



REDEFINING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

*Recommendations for Community Co-Design
Policymaking*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Living in poverty stands as a major barrier for individuals accessing the government decision making process, but it is only through direct and meaningful ongoing community engagement that one truly gains an understanding of a communities' experiences, opinions, and needs.

Despite a recent increased commitment to community engagement and poverty reduction by all levels of government, current policies and laws are persistently failing to uphold the human rights and dignity of impoverished and marginalized groups across Canada, and will not be adequate to meet the Government's own goals to reduce poverty by 50% by 2030.

To address community needs and reduce poverty in an equitable, holistic, and sustainable way, there must be better community engagement practices that centre lived experience knowledge in the policy creation process.

This report presents a community co-design approach to policy making, which better aligns with the expectations many community members and advocates have about what the government consultation processes should look like.

Co-design frameworks centre human rights and recognize that people with lived experience are the experts in their experiences and must be foremost centred in policy making and accountability.

Based on the principles of community co-design, as well as the experiences that CWP and the Project Advisory Group members have encountered in numerous government engagements, this report presents six key recommendations for facilitating community co-design policymaking:

1. Greater and immediate support for non-profit and charity organizations and services
2. Shift thinking of community members as participants, to treating community members as partners
3. Undertake extensive research into communities you hope to engage with
4. Set the agenda and team expectations together
5. Ensure the team environment is physically, intellectually, emotionally, and culturally accessible
6. Compensate community partners fairly



INTRODUCTION

Led by a Board of Directors and staff with lived and living experience of poverty, [Canada Without Poverty \(CWP\)](#) is a non-partisan, non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to ending poverty in Canada. Established in 1971 as the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO), CWP has been championing the rights of individuals experiencing poverty and marginalization through research, awareness-building campaigns, human rights activism, public policy development, and building government relations for over 50 years.

About the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

“[The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.”

- United Nations





About This Project

*“This project is a real opportunity to challenge the labelling of people and communities and to use different language which takes into account a human rights lens. We should use this opportunity to challenge language which enforces colonial views and norms and to ensure that in writing this report, we are doing so **with the understanding that people with lived experience of poverty are the real experts.**”*

- Advisory Group Member

CWP applied for Sustainable Development Goals Program Funding in Fall of 2019 with a project aim to strengthen Canada’s ability to meet the SDGs through mapping more effective engagement processes between the Government and lived experience communities across the country. CWP was awarded the grant in January 2021, when Canada was in the middle of the brutal second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After months of carefully re-planning and adjusting project activities to a virtual setting, CWP formed an Advisory Group consisting of individuals and organizations working with and alongside lived experience communities across Canada.

For five months, our Advisory Group discussed how redefining and improving lived experience community consultation can improve the policy and program-design process to ensure that communities gain increased engagement and ownership in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Our project has produced this report, “Redefining the Consultation Process”, as well as the Lived Experience Community 2030 webpage, featuring a virtual map of anti-poverty and lived experience organizations across Canada.

Our Project centres 4 of the 17 SDGs: (1) No Poverty, (2) Zero Hunger, (10) Reduced Inequalities, and (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities. Although these SDGs are ambitious in their aim, they are achievable through a human rights approach that centres and fosters the meaningful engagement of lived experience communities.



About This Report

“People with lived experience are often looked down on and they are often not respected or listened to, in the way that they should be. People are often seen as “less than” when they have, or have had lived experience with poverty.”

- Advisory Group Member

It is only through direct and meaningful ongoing engagement that one truly gains an understanding of a communities' experiences, opinions, and needs. Lived experience engagement is essential for collecting qualitative data to enhance the effectiveness of policy creation and delivery, and ultimately for achieving the SDGs targets.

In planning this report, the first thing our Advisory Group agreed upon was the need for the current consultation process to be re-defined and re-designed. **This report aims to provide better practices through human rights and community co-design frameworks, and recommendations to improve community engagement.** This report provides real examples and quotes from CWP and Project Advisory Group members, grounding our recommendations in our lived experiences in advocacy and government engagement.

This report is not finished, and in a sense, it never will be. The concept of community co-design posits that design processes are ongoing and always have room for improvement. Just as we will highlight that policies and program design should frequently be reviewed and re-evaluated by community members, we acknowledge there can always be improvements to strengthen our report and recommendations.

