



OPERATIONAL PROGRAM | VERSION 1.0

National Evidence Collection Program

Participant Recruitment, Engagement and Intelligence Collection Plan 2026–2027

National Lived Experience Commission | June 2026 | Operational Planning Document

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1. Program Purpose and Objectives

The NLEC National Evidence Collection Program is the operational programme through which NLEC builds its primary lived experience evidence base. It translates the commitments made in NLEC's Primary Research and Intelligence Collection Framework into a concrete, time-bound, resourced plan for recruiting participants, gathering evidence and generating the original dataset that will underpin the 2027 National Lived Experience Intelligence Report.

"The question is not whether NLEC has a framework. The question is: how many participants, how, and by when?"

This program answers that question. By 30 April 2027, NLEC will have gathered original lived experience evidence from a minimum of 620 participants across all ten reform domains — making the 2027 Intelligence Report the first edition to be grounded in NLEC-generated primary evidence.

Program objectives:

- Recruit and engage a minimum of 620 lived experience participants across all ten reform domains by 30 April 2027
- Establish five standing Lived Experience Advisory Panels (one per priority domain) by 31 October 2026
- Complete the National Lived Experience Survey with a minimum of 500 responses by 28 February 2027
- Complete a minimum of 60 structured interviews and 20 focus groups by 31 March 2027
- Build a national participant network of at least 1,000 registered lived experience contributors by 30 June 2027
- Establish formal recruitment partnerships with a minimum of 20 sector organisations by 31 December 2026

2. Participant Targets

The following targets represent NLEC's minimum viable evidence base for the 2027 Intelligence Report. They are designed to be achievable within NLEC's current resource constraints while generating a dataset of sufficient scale and diversity to

support credible national intelligence claims.

500+

Survey responses

National Lived Experience Survey

Online and paper-based survey covering all ten reform domains. Minimum 50 responses per domain. Stratified to ensure national geographic coverage and demographic diversity.

- Deadline: 28 February 2027
- Remuneration: \$30 gift card per completion
- Estimated cost: \$15,000–\$25,000 (remuneration + distribution)

60

Structured interviews

In-Depth Lived Experience Interviews

60–90 minute structured interviews with people who have direct experience of specific system failures, reform processes or service interactions. Priority domains: Mental Health, Disability/NDIS, Housing, Social Services.

- Deadline: 31 March 2027
- Remuneration: \$150–\$200 per interview
- Estimated cost: \$9,000–\$12,000 (remuneration only)

20

Focus groups

Lived Experience Focus Groups

Small group deliberative processes (6–10 participants, 2–3 hours). Priority domains: Mental Health, Disability, Child Protection, Justice. Specific groups for First Nations participants (facilitated by First Nations partners), participants with disability and young people.

- Deadline: 31 March 2027
- Remuneration: \$100–\$150 per participant per session
- Estimated cost: \$12,000–\$18,000 (remuneration only)

5

Advisory panels

Lived Experience Advisory Panels

Standing panels of 8–12 members meeting quarterly. Priority domains: Mental Health, Disability/NDIS, Housing/Homelessness, Social Services/Income Support, Family Violence. Panels provide ongoing intelligence and review draft findings.

- First meeting: 31 October 2026
- Remuneration: \$350–\$500 per member per session
- Estimated annual cost: \$28,000–\$48,000 (remuneration, 4 sessions × 5 panels)

40

Co-design interviews

Co-Design Quality Assessment Interviews

Structured interviews with people who have participated in government or institutional co-design processes, assessing quality against NLEC's National Co-Design Standards Framework. Focus: NDIS reform, Housing Plan, Mental Health Workforce Framework.

- Deadline: 30 April 2027
- Remuneration: \$100–\$150 per interview
- Estimated cost: \$4,000–\$6,000 (remuneration only)

3. Recruitment Channels and Partnerships

NLEC’s participant recruitment strategy relies on a combination of direct outreach, sector partnerships and digital channels. The following table sets out the primary recruitment channels and their estimated contribution to the overall participant target:

Channel	Est. Contribution	Lead Time	Key Actions Required
Sector organisation partnerships (LEA, AFDO, AAPW, ACOSS, Homelessness Australia, etc.)	200–300 participants	2–4 months to activate	Sign MOU; provide recruitment materials; agree referral process
NLEC direct digital outreach (website, email list, social media)	100–150 participants	Immediate on launch	Build email list; launch social media; develop participant registration portal
Peer worker and peer support networks (AAPW, state peer networks)	80–120 participants	2–3 months to activate	Partner with AAPW; develop peer worker recruitment pathway
Service provider networks (mental health, disability, housing, community services)	80–120 participants	3–5 months to activate	Develop service provider recruitment kit; train service provider staff
University research partnerships	50–80 participants	4–6 months to activate	Establish research partnerships; access existing participant pools
Community and grassroots outreach (community centres, libraries, online communities)	50–80 participants	3–4 months to activate	Develop community outreach materials; train community connectors
Total	560–850 participants		

4. Program Phases

Phase 1

Foundation and Partnership Building

July – September 2026

Establish the operational infrastructure for the National Evidence Collection Program and activate the first wave of sector partnerships.

