# Compensation Guidance

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#### Welcome

###### Welcome to the Compensation Guidance Outline. In this outline, participants will explore proper channels of assessing and developing a sustainable compensation structure. This roadmap will discuss traditional and non-traditional methods of compensation and challenge participants to elevate their approach of collaborating with youth/young adult partners in efforts of creating a more equitable system.

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#### **Lesson 1: Laying the Foundation**

#### Objectives

###### Participants will understand the concept of economic equity and its association to address the issue of youth homelessness.

###### Participants will understand how to conduct economic research in their communities to inform direct practice.

###### Participants will understand how government funding can be spent on YAB expenditures and the benefits of securing unrestricted funding.

##### Economic Equity

Economic equity is a concept or idea of fairness in economics. Policies that enhance economic equity help provide stability for individuals experiencing homelessness, therefore supporting the achievement of “self-sufficiency”.

An essential component of developing a more economically equitable system is paying youth/young adults (YYA) with lived expertise for their input, feedback, effort on any task involving the homeless response system. Adult partners charged with collaborating with youth should ask youth partners what is equitable compensation.

As the older adult partners assesses adequate compensation, the following are some key considerations:

* How do youth partners want to receive payment?
* What is the appropriate frequency of payment?
* How do adult partners ensure youth always have access to their funds at the agreed time?

Older adult partners must work to identify the proper channels to disburse payments to youth partners. This means of disbursement has to be sustainable and reliable. Adult partners should always remain transparent about timelines, challenges, and changes with payment.

Creating a more equitable system

Achieving an economically equitable system can present many challenges for communities. Many communities face power imbalances where people without lived expertise who are currently employed within the system also do not feel valued. This can be viewed as a potential opportunity for coalition building amongst systems staff and youth partners to create change through collective advocacy.

When crafting an approach to economic inequity in your solutions to end youth homelessness, be mindful of how the targeting of specific social identities has impacted this approach. For example, according to the Williams Institute nationally, Black LGBTQ+ people experience poverty at three times the rate of their white cisgender, heterosexual counterparts.[[1]](#footnote-1) Everyone involved in homelessness system response has to be committed to understanding and addressing how an individual’s intersecting identities can create unique experiences of oppression within the systems designed to support them.

##### Understanding the economics of your community

Each community has a unique set of challenges with economics. In order for Continuum of Care bodies to truly understand how these challenges impact youth in your community, it may benefit your Youth Action Board to perform some collaborative research (See Lesson 2).

Allowing youth partners to lead the effort, consider partnering with local organizations to understand salary or hourly wage trends. Assess if any of those organizations currently have systems in place to compensate youth as independent contractors. If the Continuum of Care Board is not in the position to make direct payments to Youth Action Board (YAB) members, consider funneling payments through any partner organizations with current systems in place.

*Be sure to shape an understanding of how race, gender, level of education, LGBTQ+ identity, and age have shaped access to wealth and resources in your community, region, and state.*

In this process, assess if there are any current efforts to increase minimum/livable wage and consider if this could be a potential opportunity for the YAB to advocate around the issue.

Work with the YAB to mitigate any other economic challenges to engagement and develop specific plans to address these challenges with YAB. Consider securing unrestricted funds specifically for YAB’s unique needs such as:

1. Housing access
2. Childcare
3. Food/nutrition
4. Transportation
5. Technology access
6. Understanding taxes

*Note: Usually YAB members are hired as consultants. Organizations are unable to withdraw taxes for consultants but will issue a 1099 tax form to the consultant for them to file. Ensure that YAB members understand how this may impact their annual filing. If you are able to bring in a financial consultant to share some oversight about what YAB members should be mindful of, YAB members may find this helpful.*

##### Government versus Unrestricted Funding

1. Government Funding
   1. XXX (to be filled by CSH)

Unrestricted funds allow for more flexibility in reaching youth/young adults to serve on YAB. Securing this type of support may create more opportunities for innovation and can be utilized to help meet unique needs (childcare, food, or transportation) of YAB members that may not be covered by government funding.