While this report focuses on Government of Canada community consultation practices, we hope our lessons and recommendations can be utilized by all levels of government, other organizations, or by private companies who seek collaboration with individuals and/or communities with lived experience in poverty.



DEFINITIONS

Lived Experience

For the purposes of this report, lived experience refers to individuals and groups who have experienced or are experiencing living in poverty in Canada.

Lived Experience Expert

This term typically refers to advocates who use their own experiences in poverty to guide their social justice work and activism.

Lived Experience Educator

Similar to a Lived Experience Expert, a Lived Experience Educator uses their own experiences and stories to educate people on the realities, hardships, and systemic barriers of living in poverty, and solutions for addressing and alleviating poverty.

People with lived experience in poverty may choose to use one of the terms defined above, or by other terms. It is necessary and important to allow and empower lived experience individuals to align themselves with terminology and definitions they feel most comfortable with.

Hidden Poverty

Occurs when someone earns above the poverty-line, but does not make enough money to pay for necessities such as rent, adequate food, hydro bills, childcare, or health-related expenses.

Government

For the purposes of this report, we are referring to the Government of Canada.

Engagement

In order to move away from the negative experiences felt by communities who have “consulted” with the government but still felt unheard and unserved, this report will use the word “engagement” in our recommendations to refer to meetings and collaborations between communities and the Government of Canada.

Equity-Seeking Groups

Groups of individuals who have experienced marginalization, discrimination, exclusion, systemic oppression, and/or barriers to adequate standards of living due to their race, nationality, immigration status, religion, sexual and/or gender identity, physical and/or mental abilities, and/or other socioeconomic identities and statuses.



Human Rights

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. All people are **Rights-Holders**, and all government actors are **Duty-Bearers** under legal obligation to uphold human rights.

Human rights also encompass Social, Cultural, and Economic Rights, such as the right to education, to take part in cultural life, the right to safe conditions in the workplace, and political rights such as voting in government elections.

Human rights include, but are not limited to...

- Right to work
- Right to adequate food
- Right to adequate housing
- Right to healthcare
- Right to education
- Right to personal security & privacy
- Right of equal access to justice
- Right to vote

Human Rights Approach

The human rights approach meets the needs of people living in poverty by realizing their human rights. This approach requires government actors, or Duty Bearers to human rights, to recognize the vast experiences of living in poverty, identify groups and communities who are uniquely and/or disproportionately impacted by poverty, and implement decisions that respect the dignity of people.

Systemic Oppression

Occurs when laws and policies create and perpetuate unequal treatment often resulting in lesser standards of living for particular groups. Further, systemic oppression may result in the criminalization of certain social identities and/or statuses, such as excess police surveillance in neighbourhoods with higher proportions of lower-income racialized people.

Community Co-design

Community co-design frameworks aim to reduce hierarchies, elevate the status of lived experience people from participants to partners, and give more agency to community members and advocates during the engagement and decision making process.



1 WHY BETTER CONSULTATION IS NEEDED

“Hope and equal access to decision makers is key to building strong communities and good policy making.”

- Advisory Group Member

It is only through direct and meaningful ongoing community engagement that one truly gains an understanding of a communities’ experiences, opinions, and needs. Many organizations and advocates have been calling on better consultation and community engagement for decades. Despite recent growing commitment to community engagement and poverty reduction by all levels of government, current policies and laws are failing to uphold the human rights and dignity of impoverished and marginalized groups across Canada, and will not be adequate to meet the Government’s own goals to reduce poverty by 50% by 2030.

To address community needs and reduce poverty in an equitable, holistic, and sustainable way, there must be better community engagement practices that centre lived experience knowledge in he policy creation process.

This report focuses on broad engagement practice recommendations and does not directly address the varying and unique needs that Indigenous, racialized, and other marginalized communities require. Communities facing systemic discrimination, exclusion, and other intersecting forms of oppression have called for engagement practices that respect their particular experiences in society, non-colonial worldviews, and accessibility, language, and/or cultural needs.

It is essential to be educated on the history, current realities, and needs of the communities you are hoping to approach and work with. For more resources on engagement with Indigenous, racialized, and/or other equity-seeking communities, please refer to the Bibliography.



