

A Guide for Lived Experience Workers

CHALLENGES



Scope of work, boundaries and role-creep

Role-creep occurs when you receive requests of tasks outside your usual duties or your usual working hours. This can be from your manager, other workers, community members and external organisations.

If you find yourself in this situation, you can:

- refer to your Position Description. The Position Description describes the scope and limits of your work. For example, you are not an interpreter or translator for the organisation.
- clarify with your manager what tasks are part of the role and what tasks are outside the role.
- consider discussing with your manager if you think that your role should be updated. For example, you may want to discuss how you can become an accredited interpreter or translator and what it would mean for your current role.

“ There was a time where a community member knocked on my door at 9pm asking when they can make an appointment, so when they know where you live it’s hard.

(Lived Experience Worker)

“ It’s hard to manage high expectations as community see us as people who can bring change. They know we will be more understanding, and at times because they know us, they expect us to perform miracles.

(Lived Experience Worker)

Community understanding of your role

As a Lived Experience Worker, you need to engage with the community. It may be difficult for community members to understand, or to respect, the boundaries of your role: what you can do, what you cannot do, and when you are available to help them. This is particularly difficult if you live in the same area or attend a lot of community gatherings in your private time.

A team of Lived Experience Workers shared with us some of the ways they had used to respond to community requests.



Explaining your role

- “I’m here to help you.”
- “I’m being paid to do this job.”
- “There are other people that can help you too. This is not work that I do alone.”

Outlining what support you can offer

- “I can give advice, help with phone calls, try and make services clearer for you.”

Boundaries set by your organisation

- “I’m only expected to work my set hours.”
- “I’m not to use my personal phone during work hours.”
- “This is a formal job. There are ways that I must behave which are different to as when I’m being your neighbour or your friend.”

The limits of what you can achieve

- “I don’t have more power than you with respect to housing. I will get the same responses that you will get.”
- “I can attend a meeting with you and help you understand better what is happening, but I cannot make the outcome better.”

Other stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or entities that have an interest in, or are affected by, a particular project, organisation, or decision. They can be both internal and external to the organisation, and their interests and influence can vary significantly. Stakeholders typically fall into various categories.

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Board members, executive team, managers, and other workers. Having strategies in place to manage your relationship with internal stakeholders is important. You should be able to set boundaries if you feel that staff or managers are inappropriately using your cultural experiences, knowledge, and language as part of your role. You can do this by:

- explaining when tasks are not in your Position Description and the fact that staff's demands may take you away from what you are meant to do.
- seeking your manager's support to clarify your role to internal stakeholders.
- knowing the appropriate ways to report if you are concerned about staff asking you to do tasks outside your Position Description. For example, it may not be appropriate to send an email to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) about your concerns. Check first with your manager.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

In your role you may be in touch with people outside your organisation. These are your external stakeholders.

Because you have good connections and knowledge of communities, you are seen as an 'entry point'. As a result, some organisations may want to work with you and ask you to help them to achieve their diversity goals, recruit for consultations, promote projects, etc. You should always check with your manager before engaging with other organisations.

To manage your relationships with other organisations you should:

- inform your manager, so you can be aware of any existing relationship within these organisations.
- ensure that you do not immediately accept any requests of tasks or projects from other organisations before consulting your manager.
- clearly explain your role to external stakeholders and how can you support other organisations.
- discuss with you manager if there is any capacity in your role to engage in external meetings/projects run by other organisations.