Some examples of unrestricted funding may include:

* Private Donors
  + Individual
  + Groups
* Foundations
* Corporate Sponsorship
* Membership Fees
* Selling Goods and Services
* In-kind Donations
* Fundraising

Many YABs have lofty goals, which is ideal but can be difficult to fund. Unrestricted funds open opportunities for YAB members to be able to do some of that work. Consider supporting YAB members' understanding of grant writing. This tool can be beneficial in the ongoing practice of fundraising. (See [Youth Collaboration 102 Roadmap](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-Youth-Collaboration-102-Roadmap.pdf) for more information on developing grant writing skills for youth with lived expertise)[[2]](#footnote-2).

*Be transparent with YAB members about what is achievable within the confines of current funding but allow them to co-lead any efforts on identifying unrestricted funds.*

Funding technology access is also vital while we all rely heavily on remote interaction but also could be beneficial for supporting youth collaboration in rural areas and for people with disabilities. Communities must work with youth/young adult partners to identify any technological gaps in engagement and actively work to mitigate those. (See Virtual Access & Engagement Roadmap).[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Discussion:**

What is your community’s understanding of economic equity?

What are the current facilitators and barriers to achieving economic equity within your community?

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#### **Lesson 2: Performing Economic Research**

#### Objectives

###### Participants will understand how to develop a survey with youth/young adult partners (YYA)/ Youth Action Board (YAB) to properly assess adequate compensation and potential barriers to engagement.

* *Participants will develop an understanding of working with YYA/YAB partners to monitor economic barriers as they may present themselves.*
* *Participants will understand the importance of developing a continuous quality improvement strategy specifically around compensation for YAB to ensure sustainability.*

##### Survey

Surveying youth/young adults is fairly customary across many different CoCs. This practice allows for older adult partners to develop an understanding of an individual’s experience navigating the system. Oftentimes, when a person hears the word survey, they imagine a form they have to fill out with a list of different questions. Surveying participants can also be viewed as a listening session, creating a consistent feedback loop, or one-off conversations with individuals involved in the process.

When approaching the conversation on adequate wages for a youth with lived expertise, communities should avoid deciding on that number without proper assessment directly involving the people who will be impacted by the decision.

Allow YYA/YAB members to support the development of the survey or feedback loop. Older adult partners are encouraged to allow youth partners to decide the proper channel(s) for surveying and lead the crafting of questions. If not already established, this is an opportunity to begin to develop positive rapport with youth/young adult partners, learn their strengths, and assess any unrecognizable challenges.

Some concepts to absolutely consider assessing include:

* What individuals believe a working wage is in their community?
* What social-economic challenges/barriers does each person have to their participation?
* Are there any special needs assistance requests necessary such as technology, an interpreter, or environmental changes?
* What day(s) of the week/ time(s) of day is ideal for meeting?
* What are some activities outside of meetings that would keep YYA engaged? (See “Emotional Labor” in Lesson 4)

*While allowing YYA to lead, be realistic and transparent about what is/is not feasible early and often. Be sure to create a collaborative environment where you agree on the deadlines/responsibilities and create a follow up/ debrief strategy during the initial planning meeting.*

YYA/YAB should lead distribution as they will be able to identify youth who could be interested in serving on the YAB more long term. Work with youth partners to create a distribution strategy.

Include specific goals on

* Who to reach
* How many to reach
* When to reach them by

Be sure to create a space for mitigating risks throughout the process such as not reaching the goal within the ideal timeframe, not reaching the intended audience, or exceeding goals.

Establish regular check-ins throughout the survey process with major contributors and leverage YYA major contributors as potential inaugural YAB members.

##### Monitor

After establishing wage/economic compensation, older adult partners should work with the YAB to continue monitoring and assessing the overall process.

Older adult partners should encourage YAB to include detailed information about the process to land on current wage within the onboarding process. Include insight about potential growth or any current challenges with addressing economic barriers.

Remember, some challenges can be mitigated by the YAB so support them in creating space to process these, establish a proposal, and present it to the necessary stakeholders.

*Create a collaborative agreement with all stakeholders and ensure that all parties involved understand and agree.*

Monitor/mitigate any challenges as they arise. Be sure that working wages are issued to YAB members in ways that make sense for each person collectively and individually.