Poverty is a Barrier to Decision-Making

*Poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, **as well as the lack of participation in decision-making.***

- United Nations

Poverty **is not** an individual's choice, fault, or inevitable. Poverty is a policy choice, a form of systemic oppression, and is preventable as long as governments uphold the human rights and dignity of all human beings through equitable, holistic, and sustainable policy choices.

It is important to note that poverty rates alone do not adequately capture the scope and realities of poverty. Poverty is experienced differently across socioeconomic and equity-seeking groups, as well as within groups. Hidden poverty is also on the rise. Some people may be earning above the poverty line, but with housing and rent costs in Canada rising faster than wages, people are left without enough money to pay for food, medications, childcare, and often struggle to afford rent every month. Canadian census counts also exclude foreign and migrant workers, and many Indigenous reserves are not adequately enumerated for census data on poverty rates.¹

“People are poor because of systems, not because of anything they have done.”

- Advisory Group Member

Relying on quantitative data for understanding poverty will not provide the complex histories and current realities, nuances, and diversity of experiences of living in poverty that are essential considerations for building equitable and effective poverty reduction strategies. The diversity of experience of poverty further calls for a diversity of community engagement approaches and practices to collect qualitative data.

Overviewing the diverse and intersectional experiences of poverty in Canada is beyond the scope of this report. However, we want to highlight a common experience that all communities in poverty face: **living in poverty creates major barriers to government decision-making.**

¹<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/about-apropos/about-apropos.cfm?Lang=E>



Equity-seeking groups are not only furthest below the poverty-line, they are the furthest away from accessing public servants and politicians who hold decision-making power over the policies that will impact marginalized communities the most.

Many societal, economic, and systemic conditions perpetuate barriers to decision-making:

- **Education systems and employment standards** that disproportionately benefit people from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds
- **Systemic discrimination & oppression** excluding certain groups from decisionmaking processes and positions of power, such as through inequitable hiring practices
- **The criminalization of poverty**, disproportionately affecting Indigenous and racialized people in Canada, which cultivates distrust in government authorities and/or fear of punishment if they share the truth about their living conditions in consultation meetings
- **The burdens of poverty**, such as being a working single parent, that leave people with little time and resources to engage in government consultations
- **Inaccessible government** engagement meetings, such as meetings held during a week day, or that require individuals to travel

“People are working within a system which treats individuals as though they are committing fraud or lack intelligence, when they struggle to complete paperwork and processes which are extremely complex.”

- Advisory Group Member

If lived experience communities are consulted with, but their experiences and recommendations are continuously excluded from the policymaking process, then policy decisions and delivery will never be adequate, and the SDGs will never be achieved in Canada. Communities hold first-hand knowledge of policy failures, unintended consequences, as well as recommendations to improve policies and programs. **This knowledge must be centred in solutions to addressing poverty, and the roadmap to the SDGs.**



2 COMMUNITY CO-DESIGN

There is a common phrase in anti-poverty advocacy in Canada:
“over-consulted and under-delivered”

- Advisory Group Member

There has been an increased commitment by the Government to consult with communities across Canada in policy and program design, especially under the *National Poverty Reduction Strategy and National Housing Strategy*. **However, policies persistently fail to meet community needs and human rights obligations.**

The knowledge and stories shared at consultations are getting lost throughout the policy development process because communities are consulted with once, but then are excluded from the rest of the process and cannot provide continuous feedback to ensure their needs are heard.

During our discussions, the Advisory Group and CWP Board of Directors members raised concerns that Government community consultations are becoming performative, like a consultation meeting is just a box to tick off. Communities and individuals feel detached from the policy outputs and programs that they were asked to consult on. And crucially, the policy outputs are not adequately addressing and remedying the various challenges they are experiencing while living in poverty.

“We went through two years of consultations with public health agents, and researched and compiled a report proposing better practices for understanding the social determinants of health (affordable housing, transportation, hardships and stressors of poverty) and the treatment of mental health in the healthcare system. I even spoke with Ministers to share our work and recommendations. I recently received the provincial government’s official healthcare plan, but none of our recommendations or work was in the plan, there were very few substantial changes. Once again, we were not listened to.”

- Advisory Group Member



How Can the Consultation Process be Improved?

