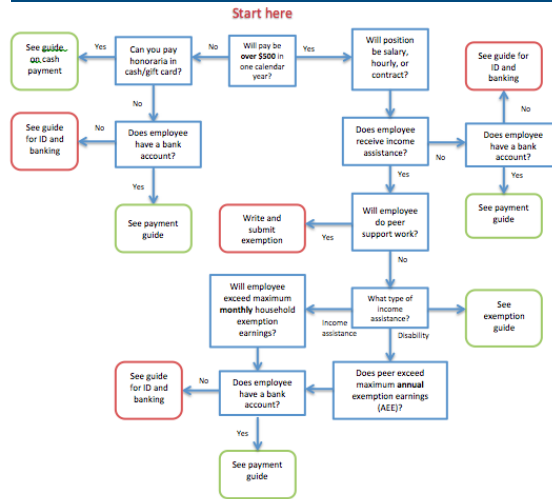


Background

- Community based participatory research has been described as a collaborative approach to public health research that involves community partners in the research process
- Fairly compensating community members for their efforts is intended to support equitable inclusion and participation by easy financial constraints
- Despite the recognition of the importance of compensating peers for their time and expertise, no process or principles have been developed to ensure they are equitably and fairly compensated
- Peer research assistants (PRAs)** are often recruited from the community under study, and are hired and trained as active members in either some or all facets of the CBPR project

Procedures for Paying Peers



Receiving employment income

Categories of paid employment

- Contractor with set tasks/pay
 - Pros: May pay as lump sum; benefits can be offered
 - Cons: A delay in pay during initial set up
- Hourly staff with time sheets
 - Pros: Flexible, hours can vary
 - Cons: Often must set a minimum number of hours; delays in pay; tracking and submitting each pay period
- Salary position
 - Pros: Titled position, legitimacy, benefits
 - Cons: Long approval process; often a criminal record check required.

In Canada, individuals may only receive up to \$500 per calendar year without claiming it as taxable earnings (and having to issue a T4)

Payment Options

Giving gift cards vs cash honorarium

- Giving cash is seen as best practice
- Cash and gift cards are income
- The payment of honorarium does not create an employment relationship under the Employment Act

Cheques vs. e-transfers

- Bank account and ID is needed
- Cheques may be cashed at non-financial institutions (i.e. Money Mart) with fees associated
- E-transfers are difficult to set up and need access to Internet

Main Lessons

- Paying peers reduces stigma by increasing opportunities for advancement, encouraging sustainable peer engagement, and giving a sense of responsibility and agency through job title and duties
- Build a relationship based on trust early on in order to have a full discussion regarding income assistance, earning exemptions, and payment options
- Peers may need help in obtaining ID and setting up a bank account
- Peer mentors may mitigate some challenges in hiring and paying peers
- Institutional procedures in hiring and paying peers can vary widely
- It is essential to verify the type of disability or income assistance the employee is receiving to avoid putting it in jeopardy
- The BC Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation changes their policies regularly <http://www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/pwd/ae>

Objectives

To examine the many variables at play when hiring and paying people with lived experience in community engaged work

Methods

We reviewed and navigated through organizational processes, policy documents, grey literature, and financial structures within the province of British Columbia to unveil the challenges and opportunities to on-boarding and paying people with lived experience

It is essential to verify the type of disability and/or income assistance that peers are receiving to assess if they exceed their earning limits

Navigating Income Assistance and Disability

Peers may be receiving disability or income assistance – both come with earning restrictions.

Earning Exemptions for peers on disability or income assistance in BC

- Any earnings above \$500 per calendar year is considered paid employment
- People on disability assistance have *Annual* Earning Exemptions (Table 1)
- People on income assistance have *Monthly* Earning Exemptions (Table 2)
- If people exceed their earning exemption limits, they will receive less on their cheques, and also risk losing other benefits such as health, eye and dental care
- Since many PRA jobs are non-permanent, if their earnings place their income assistance or disability benefits in jeopardy, they may decide not to take the position

Table 1: Annual eligible exemption amounts for persons on disability

Single person with PWD designation	\$9,600
Couple, and one has the PWD designation	\$12,000
Couple, and both have the PWD designation	\$19,200

*amounts are equivalent to 12 times the monthly exemption limit for the calendar year

Table 2: Monthly eligible earning exemption amounts for persons on income assistance or PPMB

All family units, including individuals eligible for income assistance who are not listed below	\$200
A family unit where one individual is a PPMB (this includes single PPMB individuals)	\$500
A single parent caring for a child with a severe disability where the disability of the child precludes the parent from working outside the home for more than 30 hours per week.	\$500

Peer Support Worker Stipend Exemptions

- Where possible, hire peers under a "Peer Support Worker" role (paid under '4B supplements' or '4C payments')
- The BC Ministry of Health allows the activities of a Peer Support Worker to be *fully exempt* for people on income or disability assistance
- An exemption letter must be written for those who fall under the criteria for peer support worker