical space and our group norms and processes to best accommodate all participants' physical and emotional needs?
- What processes will best help our particular group experience disagreement, navigate difficult topics, and feel comfortable setting boundaries or stepping away as needed?
- How can we resist reinforcing social/institutional norms of professionalism that have historically excluded BIPOC and upheld white supremacy?

When creating a group that will work together long-term, these questions should be answered together, since the needs and preferences of every group will vary. As with methods of compensation, it is not an organization's place to assume what their partners will prefer, but to provide ample options and space to find solutions together.

When working on shorter-term forms of engagement such as surveys or listening sessions, it is best to find diverse methods and locations that will be accessible to the widest possible number of people. You may be able to determine the best ways to engage different communities by reaching out to leaders and partner organizations in those communities.

SECTION FOUR: INTEGRATE PRINCIPLES OF RACIAL EQUITY AND TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE



What is trauma-informed care?

Trauma-informed thinking or trauma-informed care is an approach to engagement that recognizes the prevalence and impact of trauma and prioritizes the safety and well-being of people who have experienced trauma. Often applied in healthcare and social service settings, it involves understanding the potential effects of trauma on physical, emotional, and psychological health and creating environments and practices with appropriate supports. Trauma-informed approaches are also asset-based and center trust, choice, and agency.[13]

Why is it important to integrate principles of trauma-informed care in anti-hunger work?

When working in partnership with people who have experienced or are experiencing hunger and poverty, it is important to remember that these experiences in and of themselves can be traumatic and have a profound impact on mental and physical health. People with lived experience of hunger and poverty may also have experienced increased vulnerability to interpersonal and institutional harm and/or be members of communities that have been systemically disadvantaged and stripped of decision-making authority. Finally, people with lived experience of hunger and poverty are disproportionately people of color, who are likely to have been additionally traumatized by social, political, and economic systems of racial inequity. By adopting an asset-based and trauma-informed perspective, organizations can help partners to build resilience and healing and facilitate their engagement in efforts to end hunger and poverty.

6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

The CDC's [Center for Preparedness and Response \(CPR\)](#), in collaboration with SAMHSA's [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care \(NCTIC\)](#), developed and led a new training for CPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work.

Participants learned SAMHSA'S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. On-going internal organizational assessment and quality improvement, as well as engagement with community stakeholders, will help to imbed this approach which can be augmented with organizational development and practice improvement. The training provided by [CPR](#) and [NCTIC](#) was the first step for CDC to view emergency preparedness and response through a trauma-informed lens.

Trauma-informed approaches to care shift the focus from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” by:

- *Realizing the widespread impact of trauma and understanding potential paths for recovery;*
- *Recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma in individual clients, families, and staff;*
- *Integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices;*
- *Seeking to actively resist re-traumatization (i.e., avoid creating an environment that inadvertently reminds patients of their traumatic experiences and causes them to experience emotional and biological stress).*

—“KEY INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE IMPLEMENTATION”
FROM THE CENTER FOR HEALTHCARE STRATEGIES [15]

How do we include these principles in a lived experience project?

- Consider whether there are any local organizations that offer training on trauma-informed care.
 - For instance, in Oklahoma the Potts Family Foundation has previously provided a cohort of professionals across the state with a three-day training on the impacts of trauma and ways to build strength and resilience in people and communities. [16]
- Seek ways to increase organization-wide understanding of asset-based and trauma-informed thinking, as well as the ways that hunger, poverty, and racial inequity can be traumatic.
 - As the Center for Healthcare Strategies points out, trauma-informed care in a healthcare setting includes both organizational and clinical practices that recognize the impact that trauma has on patients and providers. While there is not the same clinical/organizational divide in anti-hunger work, it is still important to remember that trauma-informed practices should be instituted throughout an organization, not only among team members working directly alongside people with lived experience.
- Consider ways to provide mental health support at and between meetings, including partnering with a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW).
- Maximize agency for all participants. Make it clear that partners with lived experience are in control of their own stories and are under no obligation to share or disclose traumatic experiences.

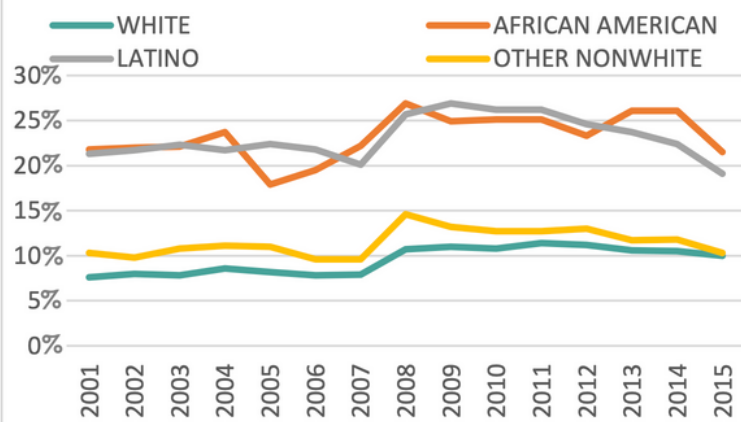
What is racial equity?

Racial equity is "a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color." [17] Achieving racial equity means that race will no longer impact outcomes like health, access to quality education, food security, and economic well-being. Instead, all people will share equal opportunity to thrive.

Why is it important to integrate principles of racial equity in anti-hunger work?

Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color (BIPOC) are disproportionately likely to experience hunger and poverty. In the United States, families of color are at least twice as likely to experience food insecurity when compared to white families, while Black and Indigenous families are three times as likely to experience food insecurity. [18] This divide has only worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which Black communities have had the highest death rate of any racial or ethnic group, followed by Indigenous communities. [19] The data makes it clear that racial inequity is a root cause of hunger, and no effort to achieve food justice for all people can truly succeed without addressing the deep-seated racism embedded in the policy, culture, and economic systems of the United States.

**TRENDS IN HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY
BY RACE, 2001-2015**



Source: [Trends in US Food Security, United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2016.](#)

From the Alliance to End Hunger
Factsheet: "Hunger is a Racial
Equity Issue."
July, 2017 [20]

What are some principles of racial equity?

The following racial equity principles were developed by Marlysa Gamblin, racial equity coach, author, and founder of the Racial Equity and Hunger National Learning Network [21]:

1. Center the needs, leadership, scholarship, data, and POWER of BIPOC first, and in all subsequent stages as well.
2. Name and consider each community of color individually, avoiding terms such as "minority."
3. Analyze the specific outcomes for each racial and ethnic group.
4. Set up policies and programs that are responsive in a way that is proportionate to the historical trauma impacts.
5. Create systems of decision-making, reflection, and accountability, to BIPOC staff, institutions, and communities.

How do we include these principles in a lived experience project?

- Recognize the impact of racial trauma in addition to the trauma of experiencing hunger and poverty. Learn more about how race impacts the experience of hunger and poverty for different communities.
 - Understand that there may be a justified lack of trust between BIPOC communities and majority-white organizations and institutions. Take the time to build trust, knowing that this process cannot be rushed or forced.
 - Actively and consistently seek out the input of BIPOC throughout your program-creation process. If creating a cohort, advocacy council, or other long-term group, recruit from racially diverse groups/communities.
 - Encourage the group to set anti-racist group norms.
 - Encourage healthy accountability, honest communication, and a learning mindset about race and racism.
 - Seek out resources written by BIPOC, especially BIPOC with lived experience of hunger and poverty.
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CONCLUSION: BE PARTNERS, NOT PROVIDERS



As long as we move with love, people will respond.

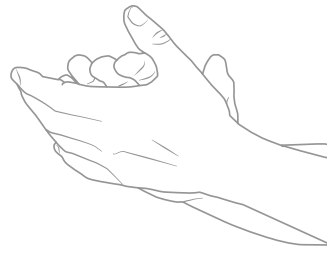
—TAMIKA MOORE, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP GROUP

In the process of Hunger Free Oklahoma’s lived experience cohort project, we spent a lot of time discussing logistics like capacity, budget, and goals. However, the theme that we continually returned to was not about logistics at all—it was about relationships. My central takeaway from this process was that the success of a lived experience project must be measured first and foremost by the strength of the relationships it fosters. Creating strong and lasting relationships among cohort members and between cohort members and staff members is not just a prerequisite for achieving success; it is, in and of itself, a kind of success.

Too often, even organizations that value lived experience and are attempting to integrate it into their work have left people with lived experience feeling exploited and left behind. They have used people with lived experience as a source of stories, quotes, or data for legislative testimony and communications materials, but not put in the time to treat them as long-term partners or to support their own advocacy and increase their decision-making power. At HFO, we had the opportunity to speak with Alice Alouch and Maryann Broxton, two members of the Center for Law and Social Policy’s Community Partnership Group (CPG), about strategies to avoid this kind of transactionalism. The CPG is a diverse collective of activists who partner with nonprofits, administering agencies, and policymakers to ensure that their work is grounded in the expertise of people directly impacted by poverty and/or anti-poverty policies.[22] I would like to leave you with a few central takeaways from that conversation:

1. **Co-create:** rather than creating a program and then presenting it to the community, create a space where community members with lived experience can come together to determine what kind of program would be most exciting and impactful for them. Include people with lived experience in the planning process as early and often as possible. Be responsive, adaptable, and transparent about what your organization can contribute.
 2. **Be adaptable:** Check in consistently to gather feedback about the group's experience and create space to adjust accordingly.
 3. **Be consistent:** let partners know what they can expect from you, and follow through.
 4. **Avoid extraction or tokenization:** support partners with lived experience in tapping into the areas where they can have the greatest impact—not just the areas that look best for your organization.
 5. **Allow dissent and disagreement:** Accept that at times, there will be disagreement within the cohort, and that the cohort may disagree with the broader organization. Have the difficult conversations with organization leadership and with cohort members about what to expect when this is the case, and set up clear and open lines of communication.
 6. **Be humble:** embrace having your assumptions challenged. Create a space where mistakes can be addressed, acknowledged, and discussed. To quote Maryann, “we are all learners, and we are all teachers.”
 7. **Foster organizational change:** People with lived experience of hunger should be engaged in all areas of decision-making and advocacy, not siloed into a single program. Consider adjusting hiring practices to value lived experience, inviting members of a lived experience cohort to sit on the board of your organization, and ensuring that all staff members have the opportunity to form partner relationships with cohort members.
 8. **Take the time:** partnership, trust, and all of the previously mentioned ideals can take a long time to achieve—but time spent building trust is time well spent. HFO plans to work with our cohort to create a plan for continued partnership, with the understanding that the conclusion of the eight-month cohort period should be a beginning, not an ending.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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Hunger Free Oklahoma works to bring a unified, statewide voice to the issue and solutions surrounding hunger, with a goal to ensure all Oklahomans have access to affordable, nutritious food. Hunger Free Oklahoma holds the core belief that hunger is solvable, unnecessary, and unjust, and it impacts everyone living in Oklahoma.



The Congressional Hunger Center develops, inspires, and connects leaders in the movement to end hunger, and advocates for public policies to create a food-secure world.

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