“Co-design” is a participatory approach to design in which community members and stakeholders are equal collaborators in the research, design, delivery, and decision-making process. Models of “co-design” have been practiced for decades in various sectors such as urban planning, technology development, and more recently in public administration.²

A co-design approach to policy making more closely aligns with the expectations many community members and advocates have about what government consultations should look like, and is the model we present in this report to improve the community engagement process.

Scholars developing models of co-design have also introduced the concept of **“empowered participatory governance”**, which are bottom-up or grassroots approaches to governance in which local communities help build practical solutions alongside officials. Communities may also provide input on government budget allocations based on community needs.

These frameworks recognize communities are best suited to identify solutions that will address underlying causes of poverty, such as more affordable housing, equitable training and employment opportunities, and expanding healthcare coverage. Whereas public servants without lived experience are more likely to apply band-aid solutions, such as one-time tax benefits or food bank funding.³

Community co-design requires dismantling classist and colonial ideologies which maintain that quantitative data, academic scholarship, and economics as the most valuable expertise on poverty. **People with lived experience are the experts in their experiences and must be foremost centred in policy making and accountability.** Even if a lived experienced person does not have formal education, they have considerable knowledge about the governing systems and institutions they must navigate everyday to access income support or other resources.

² Rachel Charlotte Smith, Claus Bossen & Anne Marie Kanstrup (2017) Participatory design in an era of participation, *CoDesign*, 13:2, 65-69, DOI: 10.1080/15710882.2017.1310466

³ Institute of Policy Studies (2017). [Mobilising Diverse Community Assets to Meet Social Needs](#).



Community co-design summarized

- Community co-design models **erode hierarchical power structures** between the government and the citizens to give lived experience communities more agency over consultation and policy decision-making.
- Co-design **centres human rights** approaches to policy and decision making, which is essential to uphold Canada's human rights obligations.
- Empowering communities to share their stories and ideas will result in policy decisions that better deliver on community needs. **Communities are experts of their experience.**
- Community co-design recognizes that no project or policy is ever complete, and that **policies must adapt to changing conditions** and circumstances. The challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis have highlighted the gaps and failures of Canada's social security net, and demonstrate that we need more effective and adaptive policies to protect marginalized communities.

Centering Human Rights

While Canada has committed to upholding human rights,⁴ Canada's government institutions, including at the municipal and provincial level, do not fully respect these rights or deliver policies and programs that ensure everyone in Canada is provided with basic necessities and can live a dignified livelihood.

A critical example of this can be seen in a recent report by Maytree, highlighting all Provincial Governments deliver income supports that are below the poverty-line in Canada.⁵ Further, these income supports are clawed back if individuals work or are given monetary gifts, systematically keeping people in poverty by disallowing individuals to earn enough to afford basic necessities or save enough money to transition away from relying on income supports. If these institutions were held accountable to human rights standards, they would receive a failing grade.

"I feel frustrated when I witnesses service users and income support recipients being put down, belittled, and made to feel that they are not entitled to the support they are receiving"

- Advisory Group Member

A Human Rights Approach to poverty reduction and eradication requires the decision maker to recognize poverty as a broader issue than just income, to recognize the vast experiences of living in poverty, identify groups and communities who are uniquely and/or disproportionately impacted by poverty, and implement decisions that respect the dignity of people living in poverty.⁶ **Co-design models centre a human rights framework by centering lived experiences in the policymaking process, and recognizes that communities must have agency over decisions that impact them.**

⁴Government of Canada (2017). [Canada's Human Rights Commitments](#).

⁵Maytree (2021). [Welfare in Canada](#).

⁶CWP (2015). [Human Rights and Poverty Reduction Strategies](#).



An Ongoing Process

The co-design process does not end once the policy is publicly implemented. Co-design models recognize that outcomes may have unintended consequences, shortfalls, or failures. Thus, it is important for the government to continue contact with community members and advocates to receive timely feedback on results and public reception, and make needed revisions to ensure policies and programs are effective.

Further, there are social, economic, and environmental events which might completely alter community needs. We saw and felt this with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the intensifying climate crisis, which required adaptive policies and programs to protect marginalized communities.