Key deliverables:

- Participant registration portal live on nlec.au
- Participant information materials developed (plain English, Easy Read, multiple languages)
- Ethics review submitted and approved for survey and interview programme
- Minimum 10 sector partnership MOUs signed (target: LEA, AFDO, AAPW, ACOSS, Homelessness Australia, Mental Health Australia, PWDA, Carers Australia, National Shelter, NATSILS)
- Survey instrument finalised and tested with lived experience advisers
- Interview and focus group guides finalised
- Research team trained in trauma-informed facilitation

Participant target by end of Phase 1:

- Advisory panel members recruited: 40–60 (5 panels × 8–12 members)
- Participant register: 200+ expressions of interest

Launch the five Lived Experience Advisory Panels and prepare for the national survey launch.

Key deliverables:

- All five advisory panels convened for inaugural meeting by 31 October 2026
- Advisory panel findings from inaugural meetings incorporated into survey design
- National Lived Experience Survey finalised and ready for launch
- Minimum 15 sector partnership MOUs signed
- Participant recruitment materials distributed through all partner channels
- Media and communications plan for survey launch finalised

Participant target by end of Phase 2:

- Advisory panel members active: 40–60
- Participant register: 400+ expressions of interest

Launch the National Lived Experience Survey and conduct the structured interview and focus group programme.

Key deliverables:

- National Lived Experience Survey launched December 2026
- Survey promoted through all partner channels, NLEC digital channels and media
- Structured interview programme commenced January 2027
- Focus group programme commenced January 2027
- Co-design quality assessment interviews commenced February 2027
- Survey closed 28 February 2027 with minimum 500 responses
- All structured interviews and focus groups completed by 31 March 2027

Participant target by end of Phase 3:

- Survey responses: 500+
- Interviews completed: 60
- Focus groups completed: 20 (120–200 participants)
- Co-design interviews: 30 of 40 completed

Complete data collection, conduct analysis and produce the 2027 National Lived Experience Intelligence Report.

Key deliverables:

- All co-design quality assessment interviews completed by 30 April 2027
- Quantitative analysis of survey data completed by 30 April 2027
- Qualitative analysis of interviews and focus groups completed by 30 April 2027
- Draft 2027 Intelligence Report completed by 15 May 2027
- Advisory panel review of draft report: May 2027
- Legal review completed: May 2027
- Board approval: late May 2027
- 2027 Intelligence Report published: June 2027

Participant target by end of Phase 4:

- Total participants: 620+
- Participant register: 1,000+ for future research

5. Milestone Tracker

31 Aug 2026 10 Sector MOUs signed	31 Oct 2026 5 Advisory panels launched	1 Dec 2026 Survey National survey live	28 Feb 2027 500+ Survey responses
31 Mar 2027 60 Interviews complete	31 Mar 2027 20 Focus groups complete	30 Apr 2027 620+ Total participants	June 2027 Report 2027 Intelligence Report published

6. Participant Experience Design

NLEC’s participant experience is designed to be dignified, accessible, safe and genuinely valued. The following principles guide every participant interaction:

- **First contact:** Every person who registers interest in participating receives a personal response within 5 business days, explaining what participation involves, what they will be paid, and how their contribution will be used
- **Informed consent:** Consent is obtained through a clear, plain-English consent process. Participants are told they can withdraw at any time without consequence and without affecting their remuneration for completed activities
- **Trauma-informed facilitation:** All interviews and focus groups are facilitated using trauma-informed principles. Facilitators are trained to recognise and respond to distress. Participants are provided with support resources before, during and after participation
- **Feedback loop:** Every participant receives a summary of how their contribution was used in NLEC’s publications. Participants are invited to review draft findings before publication
- **Ongoing relationship:** Participants who wish to remain connected to NLEC are invited to join the NLEC participant network, through which they receive updates on NLEC’s publications, reform priorities and future research opportunities
- **Recognition:** NLEC acknowledges the contribution of participants in all publications. Participants may choose to be acknowledged by name or anonymously

7. Diversity and Inclusion Targets

NLEC’s evidence base is only as strong as its diversity. The following minimum diversity targets apply to the 2027 intelligence collection programme:

Diversity Dimension	Minimum Target	Recruitment Strategy
Geographic coverage	Participants from all states and territories; minimum 20% from regional, rural or remote areas	Partner with regional service providers; offer remote participation options; paper survey for low-digital-access areas

