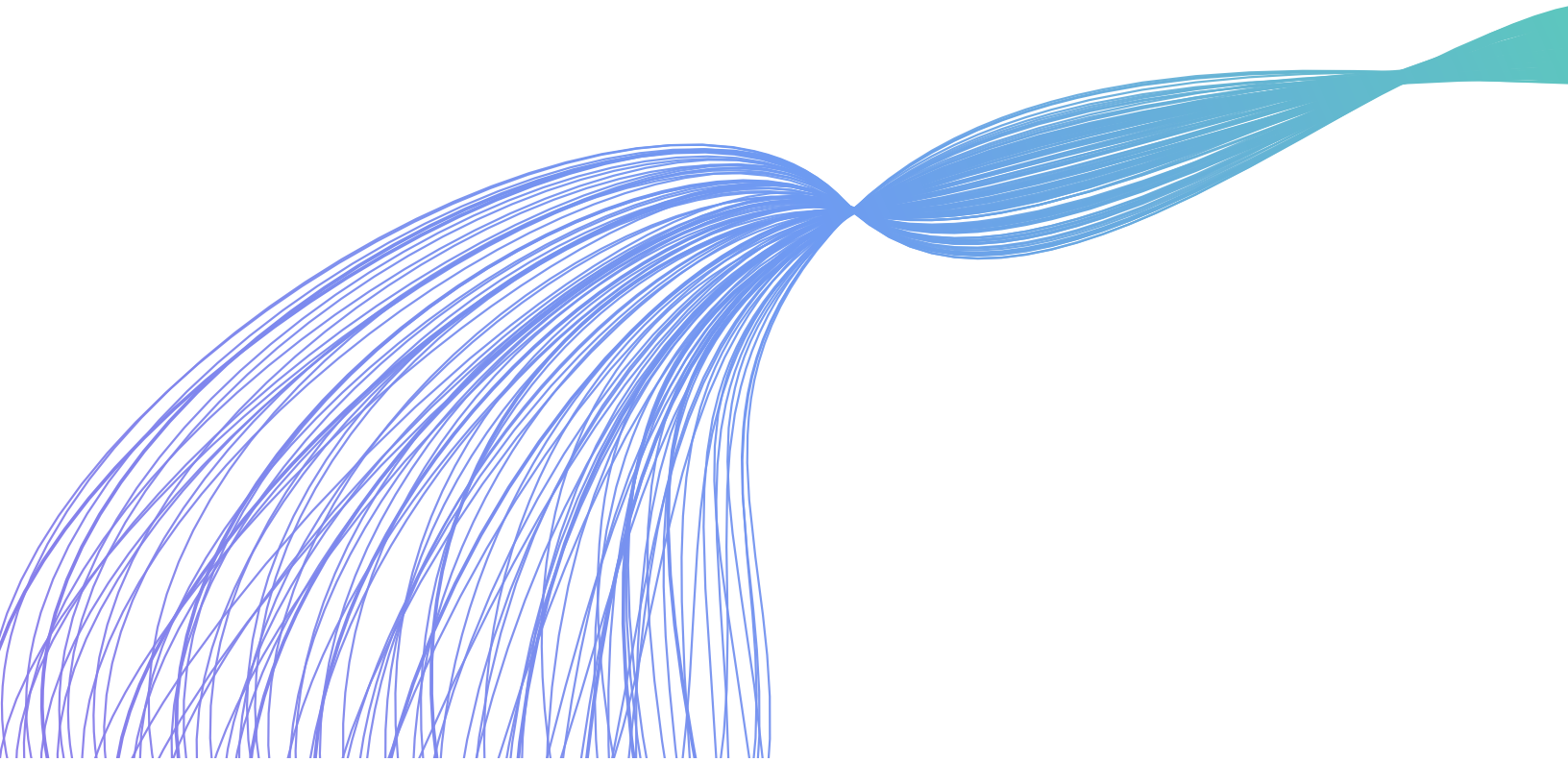
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WHITE PAPER · NOVEMBER 2026

Built With Us: From Voice to Vote in Human Services AI

Reimagining Human Services Through Real Co-Design

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People who live the outcomes should hold the vote

People with lived experience should hold real decision-making authority over the systems and AI tools that shape their lives. Consultation alone leaves the most important decisions with people furthest from their consequences.

