

Recommendations on Providing Honoraria for Community-Based Participatory and Co-Designed Research

Created by BCCHR Community Partnership Super Hub

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Types of Honoraria

- Honoraria payments help acknowledge the knowledge, expertise, time, and lived experience of people who contribute to research
- Cash (including e-transfers) or near-cash (e.g., gift cards, prepaid credit cards) are the most common forms of honoraria
- Cash or e-transfers are usually preferred because they are the most flexible
- Provide near-cash payments if asked or in certain circumstances (e.g., youth in a residential treatment facility)
- Gift cards can be restrictive (e.g., coffee or grocery stores) and prevent recipients spending their funds on what they want or need
- Prepaid credit cards often have activation and/or monthly fees that reduce their real value so we avoid them



Person-Centred Approach to Honoraria

- Use a flexible, person-centred approach when providing honoraria – keep the “honour in honoraria”
- Honoraria isn’t just transactional. It is a part of researchers’ broader relational practice with participants, advisors, community members, and others who contribute to research.
 - Honoraria acknowledges contributors’ expertise, time, emotional labour, and effort
 - Honoraria can help reinforce contributors’ self-confidence and self-respect
- Compensating people with lived experience is especially important because historically their contributions to traditional research systems have been undervalued
- Honoraria payments should be tailored to:
 - Participants’ preferences (e.g., cash or gift card)
 - Length and intensity of the engagement
 - The emotional toll of the contribution
 - Possible safety concerns (e.g., would a cash payment create a potential safety or stability concern for the recipient?)
- Same-day payments are very important!
 - Many participants rely on honoraria to pay for their essential expenses
 - Delaying honoraria payments (even by a few days) can cause harm and erode trust

Other Types of Support

- In addition to honoraria, there are a number of other kinds of support that can be provided to help:
 - Reduce barriers to participation
 - Foster spaces for dignity-centred engagement
 - Ensure emotional safety
- Other supports include:
 - Food or snacks
 - Reimbursing transportation costs (e.g., transit, taxis or rideshares, mileage, and parking)
 - Providing childcare or reimbursements/stipends for childcare
 - Small gifts or traditional items (e.g., tobacco, cloth) are encouraged to align with community traditions

Other Important Considerations

- Respect people's community-defined roles, not institutional assumptions:
 - Remember that Eldership is defined by knowledge, not age
 - Many young people serve as Knowledge Keepers in their communities so they should be compensated accordingly
- Institutional requirements to classify Elders or Knowledge Keepers as “vendors” or “contractors” are often viewed as inappropriate, disrespectful, and culturally unsafe
 - Some institutions (e.g., UBC) recognize this and have policies and procedures in place to address this
- Ongoing involvement in research can be a pathway to employment for some and can be transformative for youth and community partners who have historically been excluded from academic roles. Examples include:
 - Casual contracts
 - Paid research roles
 - Junior researcher positions
 - Mentorship and leadership opportunities

Institutional Policies and Challenges

- Honoraria payments have to be recorded and a receipt created with the recipient's name or pseudonym, payer's name, date, amount, and reason for the payment
- If someone receives over \$500 in a calendar year, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) classifies additional honoraria payments as taxable and the organization issuing payment is required to issue a T4A receipt
 - When engaging participants or community partners regularly, it is important to inform them about this policy
 - This can present major challenges for some (e.g., people who receive income assistance or disability payments; people who don't have a Social Insurance Number or are unhoused)
 - If this creates difficulties or concerns, talk about other ways that the person could be compensated for their contributions

Examples of Honoraria Payments

Danya Fast's Team

- Data collection activities: \$40 - \$50 for approx. 1 hour
- Advisory Council members and Youth/Family Researchers:
 - \$50 for participation in group or one-to-one meetings (approx. 1 hour), reviewing documents, providing feedback, supporting planning or evaluation
 - \$25 for very short engagements (e.g., 30 mins) or per hour for all-day engagements when higher payments (e.g., \$50/hour) might create safety or stability concerns for the participant
- Elders & Knowledge Keepers:
 - Planning meetings and advising: \$200/meeting
 - Workshops or activities: \$400/session
 - Other expenses (e.g., travel, childcare, materials, gifts) are covered separately

Matt Carwana's Team

- Data collection activities: \$40 - \$60 depending on grant and time commitment of research activities
- Guidance Circle members: \$50/hour (rounded to nearest 30 minutes) for participation in meetings, reviewing documents, providing feedback, supporting planning or evaluation
- Elders & Knowledge Keepers:
 - Planning meetings and advising: \$200/meeting
 - Workshops, teaching, or cultural activities: \$450/session
 - Other expenses (e.g., travel, accommodations, helpers, materials, gifts) are covered separately