Lessons from CERB:

The Canadian Emergency Response Benefit was a quickly available and relatively accessible income support during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the developers of the benefit overlooked how applying for CERB might affect provincial income support. People who received CERB lost eligibility for other income and housing support. Many experienced a clawback in provincial income benefits, with some later being asked to also repay CERB, resulting in many people in Canada seeing a double clawback.

Implementing a community co-design team with lived experience partners in the creation and rollout of CERB and other federal pandemic relief benefits could have resulted in more effective benefits and identified unintended consequences sooner. And crucially, would have prevented the uncertainty, stress, and hardships many CERB and income support recipients have been experiencing since 2020.

Co-Design in Practice

An article by Jakob Trischler, Timo Dietrich, and Sharyn Rundle-Thiele (2019), provides six case studies on public service co-design projects to call for a shift away from expert-driven design towards a human-driven policy design. Their findings highlight how co-design and lived experience-driven policymaking can drive innovative solutions; not only generating new ideas but improving the effectiveness and awareness of how community needs and experiences can be incorporated in future policies and programs.⁷

Envisioning how a co-design team can be created and maintained throughout the policymaking process, especially at provincial and federal levels of government dealing with broader social policy problems, may seem challenging. But through implementing a multi-disciplinary policy making design process which regularly engages and actively listens to community members from planning, to policy design, to delivery, community needs can be centred at every stage of the policy process.

⁷ Jakob Trischler, Timo Dietrich & Sharyn Rundle-Thiele (2019) Co-design: from expert- to user-driven ideas in public service design, *Public Management Review*, 21:11, 1595-1619, DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2019.1619810



Steps for community co-design:

Planning

- Develop understanding of underlying policy problem and what needs to be addressed
- Establish project timeline, setting, capacity, and communication methods
- Research affected communities and invite relevant community partners
- Adjust project to community needs and accessibility

Facilitating Co-Design Teams

- Set the Agenda together
- Establishing emotionally, physically, and culturally accessible team spaces
- Provide fair compensation

Reflecting

- Hold a follow-up meeting to discuss the experiences of the co-design project and what can be improved
- After policy or program has been implemented, ask community members for feedback on policy delivery
- If program is not delivering, make the changes needed based on community feedback



3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING A CO-DESIGN TEAM

This section presents six recommendations for increasing community engagement and improving community engagement practices through the community co-design framework. These recommendations are grounded in the experiences Advisory Group and CWP members have encountered in attending government engagements.

1. Greater and immediate support for non-profit and charity organizations and services
2. Shift thinking of community members as participants, to treating community members as partners
3. Undertake extensive research into communities you hope to engage with
4. Set the agenda and team expectations together
5. Ensure the team environment is physically, intellectually, emotionally, and culturally accessible
6. Compensate community partners fairly



1. Greater and immediate support for non-profit and charity organizations and services

Lived experience experts and educators are commonly found through civil society organizations (CSOs) or community services who work with marginalized people across the country. CSOs bring the voices of marginalized communities to roundtables and engagement sessions, and are important players in government accountability and democracy.

The stories, ideas, and policy recommendations that CSOs bring to meetings are extremely important for policy and take considerable time and research to prepare for the meetings. However, the work of these organizations is not regarded as equally valuable as consultations with the private sector.

“Civil society organizations are asked to do an incredible amount of work for the government with no additional funding. When private contracted agencies are brought in, the budget is huge, yet nonprofits are expected to do the same work with limited funds.”

- Advisory Group Member

Providing immediate, non-stipulated funding support to grassroots community groups and CSOs will allow them greater capacity to attend engagement sessions and participate in community co-design processes to provide their lived experience expertise and aid in effective policy solutions.

Lessons from Quebec:

Civil society organizations based in the province of Quebec receive provincial funding and support to operate. This frees up organizational capacity to focus on advocacy work because less time and resources are allocated to fundraising.

Bilateral agreements with Provincial Governments for increased civil society organization funding, or more direct Federal support for organizations across the country, is essential for improving and increasing lived experience engagement and achieving the SDGs.



2. From Participants to Partners

Fundamental to the community co-design framework is recognizing lived experience community members and advocates as equal partners in the policymaking process and regarding the stories and policy recommendations shared by people as equally valuable to other forms of data and research. Empowering community members who are directly impacted by policy decisions to share their needs, ideas, and critiques will result in policy decisions that better deliver.

Government must shift thinking of community members as participants, to treating community members as partners.