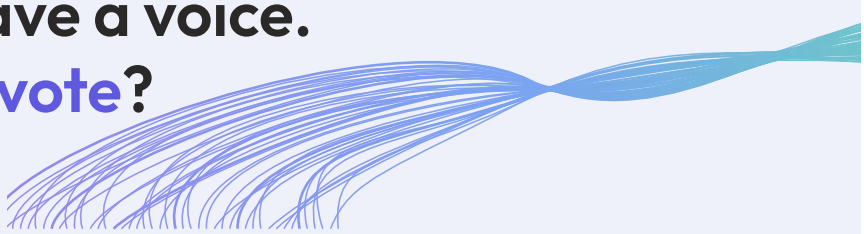
This applies to everyone public systems serve and everyone who works inside them. Youth, parents, families, system professionals and community partners each see a different part of the problem. Those who live the outcomes should hold the vote, and those who carry the work should share their power to make that real.

Public systems are adding AI now, so the rules being set today will shape the next generation of care. AIEYU offers two connected tools for changing who decides:

- **The Continuous Community Co-Design Model** keeps the community involved through four repeating stages: Look, Listen & Learn; Co-Design; Build; and Reskill, Train & Hire.
- **The 4P's Framework** asks every leader to examine their Proximity, Power, Platform and Position.

This paper explains both, shows what they change in practice, and recommends specific actions for system leaders, technology vendors and funders.

Your families have a voice. Do they have a vote?



4 stages

The Continuous Community Co-Design Model

4 lenses

The 4P's Framework for anyone who holds a seat

5 levels

The Voice-to-Vote ladder from token to lived-expert led

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THE PROBLEM

Technology is arriving before authority

Human services technology usually reaches the people it affects too late. Communities are asked for their stories early, then asked to test a finished product at the end. The decisions that matter in between are made without them. That pattern creates four costs:

Tools miss real life.

A product designed around system needs may not fit how families and frontline staff actually move through services.

Trust erodes.

Families are asked to rely on tools they had no part in shaping, often at the hardest moments of their lives. Frontline staff lose trust too, so they avoid the system or work around it in ways it was never designed for.

Expertise goes unpaid and unused.

The knowledge closest to the problem stays outside the room where choices are made.

Professionals carry the gaps.

Caseworkers and community partners fill in where systems don't connect, often with tools they had no say in choosing.

WHY NOW

The timing makes this urgent. Executive Order 14359, signed November 13, 2025, launched a federal Fostering the Future initiative. The White House fact sheet describes an online platform for youth and improved state child-welfare data collection. States are also modernizing their child welfare information systems under the federal Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) rule, which replaced the older SACWIS approach in 2016. These multi-year builds will shape how data, workflows and AI support casework for years to come. As modernization moves forward, governance choices are being made now. They should include the people these systems serve.

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THE SPIRIT OF AYLLU

A community bound by mutual care and shared work

Ayllu gives this work its moral center: a community bound by mutual care and shared work. It describes an Andean kinship-based community built on shared responsibility and the belief that people and systems are interconnected. That idea leads AIEYU to two commitments:



Lived experience is the core.

Solutions are co-designed directly by the people who have lived the challenge.



Technology connects.

Digital infrastructure should break down silos and rebuild the connected safety net that defines a true community.

Technology should bring people closer together. It should never be used to distance or simply digitize them.

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WHO WE BUILD WITH

One circle, many seats

Public systems touch a whole circle of people. Everyone in it has a seat, and the people who live the outcomes hold the vote.

LIVE THE OUTCOMES · HOLD DESIGN AUTHORITY



Youth and young adults

Navigating care, transition and independence



Parents and caregivers

Including birth, kinship, foster and adoptive families



Families and community members

Seeking housing, benefits, health and support

CARRY THE WORK · SHARE POWER AND POSITION



System professionals

Including caseworkers, supervisors, trainers and agency leaders



Community partners

Including providers, schools, nonprofits and faith organizations

In this paper, *lived experts* are people with direct experience of a system. *Frontline experts* are the professionals and partners who carry the work every day. Frontline expertise informs design, and lived expertise holds the vote.

