MindBank™

LIVED-EXPERIENCE INTEGRATION STANDARD

How lived experience *gets built in.*

The lifecycle, the selection method, and what MindBank commits to at each stage

A project and social enterprise of

ElevateHER Mental Health Support Services Canada

Version 1.1 · October 2026 · Companion to the MindBank Operating Framework
Scheduled review: on completion of the first commission cycle, or by 31 October 2027, whichever is sooner
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1. Purpose and scope

This Standard defines how MindBank integrates people with lived experience into its work, and how it selects who is invited to contribute. It applies to every commission cycle — each themed collection, commissioned focus group, program development, and training build — and is assessed at the close of each cycle.

The lifecycle structure below is adapted from the **FCDO Programme Operating Framework**, as applied to lived-experience engagement in *Engaging People With Lived Experience: Programme Lifecycle Handbook*, funded by UK International Development and developed in partnership with Survivor Alliance. MindBank adopts the structure; the obligations are MindBank's own.

2. The four-stage standard

Stage 1 — Definition and design. No commission cycle opens until its scope, themes, formats, and contributor budget have been reviewed by at least two paid lived-experience reviewers *before* the scope is fixed. Reviewers are drawn from contributors who have already published with MindBank (§3.7). Their review is documented, including where their input changed the scope and where it did not, and why. Reviewers are paid at Compensation Policy Stage 3 advisory rates.

Stage 2 — Mobilisation. No contributor is invited until the systems they will encounter are operational and tested: contributor agreement, consent record, payment method on file, named point of contact, escalation route, and clinical reviewer availability. Payment timing is stated in writing before work begins. A readiness check is completed and recorded for each cycle.

Stage 3 — Delivery. Contributors receive documented feedback on how their contribution was used, including licensing and organisational access. Scope changes trigger renegotiation of compensation, not absorption. Engagement strain — expanding requests without expanding pay — is logged as an operational risk, not a scheduling problem.

Stage 4 — Closure. Each cycle closes with a paid review open to every contributor commissioned into that cycle, covering what the collection produced, what organisations did with it, and what should change next cycle. Contributors choose their format — group, private, or written — at the consent stage, and are paid the same in every case, including where they choose not to take part, so that neither disclosure nor participation carries a financial consequence. A group session runs only where two or more contributors have chosen it. Contributors are told how the cycle ends and what continuing relationship, if any, MindBank will maintain.

The test applied at every stage: Were contributors involved before decisions were fixed? Were they compensated and supported? Did their input produce a visible change? Were structures in place to protect their safety? A "no" is recorded in the cycle review with the reason.

3. Contributor selection: maximum-variance method

MindBank selects contributors to **maximise variation across defined dimensions**, not to fill quotas and not to select for narrative appeal.

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3.1 Dimensions are set before the call opens. Each cycle names in writing the variation dimensions it will select against, drawn from the standing list and limited per §3.3. The standing list is: experience domain; nature of system contact (served well, served poorly, never reached); geography including rural and remote; time elapsed since the experience; age at onset; identity and demographic characteristics; disclosure comfort; and preferred contribution format.

3.2 Selection maximises spread, not representativeness. Invitations are issued to produce the widest defensible spread across the named dimensions. Atypical and outlier experiences are deliberately included, not screened out as unrepresentative.

3.3 Three to four dimensions per cycle; two contributors per level. Dimensions are attributes every contributor holds at once, not slots to be allocated — so a cycle names only three or four of them, and rotates which lead across cycles so the standing list is covered over time rather than all at once. Within each named dimension, no level is held by fewer than two contributors. A single contributor is never invited as the sole holder of a named experience or identity; where a second cannot be reached, the level is recorded as unfilled rather than filled by one person. A dimension can therefore carry no more levels than half the number of contributors commissioned in that cycle.

3.4 "Fit" means an unfilled dimension. Compensation Policy §3.3 Category B declines are issued only where the applicant's dimensions are already filled for the current cycle — never on the basis of how compelling, articulate, or marketable an experience appears. The specific unfilled-dimension rationale is recorded for every decline.