3. Inviting Community Partners

An Advisory Group member shared an experience in which the person leading a consultation meeting had demonstrated a lack of knowledge of the community being consulted, which resulted in a “tone-deaf” conversation. **Thorough research and consideration should go into the selection and invitation of community partners. This will ensure the appropriate representative voices are being considered and avoid unproductive conversations.**

The Tamarack Institute has released a report on “Engaging People with Lived/Living Experience”, in which they have provided an *Assess Your Readiness* tool with questions that organizers can ask themselves to evaluate and reflect on their readiness for engaging with communities.⁸ We recommend referring to this resource when planning the invitation of community partners.

It is important to find a balance of consistent partners, as well as ensuring new voices are being engaged with. This can look like forming a co-design team with lived experience partners who will inform and work on the project from start to finish, while inviting additional lived experience experts and CSOs to provide feedback and input during the process.

The Lived Experience Community project has also produced a virtual map on the CWP website which highlights lived experience and anti-poverty organizations across the country. We encourage the government to refer to this map when expanding their lived experience networks and contacts.

⁸ Tamarack Institute. [Engaging People with Lived/Living Experience](#).



4. Setting Expectations and Agenda Together

“It is really frustrating for people living in poverty to talk to the government or politicians. No one seems to listen.”

- Advisory Group Member

In order to foster a productive and accessible community co-design project, the expectations of the project, partner commitments, meeting agenda, and outputs must be determined by both the government organizers and the community partners.

Our Advisory Groups members have shared many experiences when they were asked unexpected questions by the organizers which were either tone-deaf, or were very complicated to answer and required more thought and preparation to provide a meaningful response. Members expressed feeling “thrown off” by these questions and found it difficult to stay focused, and/or felt uncomfortable for the rest of the meeting.

There is a strong power dynamic in many consultation settings, in which lived experience people feel they are talking to government authorities, and thus have less power. This power dynamic is perpetuated when they are often given a predetermined time for the meeting, are asked predetermined questions, and have little say over the talking points and expectations of the engagement. Facilitating more productive engagements and community co-design processes must begin with breaking down these power structures and imbalances, to build trust with community partners.

People who are Indigenous, racialized, with precarious immigration status, belonging to 2SLGBTQ+ communities, or living with a disability may require specific accommodations or engagement practices due to the systemic discrimination they have experienced from government policy, law, and/or actors such as Service Canada, police officers, or CRA agents. Please refer to our Bibliography for more resources on engagement with equity-seeking communities.



Trust-building between government and marginalized communities is a complex process, but establishing expectations together can be an important first step.

- Be very clear about the intention of engagement, the commitment requirements, and compensation.
 - Is this a one-time meeting? Will they be able to provide feedback after the project is completed? What compensation options are available?
- Allow contribution and involvement even if a community member may not be able to participate in all activities.
- Meeting agendas, times, and setting should be agreed upon by organizers and partners whenever possible.
- Instead of providing predetermined questions, try suggesting some talking points ahead of time, and allow the community partner to present alternate questions as they are the experts and have valuable insight into framing the discussions.
- Try not to assume knowledge-levels of community partners.
- Lived experience qualitative data should all be regarded as equally valuable information in policy creation to other forms of data and research.
- Meeting minutes and notes should be available for review by all partners to ensure information was accurately recorded. Partners should be able to make amendments to any notes related to their participation in the meeting to improve accuracy and representation.
- There should be a follow-up meeting after the launch of the policy or program to discuss successes and failures of the community co-design engagement process in order to continually improve the engagement process.



5. Accessibility and Accommodations

“Meetings are a very colonial way of conducting business. There are other ways to engage with people that are different from the colonial mold, such as key informant interviews, focus groups, and storytelling sessions.”

- Advisory Group Member

The government has done a good job in providing translation and accessibility needs to invited participants. However, we can always improve upon our accessibility, especially when it comes to needs required by people living in poverty.

Increased virtual engagement brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has left people who do not have access to proper working technology and telecommunications out of the conversation. Virtual engagement has also led to unintended barriers when people living in poverty are invited to meetings. Having your camera on in your house can be extremely stressful if you live in conditions that may be considered inadequate or unsafe. Participants must be ensured that there will be no intervention if details about their living conditions are shared in meetings.