Paying Honoraria Through UBC-Based Grants

- Faculty with grants at UBC (or staff or students on their team) can request a Spend Authorization (SA or cash advance) through Workday to cover the cost of honoraria. SAs can't be issued to non-UBC team members.
- Only one SA can be issued to a person at a time. You can't request another SA until you clear the previous one.
 - Usually takes about 1-2 weeks to clear an expense report and then have your next SA be approved and paid out, so time requests accordingly
 - Paying back unspent SA funds to UBC is very time-consuming so plan your honoraria budget carefully to avoid this
- For frequent honoraria needs, assign more than one team member to hold SAs so funds are always available
- SA funds are deposited into a UBC employee's payroll bank account
 - It can be hard to track honoraria payments if you have to differentiate these transactions from your personal account
 - We recommend using a separate bank account to manage SA funds (e.g., a no-fee account like Vancity community account or Tangerine)

UBC Policies on Honoraria for Elders & Knowledge Keepers

Following [UBC's Indigenous Finance Guidelines](#), UBC research staff need to complete following documents:

- 1) Fill out a [UBC HR Fast Track Form](#) with the Elder's or Knowledge Keeper's details before the event where you will be paying them an honorarium
 - This form will need to be approved by an HR representative if the researcher doesn't have a Scope of Work agreement in place
- 2) It is helpful to have a Scope of Work (SoW) in place beforehand:
 - Include details about what the Elder or Knowledge Keeper will be doing, the time period, and that they will receive an honorarium as a token of appreciation
 - Providing a copy of an email conversation or a researcher's notes about a verbal agreement with an Elder or Knowledge Keeper are acceptable forms of SoW
 - Attach the SoW to the *HR Fast Track Form*
- 3) Complete a [UBC Indigenous Cultural Advising Honorarium & Fee for Services Form](#)
 - This form asks for the recipient's SIN and if they have "Indian Status", but these questions are optional

Paying Honoraria Through PHSA-Based Grants

- PHSA doesn't allow any Health Authority staff, physicians, consultants, or contractors associated with PHSA to receive honoraria
- PHSA researchers can request a petty cash advance to pay for honoraria but they can only hold one at a time. When a petty cash account is created for a research team, cash is deposited into one staff member's personal bank account to withdraw and manage.
- Cash advances for most honoraria are currently suspended during PHSA's audit
 - Only cash advances can be requested for Elders at the moment, with a business case that needs to be approved
 - If a BCCHR Investigator is unable to receive a cash advance from a PHSA grant during this auditing period, and they also have grant funds held at UBC, they could use temporarily use UBC grant funds to pay honoraria and then ask their UBC department to invoice the appropriate PHSA-based grant to cost recover their honoraria expenses

PHSA Honoraria Payment Guidelines for Elders & Knowledge Keepers

Compensation Guidelines for Non-Employee/Non-Consultant Elders

Welcome (when taking place on Elder's territory)	\$300 and up
Opening (when Elder is from another territory)	\$300 and up
Closing	\$300 and up
Full-day events	\$500 and up
Half-day events	\$300 and up
Direct patient support	\$100/hour and up
On-call patient support	\$100/hour (min. 3 hours)

Source: Provincial Health Services Authority. Indigenous Peoples: Elders and Knowledge Keepers Guide. Vancouver (BC): Provincial Health Services Authority; 2022. Available from: <https://pod.phsa.ca/workplace-resources/finance/Documents/IH-PHSA-ICS-Elders-Guide.pdf>

Resources

Indigenous Health, BC Women's and Children's Hospitals. Elder Honorarium Payment Manual. Vancouver (BC): Indigenous Health; n.d.

Provincial Health Services Authority. Indigenous Peoples: Elders and Knowledge Keepers Guide. Vancouver (BC): Provincial Health Services Authority; 2022. Available from: <https://pod.phsa.ca/workplace-resources/finance/Documents/IH-PHSA-ICS-Elders-Guide.pdf>

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UBC Community Engagement. How-To Guide for Making Honoraria Payments to Community Members. Vancouver (BC): University of British Columbia; 2025. Available from: <https://communityengagement.ubc.ca/resources/financial-compensation-for-community-partners-toolkit/>

UBC Indigenous Research & Support Initiative. Indigenous Finance Guidelines. Vancouver (BC): University of British Columbia; 2021. Available from: <https://researchethics.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/Indigenous-Finance-Guidelines.pdf>



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