3.5 Unfilled dimensions drive the waitlist. Applicants held under the Call and Waitlist Model are tracked, with consent, against the dimensions they would fill. Unfilled dimensions become the recruitment priority for the next cycle and inform outreach partnerships.

3.6 The variance matrix is published. Each cycle publishes its dimensions, which were filled, and which were not — in aggregate, never identifying individuals. Decline patterns are reviewed against §3.4 of the Compensation Policy for bias.

3.7 Stage 1 review is a progression, not a separate role. Design reviewers are recruited from contributors who have already published with MindBank, and the invitation is offered in rotation rather than concentrated in the same one or two people. Reviewing is therefore a route a contributor can move into, not a higher class of contributor recruited separately. Where a cycle has no eligible published contributors — the first cycle, or a new focus area — MindBank may commission external lived-experience reviewers, and records in the cycle review why the progression route could not be used.

4. What this Standard does not yet do

This Standard is published before it has been run. It sets out what MindBank commits to doing, not a record of what MindBank has already done, and the distinction matters enough to state on the first page rather than bury here.

At publication: no commission cycle has yet been run under this Standard. No Stage 1 design review has taken place. No closure review has taken place. No variance matrix has been published. The first of each will occur in the first commission cycle after publication.

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MindBank contributors also do not currently hold governance authority. Until the Ethics Council is established, lived-experience influence over MindBank's own direction runs through paid Stage 1 review and cycle-close review only.

On the engagement levels described in Mind Australia's Lived Experience Strategy 2026–2030 — Engaged, Informed, Centred, Led — MindBank is at **Engaged, moving toward Informed**. Moving further requires contributors holding decision-making authority over MindBank's direction, not only over their own contributions.

5. Review

This Standard is reviewed on completion of the first commission cycle, or by **31 October 2027**, whichever comes sooner — and thereafter annually, or within 30 days of any situation revealing a gap.

The first review reports publicly, in aggregate: which commitments in Section 2 were met, which were not, and why. Where this Standard was not followed, that is recorded rather than quietly revised out.

Version history. Version 1.1 (October 2026): Annex A clarified that library focus groups run only when specifically funded, and how focus group costs are recovered; the A.1 table heading corrected. Version 1.0 (October 2026): first publication.

Methodology developed by Stephanie Atwood.

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Annex A — Focus Groups

A.1 Two kinds of focus group

MindBank runs focus groups in two modes. They differ in who pays, who sets the question, and what participants are consenting to. Conflating them is the main risk this annex exists to prevent.

	Library focus group *(when funded)*	**Commissioned focus group** *(separate purchase)*
Question set by	MindBank	The organisation, selected by MindBank
Subject	A theme in the sector	The organisation's own practice
Paid for by	MindBank, in advance of revenue	The organisation, before it runs
Primary use	The Voices library	Delivery to the commissioning organisation
Library inclusion	The point — consent taken upfront	A second use under §7.3, consent taken after
Participants told	Findings go to subscribing organisations generally	Findings go to a named organisation

Library focus groups run only when funded. MindBank does not run library focus groups speculatively. A library group runs only where its cost is specifically funded, or where subscribing organisations have identified the theme as a need.

Neither is a subscription inclusion. Subscribers receive completed library focus groups as part of the library. Commissioned work is purchased separately; top-tier subscribers receive a discount and scheduling priority, not a free group.

A.2 Why it is not an annexed fifth stage

A focus group is a single funded engagement, not a commission cycle. Applying all four stages would cost more in the bookends than in the session, failing the proportionality principle the Standard is built on. The annex keeps three things from the Standard — maximum-variance selection (§3), documented feedback, and payment that does not depend on outcome — and replaces the four stages with the three steps below.