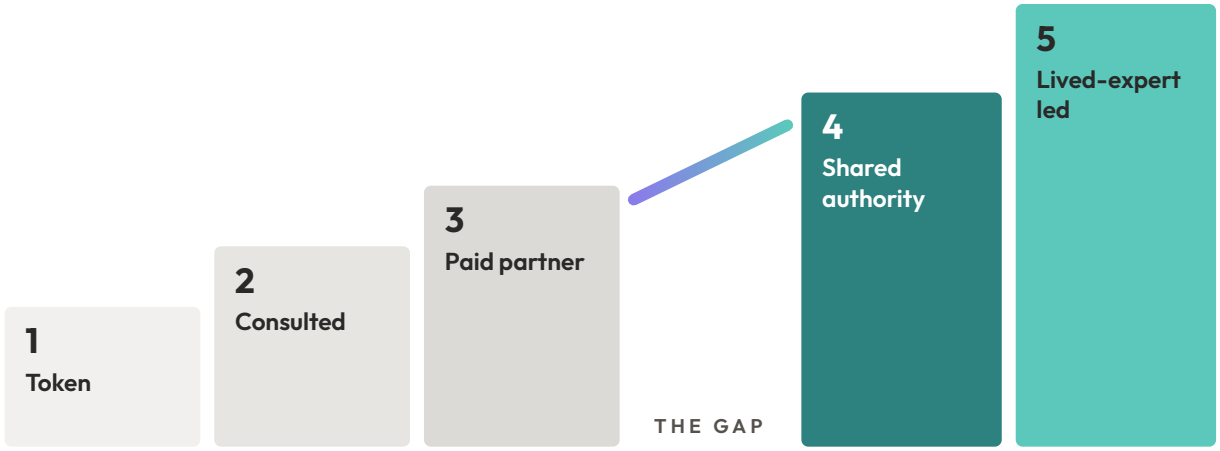
> AIEYU's co-founders bring lived experience of the systems they work to change, including growing up in foster care, serving as a kinship caregiver, and decades of frontline service in child welfare and human services. They pair that experience with more than 20 years of building data, AI and decision systems in settings ranging from Fortune 500 companies to the U.S. Department of Defense. Together, they build for the systems they know, serve and seek to improve. AIEYU's work now reaches every family, professional and community partner that public systems touch.

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FROM VOICE TO VOTE

Being heard is not the same as holding power

Being heard is not the same as holding power. The critical gap sits between paying someone as a partner and giving them authority over a decision.



1. **Token:** A seat or a story, with no say in what happens next.
2. **Consulted:** Input is requested after the plan is drafted.
3. **Paid partner:** Expertise is paid for, and the final call sits elsewhere.
4. **Shared authority:** Lived experts hold votes and sign-off on defined decisions.
5. **Lived-expert led:** Lived experts set the agenda and oversee AI tools.

Co-creation begins at Level 4. Crossing from Level 3 requires a structural change, because better listening alone leaves the final decision in the same hands.

Dimension	Consultation	Co-creation
Role	Share your story	Co-own the decision
Timing	After the plan is drafted	From defining the problem
Pay	Unpaid or a token stipend	Consultant rates, budgeted
Power	Comment and advise	Vote, sign off, veto
Systems and AI	Tested as end users	Govern requirements and AI tools

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THE CONTINUOUS COMMUNITY CO-DESIGN MODEL

Community stays at the center of a loop that keeps repeating

The model keeps the community involved at every stage, so authority never ends at a listening session. Each stage is activated by one of the 4P's and states who decides.

1. Look, Listen & Learn

Proximity

Community decides which problems the work addresses.

2. Co-Design

Power

Paid lived experts review each design iteration.

3. Build

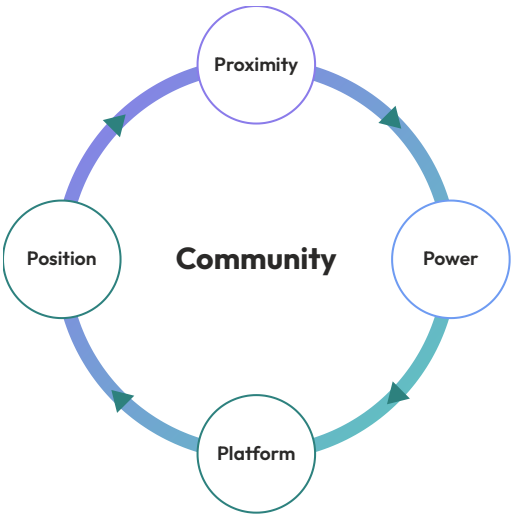
Platform

Lived experts co-write AI knowledge and sign off.

4. Reskill, Train & Hire

Position

Participation becomes a pathway into paid roles.



The final stage feeds the first. New staff and community leaders bring what they learn back into the next round of listening, so the work keeps improving and the community keeps its place at the center.

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THE 4P'S FRAMEWORK

Four questions for anyone who holds a seat

The 4P's turn co-design into a personal leadership practice. Each one asks anyone in a system to examine what they hold and how they use it.

Proximity

How close are you to the people your work impacts?

Listen without ego, design with people, and honor lived experience as data, wisdom and compass.

Model stage: Look, Listen & Learn

Power

How are you using your influence?

Move from control to collaboration, and share power with those closest to the problem.

Model stage: Co-Design

Platform

What voice are you amplifying?

Use your podium, podcast or codebase to lift up people who usually go unheard.

Model stage: Build

Position

Where are you seated, and are you using that seat?

Stay grounded in humility, truth and action, and use your seat to dismantle harm.

