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# RESIDENT HONORARIUM – GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PROMISING PRACTICES

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This document draws heavily from the comprehensive document *THE USE OF HONORARIA: GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE (Version 2.0)* from Vancouver Coastal Health (2008).

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide guiding principles and promising practices regarding the use of honoraria with residents in order to support community engagement for all people.

Honoraria can support the participation of all people in the community. Thoughtful consideration must be given to its use to ensure that it supports a positive impact and does not have negative impact on fostering a culture of volunteering.

The hope is that the information provided can be useful for community partners and encourage a common understanding of and consistent application of honoraria across agencies.

## CONTEXT

Communities and agencies are enriched through the involvement of a cross-section of residents who bring a diversity of perspectives and experiences to community work at all areas. However, for some residents, there are multiple barriers to volunteerism that need to be acknowledged. Not everyone has the necessary support allowing them to give back to their community on an equal basis. Inadequate housing, clothing, food and employment opportunities can limit the ability of a person to contribute meaningfully. The provision of an honorarium can support 'levelling the playing field', encouraging a diversity of volunteer involvement which is of benefit to all.

## TERMINOLOGY BEING USED

**EXPENSE:** Incurred costs that are directly related to the performance of a volunteer activity for which recompense is given, e.g. family care, transportation.

**HONORARIA:** An honorarium is a payment (cash or gift card) in recognition of an act or service provided by someone who is contributing their time under specific circumstances. Honoraria are only offered in exceptional



circumstances. Honoraria may be used in numerous ways: as a form of recognition of their contribution of knowledge, skills and lived experience; to address a recruitment or retention barrier; or as a support towards increased community participation in a way that does not negatively impact the recipient. **NOTE: The amount of the honoraria is set by the organization and is based upon funds available.**

**RECOGNITION:** Using rewards, events, cards or gifts as forms of appreciation for the contributions of volunteers.

**VOLUNTEER:** The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI) defines volunteer as "someone who contributes time, resources and energy without monetary compensation".

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES WHEN CONSIDERING THE USE OF HONORARIA

1. **CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY/ COMMUNITY SERVICE:** Our society recognizes volunteering as an important component of civic responsibility by which we as citizens give back to our communities. Volunteerism needs to be celebrated and supported. Honoraria should only be used in specific circumstances and needs to be understood as a support to the fundamental culture of volunteerism and not perceived as a deterrent, or replacing the important contribution of freely giving of your time.
2. **EQUITY AND INCLUSION:** Communities and agencies are enriched through the involvement of a cross-section of residents who bring a diversity of perspectives and experiences to community work in all areas. However, for some citizens, there are multiple barriers to volunteerism that need to be acknowledged. Not all residents have the necessary supports that allow them to give back on an equal basis. Having inadequate housing, clothing, food and employment opportunities can limit the ability of a person to contribute meaningfully. The provision of an honorarium can support 'levelling the playing field', encouraging a diversity of volunteer involvement which is of benefit to all.

Reducing barriers to volunteering is to some extent already addressed when programs reimburse out-of-pocket expenses such as child care and transportation costs. Honoraria can be used as part of a continuum of supports to encourage the community involvement of multi-barriered populations.

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**For example:** *A working group, made up of varying partner organizations, is meeting on a monthly basis with follow-up work in between meetings for most of the participants. The majority of the members are paid staff, however there are 2 community residents, invited to join the group because of their unique perspectives, who are maintaining the same level of commitment to the working group but are not being paid. An honorarium recognizes the value and of their participation and the knowledge being shared to the rest of the working group.*

3. **HEALTH PROMOTION AND SELF-WORTH:** Beyond 'levelling the playing field' of opportunities for civic participation, honoraria can act as an incentive to those with few opportunities to develop their leadership and work skills for future employment. It is well recognized that improved self-worth and socioeconomic status results in better health, leadership and skill development. Many volunteers view receiving honorarium as recognition of the value of their contribution which has a positive impact on their sense of self-worth and thus promotes health and could provide a bridge to employment



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**For example:** Lucia began her community engagement by attending a local community meeting. This was a very big step for her, as she had suffered from a major accident and had become very depressed and withdrawn from her community for many years. Eventually, after attending a few meetings, Lucia was given the opportunity to become more involved by volunteering her time to plan a community event. Over time, and after developing many skills as a volunteer, Lucia built the confidence to attend training to become a workshop facilitator herself. Lucia is receiving an honorarium to plan and execute workshops in neighbouring communities. Lucia is now working on her resume as she is considering re-entering the job market.