Overall, YAB participation may ebb and flow. Establish regular individual check ins with YAB members to ensure everyone is feeling supported and participatory. Work with YAB members to develop a process that will re-engage members who may have divested.

Consider interviewing members who have decided to discontinue participation in an effort to establish an understanding of why they made the decision.

Having a proactive approach to addressing remarkable challenges can help ensure YAB retention. Be sure to have a strategy in place for circumstances such as

* A global pandemic
* Political uprisings
* Inclement weather
* City/municipality challenges

##### Evaluate

At inception, dedicate time and resources to the development of a continuous quality improvement strategy. This strategy will help support sustainability of the YAB by helping institute new goals for compensation as livable wages steadily increase.

Consider working with the YAB to establish an ongoing assessment approach. Performing a yearly continuum wide assessment of economic barriers to engagement could help inform the YAB’s focus and identify facilitators of economic equity.

Ensure that each evaluation/assessment is impartial and objective. Through transparency and collaboration with youth partners, create pathways for growth each year based on findings.

Lastly, share your findings with other stakeholders, organizations, entities. Uplift the impact of the YAB’s efforts and underline the need for authentic youth collaboration at every level within the system.

**Discussion:**

What are the current methods in place to survey or assess feedback from YYA partners?

How have YYA been involved in the development or implementation of surveying/ assessing feedback from other youth?

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#### **Lesson 3: Youth with Lived Expertise Transitioning from Independent Contractor to Full Time Staff**

#### Objectives

###### Participants will understand the necessary steps needed to take in order to set youth partners up for success while developing a collaborative relationship.

* *Participants will understand how to assess organizational policies/ approaches on creating a more equitable and inclusive work environment.*
* *Participants will develop an understanding of the importance of partner education and will be offered some potential approaches to executing this task.*

##### Setting Youth Up for Success

Ensuring youth have adequate professional development leading up to their acceptance of the position is essential to individual and collective success. Professional development should be an essential function of collaboration with the Youth Action Board. Through youth participation in YAB work with specific focus on honing skill set and expertise, YAB members should become qualified employable individuals.

Some considerations for professional development opportunities include:

* Trauma informed approaches
* Motivational interviewing
* Facilitation and public speaking
* Project management
* Budgeting and fundraising
* Stakeholder management

Staff members should approach collaboration with new colleagues with lived expertise the same they would approach any other professional relationship. This means, if there are any specific supports/accommodations in place for people with lived expertise, they should be offered to everyone.

With that being said, the institution of new policy should only be to create a more equitable environment and not to be punitive or reactive to people with lived expertise. Assessing the existence of white supremacy culture characteristics[[4]](#footnote-4) is essential in this work. This requires a commitment to education, awareness, and action on all parties involved.

Ensure that youth with lived expertise understand the differences from any of their previous roles to their current prior to signing a contractual agreement. Some things to consider:

* Does acceptance of a full-time position mean the person is no longer a member of the YAB?
* How does this position impact existing external relationships?
  + Depending on the level of commitment to authentic youth collaboration, the external partner may benefit from specific training on how to be an effective collaborator.
  + Youth/YYA partners should be aware of any potential shift in dynamics from service provider to partner in the work.

##### Creating a more equitable workspace

Creating a more equitable work environment is not only essential to development of authentic youth collaboration but it is necessary in order to effectively eradicate homelessness and housing instability.

Each organization/entity will have it’s on set of challenges with inequity within the workplace. Working with all colleagues on staff is the only effective means of understanding what your internal challenges may be.

Some considerations:

* What is your organization’s/entity’s ongoing commitment to internal and external equity?
* Do you currently have a cross division/program area racial equity team within your organization with a specific work plan focused on internal and external equity strategies? [[5]](#footnote-5)
* Do you currently have racial and LGBTQ+ equity mission and vision?
  + If not, is racial and LGBTQ+ equity a part of your overall mission and vision?
* Has your organization done work on understanding anti-Black racism and its implications on homelessness in your community?
* Is your staff representative of the people who are being served in your community?
* Is your organization/entity producing race neutral bodies of work?[[6]](#footnote-6)
* Are any of your organizational policies currently in place viewed by staff as paternalistic rather than to ensure clarity and promote equity?