There have been various reports and recommendations for improving government consultation accessibility and accommodations, we have included some in our Bibliography. Below are some recommendations that our Advisory Group highlighted in our project meetings.

- **Laptops, tablets, cellphones, and stipends** for internet and phone costs should always be offered in addition to compensation for involvement in the design process.
- **Training and resources** on how to use technology for engagement must be provided.
- **Provide language services** for non-English and French speakers.
- **Allow for alternative spaces and methods for discussion and sharing**, such as focus groups, | story-telling circles. Your research into communities you are engaging with will inform appropriate alternate methods.
- **Plan more in-community engagements** so participants and partners do not have to travel. Or ensure compensation for transportation costs to attend in-person meetings reflect actual local transportation costs as well as travel time.



6. Compensation

“We should provide a range of rates and ways in which people may be compensated. In this way, compensation is of value to the individual. As an example, it is not equitable for all people to be given a McDonald’s gift card when what they need is diapers.”

- Advisory Group Member

The value of lived experience is underappreciated. Having access to firsthand accounts of daily living as a result of policies, or lack of policies, is the most important piece of information in the planning or design of new programs that will serve those communities.

Compensation rates should be determined and agreed upon by both the organizers and the partners.

- Compensation methods and rates may vary, but **must not be below the local living wage**. Compensation can also include: giftcards or other non-cash gifts.
- Ask the community partners **how they want to be compensated**.
- Consider the community partner’s **preparation and travel time in compensation**.
- Compensation should be **exempt from provincial clawbacks** for social assistance and benefit or income support recipients.

“When we get invited to appear as a witness in front of parliamentary bodies and share our stories and the experiences of people living in poverty, we do not get compensated for that time. It can take hours to prepare for those meetings, sometimes weeks of preparation. We have to fundraise just to allow us the capacity to participate in the parliamentary process.”

- CWP member



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Understanding and Engaging Equity-Seeking Groups

Assembly of First Nations & Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: [Towards Justice](#)

Assembly of First Nations: [Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change: [Fact Sheets on Racialized Poverty](#)

Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change: [A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING AND GOOD RELATIONS GOING FORWARD](#)

United Nations: [Consulting Persons with Disabilities](#)

Kia, H., Robinson, M., MacKay, J., & Ross, L. E: [Poverty in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit, and Other Sexual and Gender Minority \(LGBTQ2Sp\) Communities in Canada](#)

Council of Canadians with Disabilities: [Disabling Poverty and Enabling Citizenship: Understanding the Poverty and Exclusion of Canadians with Disabilities](#)

Community Engagement Resources

Tamarack: [ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE](#)

Lived Experience Advisory Council: [Nothing about us without us: Seven principles for leadership and inclusion of people with lived experience of homelessness](#)

Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction: [Social Inclusion Policy](#)

Association Québécoise des Organismes de Coopération Internationale: [D'abord une question de droits](#) (French only)

Chew on This! 2020 Webinar Series: [Meaningful Consultation & Accountability in Addressing Poverty](#)

Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership: [A Guide to Creating a Culture of Inclusion](#)

EndPovertyEdmonton: [First Voice Protocol](#)



Community Co-design

Rachel Charlotte Smith, Claus Bossen & Anne Marie Kanstrup (2017) Participatory design in an era of participation, *CoDesign*, 13:2, 65-69, DOI: 10.1080/15710882.2017.1310466

Jakob Trischler, Timo Dietrich & Sharyn Rundle-Thiele (2019) Co-design: from expert- to user-driven ideas in public service design, *Public Management Review*, 21:11, 1595-1619, DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2019.1619810

Institute of Policy Studies (2017). [Mobilising Diverse Community Assets to Meet Social Needs](#)

Human Rights Resources

Canada Without Poverty: [Human Rights and Poverty Reduction Strategies](#)

Government of Canada: [Advancing Human Rights](#)

The United Nations: [The Human Rights Based](#)

Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations: [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development](#)

Government of Canada: [Towards Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy](#)

The United Nations: [Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

Know of a resource we should include? Contact us at info@cwp-csp.ca. We update our resources on our webpage.

Visit our **Lived Experience Community 2030** Webpage for a virtual map of anti-poverty and lived experience organizations across Canada, and to learn more about this project!