Model stage: Reskill, Train & Hire

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TRUST, DATA OWNERSHIP AND HUMAN JUDGMENT

A design decision, made in the open

Trust is a design decision, and security alone can't deliver it. AIEYU has taken a position on four questions:

Who should own the data people share to get help?

They do. Access is theirs to grant.

What does it mean for AI to support judgment?

A human stays the decision-maker in every sensitive moment.

Where should consent live?

At the point of sharing, instead of buried in a policy no one reads.

What separates insight from surveillance?

Insight looks at trends. Surveillance looks at people.

Technology should humanize and never harm. That requires auditing predictive models and data systems for racial and socioeconomic bias, and requiring vendors to be transparent about algorithm design and safeguards.

OUR AI GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

Voice to vote, applied to AI.

AI governance is usually written by experts and explained to the public afterward. AIEYU starts from the other end. The people our tools affect help write the rules, check the results and correct course. We hold ourselves to a gold standard, guided by pioneers such as the EU Artificial Intelligence Act.

PROXIMITY

Governed by the people it touches. A lived-expert group will review each AI tool before release and on a regular schedule after.

POWER

A vote, not a comment. Lived experts will be able to pause, change or retire an AI feature, and a person makes the final call in every sensitive decision.

PLATFORM

Open about how it works. People know when they are using AI, what data it draws on, and where its limits are, in plain language.

POSITION

The highest bar where stakes are highest. Anything touching eligibility, safety or family decisions gets high-risk safeguards, in line with how the EU AI Act treats public benefits. Data belongs to the people who share it.

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WHAT THIS CHANGES IN PRACTICE

We heard. We learned. So we built.

When lived and frontline experience is treated as design authority, the product changes. AIEYU's six products show the pattern.

We heard	We learned	So we built	Who it serves
Youth, families and community members have no single place to turn for housing, benefits or support.	People need one door into the services that already exist.	**U Navigate:** resources in their pocket, without the maze.	Youth, parents, families, community members and system professionals
New and frontline staff learn statutes and practice on the fly, under real caseloads.	Training that happens once a year can't keep up with turnover that happens every month.	**U Lexi:** an always-on partner, on call for real questions.	Families, caregivers and frontline professionals
By the time leadership sees a risk trend, youth, families and frontline staff have been living it for months.	Insight has to reach the people doing the work, along with the people reporting on it.	**U Insight:** predictive and prescriptive analytics for communities, frontline staff and leaders.	Communities, frontline staff and leaders
Leaders make high-stakes decisions across programs that were never designed to work together.	Coordinated action starts with a shared picture across teams and systems.	**U Core:** one shared picture that youth, families, communities and leaders can all see and act on.	Youth, families, communities, agency leaders and cross-system teams
Passive compliance training leaves people to meet their hardest moments for the first time on the job.	People need a safe place to rehearse decisions, coordination and response before lives are affected.	**U Realm:** immersive learning that builds capacity for community and staff together.	Community members, staff and partners learning together
Systems are asked to scale new tools without accounting for staffing limits, training load or data readiness.	Scale follows alignment across policy, funding and workforce readiness.	**U Gauge:** readiness assessments that surface gaps and prepare systems for scale.	Agencies and community partners preparing to scale

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Move from voice to vote

Every leader can start moving from voice to vote with their next committee, contract or grant.

System leaders

- Audit committees, boards and planning teams. Ask whether lived experts are participating or leading.
- Add two or more lived experts with decision-making power to each working group.
- Name which decisions lived experts vote on, and put their authority in writing.
- Write lived-expert roles into RFPs and procurement requirements, from requirements through go-live.

Technology vendors

- Involve youth, families, communities and frontline experts from the start, well before user testing.
- Give lived experts sign-off on how AI tools behave before release.
- Be transparent about algorithm design and safeguards, and audit for bias.
- Place consent at the point of sharing.

Funders

- Require budget lines that pay lived experts as you would any other expert.
- Fund the governance work along with the technology.
- Support pipelines that prepare lived experts for roles in policy, technology, supervision and executive leadership.

Community partners

- Bring the families you serve into planning and governance alongside your own staff.
- Share what you see on the ground with system leaders and technology partners.
- Help build pathways that move community members into paid roles.

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CONCLUSION

Move your system from voice to vote

The question facing human services is who will decide how AI enters people's lives. The best answer includes the people who will live with the results.

Ayllu reminds us that communities have always known how to care for and govern themselves. AIEYU invites youth, parents, families, system professionals, community partners and funders to build that future together. Start with one seat, one decision or one conversation, and move your system from voice to vote.

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Sources

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- Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System final rule, Federal Register, June 2, 2016
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