Who are the People with Lived Experience Sector?

People with Lived Experience Sector are individuals and families who have gone through mental health challenges, substance use, treatment, or recovery. They have direct experience with these systems in real life.

These individuals understand what works and what does not work. They can help reduce stigma by sharing their experiences and speaking honestly. ROSCs can work with them to make sure services are fair, helpful, and focused on real needs.

How can People with Lived Experience support recovery?

People with lived experience can be strong leaders in recovery. They understand how systems work because they have used them. They can help improve services so they better support others.

To make the biggest impact, people with lived experience and ROSCs can:

- **Use their voice in decisions:** Help plan and improve services based on real-life experience.
- **Improve programs and policies:** Share what helps and what needs to change.
- **Build trust:** Help others feel more comfortable getting support.
- **Reduce stigma:** Share stories that show recovery is possible.
- **Support peer roles:** Encourage and support others in recovery.
- **Connect systems and community:** Help services better understand community needs.
- **Encourage accountability:** Make sure services are truly helping people recover.

How can ROSCs work with People with Lived Experience?

- Include people with lived experience in leadership and decision-making.
- Design programs together based on real recovery experiences.
- Make sure participation is supported and fairly paid when possible.
- Support training and job pathways for peer support roles.
- Use both stories and data to improve services.
- Work with diverse voices to make services fair and inclusive.
- Share decisions and results openly to build trust and improve outcomes.

What is Lived Experience?

- Knowledge and insights gained through direct, personal experiences.
- Often connected to challenges, resilience, and navigating systems.
- Brings unique perspectives not found in data alone.

Why Lived Experience Matters

- Builds trust and credibility
- Promotes equity and inclusion
- Ensures programs are relevant and effective
- Strengthens community relationships

Benefits of Partnering

- Shared decision-making.
- Community ownership of initiatives.
- Improved outcomes through real-world insights.
- Sustainable, long-term impact.

Case Example

- A behavioral health program invited community members with lived experience to co-design outreach. Participation improved program adoption by 40%.

Strategies for Engagement

- Involve the community early in planning.
- Compensate participants fairly (if applicable).
- Use advisory boards and listening sessions.
- Build long-term relationships, not one-offs.

Common Barriers	• Tokenism • Power imbalances • Lack of trust • Limited resources or compensation
Solutions	• Prioritize shared decision-making • Be transparent and accountable • Provide ongoing feedback loops • Build trust over time

Key Takeaways

- Lived experience adds unique, essential insights.
- True partnership requires respect, trust, and fair compensation.
- Engagement leads to stronger, more effective programs.

