

# How Can Funders Support Child Welfare Researchers in Meaningfully Engaging Lived Expertise?

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Meaningfully engaging individuals with lived experience and lived expertise in high-quality research requires significant determination, time, funding, and flexibility. As such, it can be challenging for researchers to do this well while balancing concerns related to budgeting, scientific rigor, and traditional metrics used to assess successful projects and careers. However, funders are uniquely positioned to influence longstanding incentive structures and how researchers engage with and value lived experience expertise. Below is a summary of the actions funders can take to support researchers in meaningful engagement of lived expertise in high-quality research.

See the full brief for elaboration on these points, as well as examples, references, and resources.

## Reshape power dynamics

- Prompt researchers to establish and attend to power dynamics among researchers and lived experience experts.
- Provide clarity regarding power dynamics among funders and grantees.

## Rethink budgets

- Outline equitable compensation procedures and rates.
- Offer overall budget flexibility.
- Fund (and require) continuous quality improvement processes.

## Minimize the potential for tokenism & promoting co-design

- Require applicants/grantees to articulate how they intend to partner meaningfully with lived experience experts.
- Prompt researchers to develop plans to meaningfully engage experts with lived experience throughout the entire scientific process.

## Reimagine timelines

- Allow (and anticipate) flexible and extended timelines.
- Invest in planning, relationship building, and other early-stage processes that ideally should occur before the primary research grants are obtained.

## Promote diversity in lived experience

- Ensure that researchers meaningfully incorporate lived experience expertise from experts of diverse and marginalized backgrounds, identities, and experiences.
- Expand the pool of lived experience experts.

## Model change

- Solicit feedback from grantees about whether the grant application and administration processes were conducive to meaningful involvement of lived experience expertise.
- Include lived experience experts in funding organization operations.
- Publicize commitments to consistently funding and valuing lived expertise in research.
- Fund diverse and first-time grantees.