BUDGETING FOR EQUITY IN RESEARCH

Best practices for building equitable budgets in research.

The following guidelines and practices are designed to assist researchers in developing budgets that provide equitable resources for community partners working on research projects and ensure inclusive recruitment of diverse research participants. Researchers should consider these costs to be central to their work. It is important to build partnership and recruitment costs into budgets at the start of the budgeting process and not delay this while waiting to see if funding may be available after other expenses have been covered.

Why does this matter? Research should value and compensate participants and community partners for their contributions. Without thoughtfully considering the resources necessary for inclusive participant recruitment, research will continue to underrepresent and exclude some groups of people. If adequate resources are not provided to community contributors, research samples may not be representative, partners and participants may reject future research opportunities, and people may feel that they are being exploited.

Include the Following Considerations in the Budgeting Process:

As you begin to build your budget, think about the costs your partners will accrue in order to participate, as well as costs associated with outreach to engage diverse participants.

For Community Partnerships:

Partner staff time: Carefully anticipate the time commitments of partner staff or community members involved in the project. Be sure to ask partners to help you estimate time and effort, rather than making assumptions yourself. Consider if partner staff need additional training to play a role in research teams and carry out study activities. They should be paid for the time spent in training. Do not ask your community partners to volunteer their time for your research. By partnering with you, they are adding to their responsibilities and should be compensated, unless they inform you otherwise.

Structures payments: Consider how you structure subcontracts and service agreements with your partners. If possible, deliverables-based contracts allow partners more flexibility in how activities are performed. Check with your grant administrator or funder to understand any restrictions related to subcontracting and service agreements.

Staff incentives: Staff incentives may be useful and appropriate for community partner staff carrying out research activities (e.g., supporting workflow changes for a clinical intervention) or for those participating in research activities (e.g., being interviewed as a participant). This is especially relevant when staff are asked to increase their already existing responsibilities and learn new skills.

Space: If you will be using a partner's space or seeking space in the community to conduct your research, it will be important to factor in rental and/or custodial costs. Common settings for research activities might include churches, schools, and community centers.

Advisory groups – If you use a community advisory group to help you improve the study design and implement a research study, anticipate these extra costs. Member stipends, transportation costs, meals, caregiver expenses, meeting space, and materials should be included. See this Community Advisory Board Tool Kit for more [PDF].

For Recruitment of Research Participants:

Research teams may seek to include populations that have been underrepresented in past studies. To ensure your study recruits your priority populations and is inclusive of a range of populations, consider these factors:

Language: Certified translation (written content) and interpretation services (spoken language in real time) are important to ensure that participants understand the purpose of a study and can fully consent. If you are limited by budget constraints, consider budgeting for the two to five most widely used languages.
- See our Translation Guidelines for Equity resource.
- View Local Interpretation and Translation Companies.

Accessibility: Inclusion of various physical abilities will ensure equitable participation. Think ahead and prepare resources that can help create environments and products that are accessible to study participants, no matter their abilities, disabilities, or other characteristics.
- See the National Network of Public Health Institutes' Language Access.
- View Harvard University's Accessibility Services.

Participant incentives: Participants give their time and may share experiences, physical samples, and data for a study. Offer participants incentives that align with the time contributed, whether monetary or in the form of a gift card. Participants completing the same task should be compensated equally, regardless of their occupation. Examples might include $50 for a one-hour interview or $5 to $10 for a brief five-minute survey.

Tailor the distribution method to acknowledge privacy and access concerns, particularly among participants who are immigrants or those with unstable housing. Offer participants the option to receive the incentive by email, at their home address, or have it sent directly to a trusted community organization so they don't have to disclose personal information.

Experts: You may wish to consult with community experts who will help you navigate cultural settings and improve communication with potential participants. These experts could include communications professionals, leaders, or staff from community-based organizations, or community influencers. You should plan to pay these community consultants at similar rates to those you would pay an academic consultant.

Caregiving expenses or services: Depending on the study, research participants who are caregivers may need assistance to cover their responsibilities while they are involved in the study. Budget for the time of the study visit and any time spent travelling to and from the visit.

Transportation: Reimburse participants if they are traveling for the purpose of data collection at a study visit. This includes hourly parking rates at data collection sites, local transit system fares, and mileage reimbursement.
- See federal mileage reimbursement rates.

Other Budgetary Considerations:

<u>Procurement of service</u>s: If your budget will involve procuring outside services, such as providing food, hiring a graphic designer, or working with a transportation company, consider working with minority-owned businesses from within the community where the study is based. Local chambers of commerce will provide a listing of minority-owned businesses in their catchment areas.

<u>Sharing findings</u>: Research results should be shared with participants and relevant partners. As you plan how to share study findings, anticipate costs for any events or activities that will allow you to return research results to the community. [See our Sharing Results for Equity resource here.](#)

Strengthening Relationships to Build an Equitable Budget:

Establishing relationships and building trust through long-term commitments to partners and communities are important for ensuring equity in research. It is essential that researchers meet with partners early and often to understand the organizational and cultural perspectives of partners and participants. Developing these relationships will help with budgeting and designing community-centered research questions prior to the proposal stage. When you meet with partners, ask questions to better understand their perspectives.

These questions may help get you started:

- From the partner's point of view, what assets are they bringing into the research relationship?
- How might your research goals align or conflict with your partners' priorities?
- What do you need to know about the language and accessibility needs of the people you plan to involve in your study? Are there childcare or transportation considerations?
- What methods will work best for communicating with the people you plan to involve in your study?
- What past experiences with research may make participants more or less likely to engage in research?
- What kind of payment structures work for the organization?
- Which meeting structure, frequency, and time works best for partners?
- How can your research design build off existing tasks and workflows to minimize disruption and costs?
- What data is already collected by community partners that could be applicable to your study?

Resources for Budgeting:

- **Budget Samples:** These sample budgets of hypothetical research studies, including a small pilot and a large well-resourced study, offer examples of ways to include equity considerations.
- **PCORI Budgeting for Engagement Activities [PDF]:** This document is a resource for applicants to budget appropriately for their proposed engagement activities.
- **Local Translation and Interpretation Companies [PDF]:** This list of local companies has been vetted by members of Community Coalition for Equity in Research.
- **Embedding community-engaged research principles in implementation science: The implementation science center for cancer control equity:** This paper provides an overview of how a research center operationalized a commitment to a robust community engagement.
- **Equitable Compensation for Community Engagement [PDF]:** This toolkit includes practical guidelines and approaches for creating an equitable compensation plan for your organization's community-partnered research projects.

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