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A.3 Rates

Step	Activity	Rate
1	Screening and consent conversation (30 min, with the clinical reviewer)	$60
2	Focus group session (90 min)	$275
3	Findings review — written summary, paid written response invited	$50
	Total per participant, per group	**$385**

Paid within 14 days of each step. Step 3 is paid whether or not the participant responds.

The rate is the same in both modes. A participant is not paid less because MindBank has not yet been paid. Commissioned groups carry a higher price to the buyer; that margin is MindBank's, and does not come from paying participants differently for the same work.

Parity note. $385 is deliberately the same total a written contributor receives across a full cycle ($60 + $225 + $100). A full engagement is paid the same whether it was writing or discussion — MindBank does not price one form of lived-experience contribution above another. State this wherever rates are published, and move the two together at every annual review so the claim stays true.

The session rate also stands on its own benchmark: $275 for 90 minutes is approximately $183 per hour, inside the $200–400 band commercial research pays for health-topic focus groups and well clear of the $42 per hour average found in Canadian lived-experience advisory compensation.

Benchmark position, September 2026. Canadian patient-partner and health-network guidance sits at roughly $25–50 per hour, with published examples as low as $50 for a two-hour focus group. Commercial market research pays $100–200 for a 90-minute consumer group and $200–400 where the topic is health-related. MindBank prices against the commercial benchmark in both modes and states the comparison openly.

A.4 Selection

Maximum-variance selection under Standard §3 applies in full, and applies more naturally here than anywhere else — a focus group is the one place where the spread of people in the room *is* the method.

Three to four dimensions are named per group (§3.3), with a floor of two participants per level; a group of eight can therefore carry no dimension with more than four levels. In commissioned groups the organisation may propose dimensions. **It does not select participants, is not told who was invited or declined, and does not see the recruitment record.**

A.5 Disclosure consent happens at recruitment

A focus group is a group by design, and there is no private version of the session. Consent to be seen and heard by other participants is therefore obtained **before the invitation is accepted**, not after the work. A person who does not want to be identifiable to other participants is offered an individual interview commissioned separately, or held for a future call. This is recorded as a declined invitation with reason, never as a screening failure.

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In commissioned groups, participants are told **which organisation** will receive the findings before they accept, and may decline on that basis alone without explanation.

A.6 Use and consent

Library groups. Library inclusion is the primary purpose and is consented to upfront. Later licensing of findings to a specific named organisation is a second use under Compensation Policy §7.3: fresh consent, additional compensation.

Commissioned groups. Delivery to the commissioning organisation is the primary purpose. Placing findings in the Voices library is a second use requiring separate consent and **$100 per participant**, sought after the group has run and the findings are known — never bundled in advance, because no one can consent to library use of findings that do not yet exist. Participants who decline are not identified to the commissioning organisation, and declining does not affect the findings delivered under the commission.

A.7 Commissioned findings are not edited by the buyer

Where findings concern the commissioning organisation's own practice, the organisation **receives the findings as recorded and holds no approval, amendment, or suppression right**. This is stated in the commissioning agreement before purchase. An organisation unwilling to accept it is not sold a commissioned group.

Participants retain their individual withdrawal rights over their own contributions throughout, per Compensation Policy §7.1.

A.8 Proportionate lifecycle obligations

Before: one paid lived-experience reviewer (not two) reviews the discussion guide before it is fixed, at Stage 1 advisory rates, drawn from published contributors under §3.7.

During: the clinical reviewer is available throughout; any participant may leave at any point and is paid in full.

After: Step 3 replaces the closure review. No separate closure session is held.

A.9 What a group costs, and who carries it

Library group: eight participants at $385 is **$3,080**, plus one design reviewer at $200–400. MindBank carries this cost before any revenue is attached to it, and under Compensation Policy §1.2 it is paid whether or not the findings are used. This is why library groups run only when funded.

Commissioned group: the same $3,080 in participant cost, plus reviewer, plus MindBank's delivery time, recovered in the price to the buyer. Library inclusion of commissioned findings adds up to $800 if all eight participants consent.

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