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matter

"Backbone collective has given me a voice which is so empowering when you are in PTSD and at last I am feeling validated. I feel like we are now getting listened to."

Getting it Right

A guide for government agencies working with specialist organisations to gather victim-survivor feedback.

2023

This guide has been prepared by The Backbone Collective with input from Shama; Supporting Ethnic Women, Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura; Outing Violence, Debbie Hager - disability advocate, HELP Auckland.

You are welcome to share this guide with the people you work with.

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Rationale for engaging specialist organisations to gather victim-survivor feedback

To gather lived experience insights from victim-survivors of violence, best practice includes:

- **Safety:** ensuring consultations do not cause further harm.
- **Accountability:** ensuring consultation and associated findings result in necessary policy or practice changes.

Gathering victim-survivor insights requires a specialist organisation to:

1. **Access victim-survivors to participate**
2. **Be mindful and responsive to victim-survivor needs regarding;**
 - privacy, confidentiality and safety
 - trauma responses
 - preferred ways of providing feedback (anonymously, individually etc.)
 - improved victim-survivor self-confidence and empowerment as a result of participation
 - being able to make a difference to the system responses for the benefit of others.

Victim-survivors of family and sexual violence come from a range of backgrounds and experiences. There is no one size fits all victim-survivor engagement method or organisation. For victim-survivors without funded specialist responses and support, additional care must be taken to ensure no harm is done to them when collecting or reporting their feedback.



The following list outlines what government agencies need to consider and actions they should take.

Be prepared – actions to take before contacting a specialist organisation

- **Are you aware of existing research?** Victim-survivors (and organisations that support them) are repeatedly asked for input, and too often this does not result in action. If the evidence already exists, there may be less value in asking again. Robust literature reviews of NZ material, including grey literature such as reports and submissions, may uncover information you need, or help you target more specific questions.
- **Have a clear plan about the purpose of the project** and include an outline of what you want to engage on, why and when. Share this with the specialist victim-survivor organisation(s) you wish to engage.
- **Ensure timeframes allow the time needed** to facilitate victim-survivor engagement.¹
- **Build extra time into your project** to allow for contract negotiation and scoping up of the project with external providers (specialist organisations).²
- **Ensure you have organisational support** from your leadership team. This will provide a layer of certainty and confidence regarding the proposed consultation project for specialist organisations you contact.
- **Check with all relevant teams and other government agencies** to see if they have current overlapping projects and consider sharing reports or insights where practical.
- **Establish what budget is available to support engagement prior to contacting outside organisations.** Ensure the budget is appropriate for organisations to be able to fund their work. Be aware that gaps in specialist violence response services mean gathering input for under-served communities requires more care, resource, time and may require that a specialist group of individuals is convened to undertake a particular project.

¹ Projects that want to include the voice of victim-survivors should allow two to six months. Length of time will vary depending on how the engagement will happen. Discuss this with the organisations before contracting begins.

² It can take a significant amount of time (one to two months) for both parties to get outputs agreed, contracts finalised and invoicing schedules set up and authorised, both internally and with external providers.

- **Think carefully about the victim-survivors you want to hear from.** Are there particular groups who will be impacted by your project e.g. Māori, Pasifika people, disabled people, Takatāpui and Rainbow people, children, migrant women, rural communities, male victim-survivors. Some victim-survivor populations are more impacted by family and sexual violence than others and there are particular dynamics that mean violence and abuse tactics might be different and the impacts felt in varying ways. It is important to apply an intersectional lens to your project.
- **No single victim-survivor organisation can gather experiences and feedback from victim-survivors from all backgrounds or ranges of experiences. Therefore, you will need to consider approaching numerous organisations.** However, not all organisations who support particular population groups have specialist skills working with victim-survivors of family and sexual violence. It may be necessary for you to spend some time establishing who the specialists are in a particular sector who understand the intersection of family and sexual violence *and* the specific community they work with. Therefore, you will need to approach specialist organisations and ask them to demonstrate their knowledge and skill regarding family and sexual violence, ask if their client group would be impacted by your project and if they would be prepared to assist you in gathering victim-survivor feedback.
- **Prepare a summary that identifies and explains any limitations and risks that might impact on how the project can positively respond to the victim-survivor feedback you receive.** For example, consider how you will manage feedback that is in opposition to your project, is out of the scope of your project or raises issues not directly related to your project but may impact on it. Have information ready to share with the specialist organisation(s) you work with to explain how you will respond to any limitations.

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Be prepared for timeframes, deadlines and budgets to change based on advice received.

Initial discussion

- Contact relevant specialist organisations and ask to discuss your project.
- Offer an initial hourly rate for discussions about your project and the preparation of a proposal.³
- Ensure transparent communication, including explaining the political drivers and timelines that sit over the project and may be beyond your control.
- Jointly agree an approach⁴ that includes:
 - **Type of engagement** – understand there are a range of ways that victim-survivor feedback can be gathered but not all feedback options are possible if there are budget or timeframe constraints. Accept guidance from specialist organisations regarding consultation with victim-survivors.
 - **Timeframes and Deadlines** – be upfront – if you have a short timeframe it is better to be able to shape something for that timeframe than rush and risk quality or place unacceptable expectations on the specialist organisation you are working with.

