Best Practices for Community Partner Compensation

Equitable partner compensation is essential for conducting community-based participatory research, which is a collaborative method involving community members, scientists, practitioners, administrators, organizational leaders, and others in all aspects of the research process. This integration of community collaborators as members of the research team strengthens and supports the research design to promote greater and more relevant impact for communities. Community partners range in size, operating budget, mission, and approach. Their experience, expertise, time, and relationships are all extremely valuable. Compensation should be equitable and included in budgets. By equitably compensating community partners, the research process can shift from being done on communities to being done *with* communities.

What Does Equitable Community Partner Compensation Look Like?

- Shift responsibility from patient/participant to health care/research institutions when possible.
- Focus expertise and strengths on communities experiencing marginalization.
- Implement meaningful practices to improve interpersonal and institutional trust.
- Reflect on and dismantle harmful practices within institutions.
- Enact concrete strategies to repair and build authentic relationships with community partners.
- Consider who benefits from the research. How and when do benefits occur? What benefits are meaningful to specific local communities?

Key Recommendations

- Consider establishing an escrow account with available funds (< $5,000) to mitigate any delays in funding partner activities.
- Cocreate institutional best practices to routinize mutually beneficial procedures for the community and your organization.
- Keep the project moving forward with prompt action while adhering to institutional policies and project timeline.
- Appoint an ombudsperson to alleviate any administrative burden on community partners.
- Identify holes in the system with gap analysis.
- Assess immediately actionable vs long-term solutions.
- Mitigate financial burden/risk for academic or research institution and community partners.
- Analyze examples of other institutional processes.
- Reduce time from invoice to payment.
- Define strategies to overcome structural barriers.

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Immediate Action Steps

⭐ Include community partners in pre- and post-award administrative processes:

- Allow for shared decision making from the beginning.
- Recognize their goals and interests.
- Include them in grant writing.
- Provide compensation.

⭐ Be transparent with partners about approval processes and payment timelines:

- Develop a memorandum of understanding.
- Be accessible and responsive to partners.
- Use clear, plain language.

⭐ Outline clear procedures for tracking and managing payments:

- Ensure all partners have shared understanding.
- Track all partners' expenditures respectfully.
- Review paperwork for accuracy prior to submission.

Long-Term Action Steps

⭐ Support community-based organizations in building fiscal and administrative knowledge, skills, and infrastructure:

- Provide training and education to community members.
- Develop community-facing resources such as FAQs and quick reference resource guides to illustrate the payment processes.
- Hire community members as part of the research team.

Requests for CEACR services can be made at https://redcap.link/consultrequest

⭐ Develop flexible infrastructure to deliver timely payments to community partners:

- Include fiscal administrators in development of procedures.
- Consider providing cash advances.

⭐ Embrace equitable power-sharing with community partners

⭐ Apply the principles of partnership when developing administrative processes

Targeted Resources

⭐ Offering Proper Partner Compensation for Community Engaged Research: CEACR Speaker Series June 2022

Guidance and best practices on delivering speedy and equitable compensation for community-based organizations involved in research and public health initiatives.

⭐ AAMC Center for Health Justice: The Principals of Trustworthiness

These 10 Principles of Trustworthiness integrate local perspectives with established precepts of community engagement to guide health care, public health, and other organizations as they work to demonstrate they are worthy of trust.

CEACR Resource Toolkits

CEACR resource toolkits were developed using expert insights and direct feedback from community leaders.

CEACR supports the CEAL mission by serving as a conduit for promising community-engaged practices. CEACR supports NIH-funded research teams who are seeking to apply principles of community engagement to address diversifying research participation, with a specific emphasis on communities traditionally underrepresented in research.

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