Including people with lived expertise is a pivot to make the work we are doing more equitable. This means that getting deliverables accomplished may take more time.

Ensure that your organization/entity is not operating out of urgency to satisfy deliverables, rather operating out of urgency to advance equity.

Non-competition clauses/ conflicts of interest

Prior to being employed full time, many youth experience independent contract work. Moving into full time employment will be a transition that will require a clear understanding of what is proprietary within an organization.

Youth with lived expertise should not only be allowed but encouraged to continue to work as an independent contractor outside of full-time employment. Considering economic equity, many youth with lived expertise are employed with agencies at an entry level. These positions often require young people to seek out supplementary income.

Work as an organization/entity to define conflict of interest. Be sure the organizational policy reflects the agreed approach. Consider making a decision tree for all staff that would help individuals determine whether or not an external task is a conflict of interest or not.

Partner education

Partners need to understand when the transition happens/ how this impacts the relationships

External partners should be notified of position changes when they are official. This practice should be standard across staff and not only reserved for people with lived expertise.

Always consider whether or not an external partner’s relationship is in alignment with your organization’s core values, mission, and vision. Manage external partnerships as you would internal, but do not be afraid to walk away if the approach or objective doesn’t work for all people on staff

**Discussion:**

What are some examples of organizational policies/procedures that do effectively advance/promote equity?

What is your organization’s current commitment to equity?

What challenges/barriers do you see in achieving a more equitable workplace?

#### **Lesson 4: Emotional Labor**

#### Objectives

###### Participants will develop a working knowledge of the concept of emotional labor.

* *Participants will understand the core principles of a healing justice approach.*
* *Participants will be offered some specific means of compensating emotional contributions.*

##### Understanding Emotional Labor

According to the Workplace Emotional Labor and Diversity Lab, “emotional labor refers to regulating or managing emotional expressions with others as a part of one’s professional work role”.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Addressing youth homelessness requires emotional labor from individuals who have lived experience. Discussing these issues can sometimes be viewed as a workplace hazard, particularly for people still currently battling housing instability. This underlines the need to create work environments that are equitable and supportive of overall wellness.

An essential function of avoiding burnout as individuals who invest in this work emotionally is working with YAB to focus on their vision for the future in opposition to reliving harmful past or current experiences.[[8]](#footnote-8) This philosophy is not only supportive of the youth partner but, if their thoughts/ideas are truly centered, it will push the system forward and reach more youth and create transformative, sustainable change.

##### Healing Justice

There may be instances where interpersonal challenges arise within the YAB. Creating a healing/restorative justice approach for the YAB may be advantageous.

This method also leans into compensating emotional labor by working to mitigate past or current trauma each individual may possess.

Some of the principles of Healing Justice according to Dignity and Power Now are: [[9]](#footnote-9)

* Without healing there is no justice
* Justice should address the whole person
* Our work must be trauma informed and resilience-centered
* Resilience is strategic

##### Compensating Emotional Labor

Include a few questions on what would compensate emotional labor in your annual survey. Be sure to have a clear pathway with funding and always be transparent about what is/isn’t feasible.

Prince George’s County Youth Action Board effectively instituted access to a counselor/mental health therapist at each of their meetings. This was an optional offering for youth partners, but it provided individuals who hadn’t historically had access to mental health services, an opportunity to engage.

Consider offering emotional support/counseling at meetings. Create a pathway for individuals to attend regular sessions if interested. This may require you to outsource support around insurance navigation for all participants. The YAB may also feel comfortable delegating a set of funding to help cover copays or other doctor costs.

Establish regular mental/physical/emotional health check ins at meetings and consider offering other supports such as:

* Regular outings
* Yoga
* Wellness/mindfulness sessions
* Nutrition support/access

**Discussion:**

What was your understanding of emotional labor prior to this discussion?

What are the current methods in place of compensating emotional labor?

What would make you feel like your emotional contributions are valued?

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4. The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture. Showing up for Racial Justice. <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-characteristics.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. If you are unsure of how to begin your organizational racial and LGBTQ+ equity journey, reach out to a consultant who is skilled in the subject matter to access technical assistance. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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