³ The amount of time required will depend on the size of the project to be scoped.

⁴ Understand that this could take time. The provider may need to plan details and liaise with others.

- **Budget** – be upfront – do not waste specialist organisations’ time asking for a proposal for a large-scale engagement project if you do not have the budget to support that.
 - Develop funding processes that are straightforward for specialist organisations, agreed inside your procurement teams before the work is undertaken, and ensure payment is made promptly afterwards.
 - Accept the proposed rates given by the specialist organisation to facilitate victim-survivor engagement on your project. Most organisations hiring independent contractors to undertake this work will need to charge between \$150.00 - \$200.00 per hour⁵ to cover contractor fees and organisational overheads.
 - Include a budget for koha for victim-survivor participants and be guided by the specialist organisation as to how much and how this koha will be passed on to participants.
 - Consider the barriers or risks that victims may face (transport support, interpreting service, child minding, etc) and include costs to address these in budgets.
- **Data sovereignty** - prior to project commencement, initiate a conversation with the specialist organisation undertaking victim-survivor engagement for you regarding key issues relating to data ownership, analysis and use.

In particular, how data and insights regarding Māori will be used to advance Māori aspirations for collective and individual wellbeing. It is vital that particular populations (who are already marginalised and under resourced), are able to determine how their data will be used to advance their aspirations (including ethnic, Pasifika, disabled and Takatāpui and Rainbow people).

- **Outcomes** - provide sound information to the specialist organisation to share with participants detailing how the victim-survivor feedback will be used and what follow up activities will be available. Ensuring that consultation is meaningful for victim-survivors and does not compound the trauma of the abuse by mirroring power dynamics or silencing the victim-survivor, requires government agencies to use survivor feedback with integrity. For example:
 - In your reports, always include the recommendations that survivors provide.
 - Give victim-survivors decision making control over how their information is used and how their participation is managed.
 - Ensure victim-survivors know they are seen, heard and that they count.

⁵ At 2023 rates.

Transparency and ownership of feedback

- Victim-survivors usually want to share their feedback with an independent organisation rather than with government agencies directly.
- External specialist organisations will gather feedback and present it to you in a way that removes identifying detail but still delivers impact.
- Specialist organisations will be kaitiaki (guardians) of the victim-survivor feedback.
- Due to the lack of trust that external organisations and victim-survivors have with government agencies, it is unlikely that raw victim-survivor feedback will be shared with you.
- Accept that victim-survivor specialist organisations may need to publish and share victim-survivor feedback or reports in order to share the outcome of the engagement with the people who took part and to provide transparency about what feedback was provided to the government agency.
- Publishing reports about feedback projects helps provide a road map of how well the Government is responding to the insights and lived experience of victim-survivors in pursuit of the vision of Te Aorerekura.

Undertaking the work

- Ensure there are regular opportunities for the specialist organisation(s) to connect with you about the project. Frequency and purpose should be led by the specialist organisation's needs.
- Build hours into the contract costing to accommodate these meetings or updates.
- Ensure any changes to deadlines or other policy work is clearly communicated to the specialist organisation(s) as early as possible.

Following completion

- Acknowledge receipt, review and provide feedback. Ensuring these steps are taken within the first few weeks of the final deliverable being received shows respect for the work completed and provides opportunities for questions and clarifications.
- Thank the specialist organisation formally for the service they have provided you – remember you could not have accessed this feedback without them.
- Provide an update on how the feedback has been used to date and what plans there are to inform future projects.
- Prepare communications suitable to share with victim-survivors to thank them for their participation, acknowledge the value of victim-survivor feedback and state what will happen to their feedback. Include any opportunities for further updates on the project or victim-survivor engagement.
- If limitations of victim-survivor feedback are discussed by the specialist organisation, take action to address those limitations such as, highlighting gaps in victim-survivor feedback in your reports on your project and/or engaging further specialist organisations to gather feedback from different groups of victim-survivors.
- Consider who in your team or across other government agencies could benefit from the victim-survivor input you have received. Take the opportunity to share what you have learned with others working in the family and sexual violence area.

Invite feedback from organisations to improve how you engage

Ask the specialist organisation(s) to provide feedback to you and your team regarding the engagement project and in particular how:

- well you responded to the recommendations from the specialist organisation(s) as to the nature and scope of the engagement project
- well-resourced the project was financially
- easy and timely the payment processes were
- realistic and considerate the timeframes were
- clearly and considerately you communicated your expectations to the specialist organisation(s)
- responsive you were to the victim-survivor feedback they gathered for you
- respected and valued they felt by you during the project
- likely they would be to undertake a victim-survivor engagement for you in the future.



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