Diversity Dimension	Minimum Target	Recruitment Strategy
First Nations identity	Minimum 10% of participants identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	Partner with First Nations organisations; First Nations-led focus groups; culturally safe recruitment materials
Disability	Minimum 40% of participants identify as having a disability or chronic health condition	Partner with disability organisations; accessible survey design; Easy Read materials; support for participation
Gender	Minimum 40% women; minimum 5% non-binary or gender diverse	Targeted outreach through women's services and LGBTIQA+ networks
Age	Minimum 15% aged 16–25; minimum 15% aged 65+	Partner with youth services and aged care organisations; age-appropriate recruitment materials
Cultural and linguistic diversity	Minimum 15% from CALD backgrounds	Translated materials; CALD community organisation partnerships; bilingual facilitators for focus groups
Socioeconomic disadvantage	Minimum 50% of participants currently or recently receiving income support	Partner with income support advocacy organisations; community centre outreach; remuneration designed to be accessible

8. Budget and Resource Plan

The following budget covers participant remuneration and direct program costs for the 2026–2027 intelligence collection programme. It does not include NLEC staff time, which is covered by core operations funding.

Item	Low Estimate	High Estimate
National Survey — participant remuneration (500 × \$30)	\$15,000	\$15,000
National Survey — platform, distribution and accessibility	\$5,000	\$10,000
Structured interviews — remuneration (60 × \$150–\$200)	\$9,000	\$12,000
Focus groups — remuneration (20 groups × 8 participants × \$125 avg)	\$20,000	\$24,000
Advisory panels — remuneration (5 panels × 10 members × 4 sessions × \$425 avg)	\$85,000	\$100,000
Co-design assessment interviews — remuneration (40 × \$125 avg)	\$5,000	\$6,000
Travel and accessibility support for participants	\$8,000	\$15,000
Translation and interpreting services	\$5,000	\$10,000
Ethics review and compliance	\$3,000	\$6,000
Participant recruitment materials and communications	\$5,000	\$10,000
Data management and analysis software	\$3,000	\$6,000
Research team training (trauma-informed, cultural safety)	\$4,000	\$8,000
Total Program Budget (excl. staff time)	\$167,000	\$222,000

The advisory panel remuneration (\$85,000–\$100,000) represents the largest single cost item. This reflects NLEC's commitment to fair remuneration as a non-negotiable ethical standard. Panels provide ongoing intelligence throughout the year, not merely a single data point — making them the highest-value investment in the programme. Funders seeking to support a specific component of the programme are invited to discuss targeted funding for advisory panel operations.

9. Partnership Activation Plan

The following organisations are NLEC's priority partnership targets for the National Evidence Collection Program. Partnerships are sought for participant recruitment, not for editorial control of findings.

Organisation	Partnership Type	Recruitment Contribution	Priority
Lived Experience Australia (LEA)	Recruitment partner + advisory	Mental health participants; peer worker network	Tier 1
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)	Recruitment partner	Disability and NDIS participants	Tier 1
Australian Association of Peer Workers (AAPW)	Recruitment partner	Peer worker participants; mental health network	Tier 1
Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)	Recruitment partner	Income support and social services participants	Tier 1
Homelessness Australia	Recruitment partner	Housing and homelessness participants	Tier 1
People with Disability Australia (PWDA)	Recruitment partner	Disability participants; rights-based perspective	Tier 1
National Shelter	Recruitment partner	Housing participants; tenant networks	Tier 2
Carers Australia	Recruitment partner	Carer participants across multiple domains	Tier 2
Mental Health Australia	Recruitment partner	Mental health participants; sector network	Tier 2
NATSILS (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services)	Recruitment partner	First Nations participants; justice domain	Tier 2
CREATE Foundation	Recruitment partner	Care-experienced young people	Tier 2
Universities (ANU, Melbourne, UNSW, Flinders)	Research partner + recruitment	Research capacity; participant pools; HREC access	Tier 2

10. Risk and Mitigation

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Insufficient survey responses (below 500)	Medium	High	Multiple recruitment channels; incentive structure; partner distribution; extend survey period if needed
Participant dropout from advisory panels	Medium	Medium	Waitlist for each panel; flexible participation options; strong participant experience design
Ethics review delays	Low	High	Submit ethics applications by August 2026; develop university research partnerships for HREC access
Sector partnership activation slower than planned	Medium	Medium	Begin partnership outreach immediately; prioritise Tier 1 partners; develop self-service recruitment kit
Insufficient diversity in participant pool	Medium	High	Diversity targets monitored monthly; targeted outreach activated if targets not on track by January 2027
Participant distress during research	Low	High	Trauma-informed facilitation; support resources provided; facilitator training; clear withdrawal protocols
Funding shortfall for participant remuneration	Medium	High	Prioritise advisory panel funding; scale survey and interview programme to available resources; seek targeted funding for remuneration

620 participants. 10 domains. One dataset. One report.

By June 2027, NLEC will have gathered original lived experience evidence from more than 620 Australians who have navigated the systems this country built to serve them. That evidence will be published, publicly available and directed at the people with the power to change those systems.

That is what it means to build national evidence infrastructure.

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