4. **RECOGNIZING EXPERTISE OR COMMITMENT:** An additional reason for offering honoraria is to recognize an expertise or commitment. This recognition can include acknowledging contributing significant hours to an initiative or offering an expertise which is difficult to find.

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**For example:** Offering an honorarium to a recovered addict who provides ongoing peer-to-peer support and assistance to clients and members of an outreach health and addictions team.

**For example:** An older youth completes a series of speaking engagements throughout the city to other youth about how a youth service provider and their resources have impacted his life.

**For example:** A tenant leader has developed a unique skill set dealing with a complex community conflict in his building this expertise had been acknowledged by several partners. When a similar type of conflict arose in another social housing community, tenant leader was asked by staff to support their efforts to resolve this conflict, because of his experience, developed knowledge and skills.

5. **CONSISTENCY AND TRANSPARENCY:** A consistent and transparent approach between and within agencies and across communities allows for clear practices and fosters collaboration. It also promotes equity and fairness for honorarium recipients. It is important to have an ongoing dialogue among partner organizations on their honorarium practices, and to consider ways to strive for consistent application (i.e. when and how much) of honoraria. However, flexibility is needed, recognizing that 'one size does not fit all' and that there are varying contexts and resources across agencies.

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**For example:** A Health Agency is in need of support from resident leaders to promote and become ambassadors for an initiative that will impact on seniors' health. A Community Health Centre is embarking on a similar community engagement project which is also seeking volunteers of the same demographic. Because of the comparable need for resident leader support, both organizations are pooling from the same potential resident leaders. One organization is considering honorariums, the other is not. Because they have developed a dialogue regarding their upcoming projects, they have met and decided to both use an honorarium that is appropriate for each other's context, scope of work and budget capacities which seek to support both projects equally.



## OTHER FORMS OF COMPENSATION AND/OR RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- a) **Reimbursement of expenses:** Money to cover out-of-pocket expenses associated with volunteering (e.g. family care and/or transportation);
- b) **Recognition of volunteer service in the form of gifts:** (e.g. mugs, coffee cards, pins, bags, tickets to concerts, events etc.);
- c) **Food or refreshments** associated with the volunteering activity.

## CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DETERMINING IF PROVIDING RESIDENT HONORARIA IS APPROPRIATE

It is **very** important that the rationale for the use of honoraria is clearly understood by both the organization and the person receiving the honorarium.

To determine the rationale it is important to be aware of the distinctions between roles of: volunteer; contract/employee; and volunteers receiving honoraria. In helping to make those distinctions, here are some questions to consider:

### RELATED TO THE ORGANIZATION:

- a) Is it a task better suited to a paid employment position?
- b) Is it a task better suited to be contracted for at a market rate? (E.g. it is not an ongoing commitment or program, and the role is not a replication of an already existing position);
- c) Is it really an appropriate role for a volunteer? (E.g. Does it replace a formerly paid position or does it follow the organizations volunteer programs guidelines for appropriate placements?)
- d) Is there clarity within the organization of the different roles of paid staff and volunteers receiving honoraria?
- e) Is the provision of an honorarium the most appropriate way to recognize the developed expertise and commitment of the volunteer?
- f) Is there a clear rationale for providing honoraria, including the amount provided and a scan to see whether similar honoraria rationale exists in other agencies?
- g) Is the provision of honoraria sustainable? If not, is there an agency plan to deal with the expectations of volunteers when the honoraria are no longer possible?
- h) Is there a plan in place to support the sustainability of providing honoraria? (for example, including in funding requests)
- i) Are there administrative costs associated with the recruiting, screening, tracking, supporting and recognizing of volunteers? If so, will this require additional staff support (depending on the program size and complexity)?
- j) Are there additional costs associated with training, supporting and recognizing volunteers?
- k) How will honoraria be tracked for accountability?
- l) Do staff need to be supported when using honoraria as it often requires a cultural shift in how professionals envision their (and residents) roles.
- m) Has the organization had a discussion of the systemic barriers and the power relations that could surface when using honorariums?



