



### **Paying Community Partners**

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If you have any questions about this document, please get in touch with the authors.

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## Paying Community Partners

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It is important to pay community partners for their time and at a rate that reflects the unique expertise they bring to the project. This document gives some pointers on payment rates and mechanisms for paying community partners.

### How Much to Pay

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You need to agree on a suitable payment rate with your community partners.

This will be a higher rate than is offered for research participants who are consenting to take part in a study – payment in that context is simple reimbursement for time. We often pay £10 per hour for study participation.

For community partners who are acting as consultants on your work, something like £25 per hour may be more appropriate, and this is in-line with rates recommended by the NIHR – their guidelines are incredibly detailed and helpful (especially for the UK).<sup>1</sup> A half-day meeting might be costed at £75 and a longer meeting might be costed at £150.

When working out how many hours to cost for each activity, remember to think about:

- time taken to travel to and from the activity, and expenses for that travel too
- time preparing for the activity, e.g. reading documents
- time taken to recover from the activity, which may have been draining

We have also used the concept of “contact points” as a way to agree on payment with community partners. A contact point might vary – sometimes commenting on a document sent by email, sometimes taking part in a video call, sometimes attending a meeting. You might agree a rate of £50 per contact point, and one contact point per month for the duration of the project. This recognises that the amount and type of work might vary a bit but means you are committing to keeping the *average* commitment around 2 hours per month.

In some cases, community partners may work freelance as consultants and trainers, and they will have their own professional rates. As far as possible you should aim to meet those rates as the person may be foregoing other sources of income in order to contribute to your project.

We sometimes have community partners, with whom we have good and long-standing relationships, who agree to be involved in specific pieces of work without payment. This has happened when they are passionate about the project, and especially at the proposal-writing stage when it may be difficult to access funding for their time. However, there are also sometimes seedcorn funds available to cover the costs of community partners’ contributions.

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<sup>1</sup> [nhr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-researchers-and-professionals/27392](http://nhr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-researchers-and-professionals/27392)

## How to Pay Someone

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There are a number of ways you might think about paying a community partner for their time and expertise. Whatever you do, make sure you discuss the options with your partner and work through the consequences for them.

1. If the person is already self-employed, they may be able to become an “approved supplier” for your University. Once they are listed as a supplier, they can send you an invoice which you would pay, just like any other service the University might pay for (e.g. external catering, transcription, graphic design). Find out how you would pay for a graphic designer and see if you can replicate that for your community partner.
2. If the person is not self-employed, they may have a connection to a charity or community group. One option is for that charity to become a registered supplier for your University. Then the charity can send you an invoice, and you could pay them, and they would pass on the funds to the individual. This works if the individual has a really good trusting relationship with the charity, and if the charity’s systems for paying individuals are more flexible than at your University.
3. If the person has a job with a sympathetic employer, you might be able to replicate the process above, where the company becomes a supplier and sends you an invoice for the person’s time. This might also have the benefit of allowing them to do their consultancy with you during their working hours.
4. All universities will have a way of making one-off payments to external people, such as PhD viva examiners, or visiting speakers. Find out how your university pays these people and see if you can use the same mechanism to pay your community advisor.
5. All universities will have a way of paying individual participants in research – for example if someone enrolls in an interview study and you offer them £10 for their time. Some places will put an upper limit on the size of payment you can make in this way, but if you only need to pay your community partner, say, £50 once per month, you might be able to put this through in the same way as participant reimbursements.
6. The option of buying gift vouchers is always available. This is not ideal because being paid in vouchers is inherently less respectful and empowered than being paid cash. However if your community partner is drawing benefits, there is a risk that cash payments into their bank account will result in questions from the government departments that oversee their benefits. For this reason, we have sometimes mutually-agreed with community partners to pay in vouchers, and have carefully selected vouchers that we know will be useful. For example, vouchers for the supermarket where the person does their regular household shopping.

Throughout the payment process, it may be helpful to refer to your community partner as a “consultant”, or “expert by experience”. They will be “charging a fee for their time and expertise” or “being reimbursed for their time and expertise”. On the whole, you don’t want to talk about them being “employed” or drawing a “salary” or “wages”. This will give the incorrect impression that the person is becoming an employee of your organisation – this could be a marvellous way to do co-production but it isn’t covered by our guidance.