



Puget Sound Regional Council

Outreach Compensation Policy and Procedures

August 11, 2023

Purpose

To establish policy and procedures for compensating:

- Focus group, working group or committee members who are not compensated by their employers for participating in PSRC-funded meetings
- Members of the public for participation in surveys and interviews;
- Community-Based Organizations (CBO) to encourage participation in PSRC outreach and enable small or overburdened organizations to provide expertise and insight when they otherwise could not due limited financial resources.

Definitions

Focus Group and Community Meeting

A small group of people that meet for a limited period of time to participate in a guided discussion, providing insights on a policy, product, strategy, etc., either in-person or virtually. This type of group is used to understand different perspectives and priorities that may affect a project scope or get feedback on draft proposals or direction at any time throughout a project. These groups typically meet for 1-2 hours per session, one or more times as needed.

Committee and Working Group

Both are typically long-standing groups of people representing the perspectives of jurisdictions or interest groups, appointed by the agency to discuss key issues, make recommendations, and/or complete tasks concerning a particular subject. Working groups tend to meet for 1-2 hours per session over a 6-to-18-month period and generally require preparation and post-meeting follow up time. Committee groups meet for 1-2 hours per session, but over a longer 1-3-year period and may require participation by subject matter experts and jurisdictions, also requiring preparation and post-meeting follow up time. A committee can also be a permanent standing group that works with and advises PSRC.

Community Based Organization (CBO)

Refers to an organization aimed at making desired improvements to a community's social health, well-being, and overall functioning. Community organization occurs in geographically, psychosocially, culturally, spiritually, and digitally bounded communities.

CBOs work closely with the community and are better able to identify the needs of the residents.

An eligible CBO will be a private non-profit 501(c)3 organization or locally established entity which is representative of a community or significant segments of a community in the Puget Sound area and which provides educational or other related basic human services to individuals in the community. (Examples of CBOs include Africatown Seattle, Compass Housing Alliance, and HomeSight).

Survey

A questionnaire used to inform a project, generally multiple choice and/or short answer and distributed by email, phone, in-person or mail with participants typically selected at random based on their address or demographics.

Interview

A one-on-one telephone, virtual, or in-person meeting, sometimes as follow-up to a survey, to solicit detailed information, clarify data or community perspectives, or obtain feedback on a process.

Policy

To encourage equitable and informed public policy discussions, PSRC may compensate members of the public for participation in outreach activities. The intent of this policy is to remove barriers to participation in government actions, discussions, and decision-making and to recognize the value and expertise community members contribute.

Focus Groups, Working Groups and Committees

Members of focus groups, working groups and/or committees who are not already being compensated by their employers or other organizations for participating in PSRC-funded meetings may be compensated for attending meetings. Alternates attending a meeting on behalf of a committee member are eligible for compensation.

Participants must stay for at least 75% of the meeting to be compensated. Attendance is confirmed by PSRC staff or consultants.

Surveys and Interviews

Members of the public may be compensated or entered in a lottery for taking a survey or participating in an interview.

Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

CBOs may be compensated to consult, provide expertise and insights to aid PSRC's planning work or to encourage responses to PSRC outreach efforts. As noted in the definitions section, an eligible CBO will be a private non-profit 501(c)3 organization or locally established entity which is representative of a community or significant segments of a community in the Puget Sound area.

Compensation Rate Structure

The compensation rate structure is set and adjusted by PSRC based on market rates (what other agencies are paying for a similarly sized survey/interview) for time and level of effort. The compensation rate structure will be subjected to periodic evaluation, at the discretion of PSRC. These rates will be reviewed by Finance to determine reasonability. PSRC may adjust the compensation rate per meeting based on amount of time required and/or level of effort.

New public outreach efforts must include the Outreach Compensation Cost Estimate Form. This form is used for planning purposes and funding determination.

Procedures for

- Committees
- Community meetings
- Work groups
- Focus groups that may exceed \$600 per participant per calendar year

Outreach Compensation Eligibility Form

Participants requesting compensation must complete the Outreach Compensation Eligibility form. The form collects the participant's contact information for payment purposes. The form asks participants to verify eligibility for compensation by confirming they are not paid by their employer or another organization for their time with PSRC.

The form is made available on PSRC's website. Staff will also ensure that members know where to access the form.

Attendance

Participants must stay for at least 75% of the meeting to be compensated. Participants complete an online form noting the dates of meetings attended. Staff leading the outreach activity will verify the participants attendance and approve the form.

Consultants must provide a record of attendance and outreach payment receipt to be reimbursed.

PSRC staff will share the attendance form with participants, and/or consultants, as needed. The form is routed to PSRC's Finance department for processing. Questions should be directed to finance@psrc.org.

Calculating Compensation

PSRC's Finance Department, or designated consultant, is responsible for calculating the total compensation per member based on the current compensation rate structure. The Compensation Rate Structure will be the current standard compensation per meeting and any adjustment will be based on anticipated time commitment for a particular meeting. PSRC will compare amount, time and effort for other groups with

participant compensation to ensure a fair rate. The Compensation Rate Structure shall be communicated to each focus group, working group, or committee facilitator in advance.

Processing Payment

PSRC's Finance department, or the consultant, is responsible for processing checks, or electronic payments (e.g. PayPal, Venmo). Payments will be processed in accordance with PSRC accounts payable policy and procedures. Check reimbursements will be mailed to the participant's address provided on the Outreach Eligibility Form or Attendance Form.

Procedures for:

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups that do not exceed \$600 per participant per calendar year

PSRC will only issue checks or electronic payments for compensation. Consultants may issue gift cards as compensation. The consultant will furnish and safeguard gift cards and issue them as appropriate. Proof of purchase and delivery to recipient, when feasible, is required for reimbursement to consultant. In cases where it is not feasible, such as data privacy, the consultant will attest to proof of purchase and distribution.

Federal funds may not be used to purchase gift cards regardless of the purpose, even if distributed by a consultant.

The Outreach Compensation Cost Estimate Form is used to help determine compensation rates for surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Procedures for:

- Community Based Organizations

Payment will be made via check to the CBO upon receipt of an invoice for services provided. Services provided can be time spent working with PSRC staff, either in person, via phone, virtually, or any combination. PSRC will use the Compensation Rate Structure to determine a fair and reasonable hourly rate which will be communicated in advance of collaboration.

Invoices may be submitted to finance@psrc.org.

Revisions to Policy

Minor revisions to this policy may be performed administratively. Minor revisions include but are not limited to: Compensation Rate Structure, delivery method of payment as new services become available.

This policy will be brought to the Operations Committee every 3 years for review. The next review will be in 2028.

References

CFR Advisory councils [§ 200.422](#)

Costs incurred by advisory councils or committees are unallowable unless authorized by statute, the Federal awarding agency or as an indirect cost where allocable to Federal awards. See [§ 200.444](#), for applicability to States, local governments, and Indian tribes.

Reviewed by the Operations Committee December 4, 2025 - no changes.

Administratively Amended by PSRC August 11, 2023

Administratively Amended by PSRC August 2022

Approved revision by the Executive Board June 23, 2022

Approved revision by the Executive Board June 24, 2021

Adopted by the Executive Board October 22, 2020