## RELATED TO THE RESIDENT RECEIVING THE HONORARIUM:

- a) If the provision of honoraria is not sustainable, how will the lack of sustainability be communicated to the resident (i.e. there is honorarium available now but will not continue when funding finishes)?
- b) How will the organization provide or link to a continuum of supports? I.e., is there a way for your agency to support volunteers to identify the skills they are acquiring and help them bridge to possible employment?
- c) Is there a need to offset 'opportunity costs' for volunteers who face multi-barriers, beyond providing family care and transportation costs? Opportunity costs are used to encourage civic participation of multi-barriered populations. For example, volunteering may mean a person misses an appointment or some other opportunity to access resources.
- d) How will honoraria be dispersed to residents respectfully?
- e) Could the provision of honorarium have a negative impact on the volunteers' social assistance?

## OTTAWA EXAMPLES OF WHEN AND HOW VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS USE HONORARIA WITH COMMUNITY RESIDENT LEADERS

**CDF:** In 2014, honorariums have been provided for city-wide initiatives in two instances: Annual Learning Forum; and Creating the Change We Want resident leader capacity training. For the *Annual Learning Forum*, all residents attending the 3 hour event received an honorarium of \$25 to recognize the contribution of their expertise, lived experience and participation, in addition to bus tickets and family care. For *Creating The Change We Want* all resident co-facilitators receive \$100 to recognize expertise, lived experience and their participation in the two full day training, in addition to bus tickets and family care. An additional \$100 is provided when they complete the 6 month period to acknowledge their participation in the 1/2 day follow up training and the co-facilitation they have done in their neighbourhoods within the 6 months. The funds for the honorarium are provided by the United Way funding received and were requested specifically for that purpose.

**CITY FOR ALL WOMEN INITIATIVE (CAWI):** When funds permit, CAWI provides honorariums to women who contribute their knowledge and time to a given project. For example, in the Making Votes Count project, women who receive training on engaging residents in the electoral process received two \$50 honorariums over the course of six months as recognition for their contribution of taking their learning into their communities. Meanwhile, graduates of this training who participate in a city-wide committee receive a \$20 honorarium for each meeting where they participate, along with bus tickets and coverage of family care expenses to reduce barriers to their participation.

**OTTAWA COMMUNITY HOUSING (OCH):** While an OCH honorarium policy has not yet been formally established, currently, honoraria are being provided to support trained Creating the Change We Want resident co-facilitators supporting communities other than their own. At present, we are working from the idea of \$50.00 for a half day or \$25 per 1.5 hour CTCWW module facilitated. Honorariums are given through gift cards of the recipient's choice (usually grocery stores). Childcare and reasonable transportation costs are reimbursed in accordance with OCH Tenant Reimbursement Policy.

**GOOD FOOD MARKET:** An honorarium to recognize the active contribution to the success of the Good Food Markets has been a part of the model since the beginning of the funding for the four sites (Sandy Hill, Rochester Heights, Nanny Goat Hill and Michele Heights). Each site has determined locally what the honorarium is.

At Sandy Hill Good Food Market, a one to two hour contribution of time and participation in the success of market (e.g. at day of market, planning meetings, distributing flyers, phone calling) is acknowledged by the eligibility of \$5 worth of produce. Over 2 hours is acknowledged by eligibility for \$7.50 of produce. Given the affordability of



produce this is seen as a meaningful recognition. It is interesting to note, that originally the over two hour honorarium was \$10. However, in 2012, due to budget constraints and an increase in volunteers, the local site planning group, which includes residents, agreed to decrease the amount to \$7.50. It should be noted that many residents contribute significantly more than two hours of volunteering.

**OPTIONS BYTOWN** pays a fixed honorarium amount to tenants who perform duties that assist in the smooth running of community in the buildings. At various Options Bytown sites, tenants who are of good standing, can become 'liaison tenants' that take on regular "shifts" per month and perform duties that help with tenant safety and security. Staff set-up a schedule and 'liaison tenants' are given one shift per week on average. There are specific duties to be executed and training is given to all prospective liaison tenants. The fee per shift is \$45.00. Honorariums have also been used for occasional cleaning of communal areas, mowing the lawn, clearing snow, etc. Additionally, honorariums are only used for tasks that require training and have specific requirements. All honorariums adhere to the reporting requirements of ODSP and OW.

**For further information**, please contact Gillian Keefe (Coordinator, Community Development Framework) at [gilliank@seochc.on.ca](mailto:gilliank@seochc.on.ca).