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- North Thurston Public Schools
- Olympia School District
- Tumwater School District
- Intercity Transit
- LOTT Clean Water Alliance
- Port of Olympia
- PUD No. 1 of Thurston County

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

- Lacey Fire District #3
- Puget Sound Regional Council
- The Evergreen State College
- Thurston Conservation District
- Thurston Economic Development Council
- Timberland Regional Library

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thurston Regional Planning Council

FROM: Veena Tabbutt, Deputy Director

DATE: May 27, 2022

SUBJECT: Outreach Compensation Policy and Procedures

PURPOSE

Adopt new Agency Outreach Compensation Policy and Procedures.

Summary:

- Staff have developed a draft Outreach Compensation Policy and Procedures as part of the Agency’s financial policies.
- The purpose is to establish policy and procedures for compensating focus group, working groups, boards or committee members who are not compensated by their employers for participating in Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) funded meetings, and compensating members of the public for participation in surveys, interviews, focus groups, and other outreach.
- This policy will not apply to elected officials.
- The policy establishes that compensation for outreach activities will only be provided when compensation is deemed necessary to obtain desired outcomes, which may include engaging participants who do not traditionally participate in planning activities AND when funding is available. It should be noted that many federal and state funds do not allow for compensation for outreach activities.
- This Policy and Procedures will be posted on the Agency internet site, and translated into Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese.

REQUESTED ACTION

Adopt Outreach Compensation Policy and Procedures.

vt:bl

Attachment



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Executive Director

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MEMORANDUM

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EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

How has equity been considered in this agenda item?

This Policy and Procedures sets Agency standards on when and how to compensate for members of the public participating in Agency outreach activities. Compensation can be a key to increasing participation, particularly for those members of the public that do not traditionally participate in outreach activities.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Please see the attachment for the Policy and Procedures. Please note that after Council's review in May, slight edits were made based on Council feedback and additional staff review.

Thurston Regional Planning Council

OUTREACH COMPENSATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

June 2022

1. PURPOSE

To establish policy and procedures for compensating focus group, working groups, boards, or committee members who are not compensated by their employers for participating in Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) funded meetings, and compensating members of the public for participation in surveys, interviews, focus groups, and other outreach. This policy does not apply to elected officials.

2. 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 gather 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.

Boards, Committee and Working Group: All are long-standing groups of people representing the perspectives of jurisdictions or interest groups, appointed to discuss key issues, make recommendations, and/or complete tasks concerning a particular subject. Both groups tend to meet for 1-2 hours per session over an extended period of time and generally require prep and post-meeting follow up time. A Board or Committee can also be a permanent standing group that works with and advises TRPC or is part of a TRPC work program.

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.

3. POLICY

General

Compensation for outreach activities will only be provided when compensation is deemed necessary to obtain desired outcomes, which may include engaging participants who do not traditionally participate in planning activities AND when funding is available. It should be noted that many federal and state funds do not allow for compensation for outreach activities.

Transparency

Compensation will be communicated clearly prior to the recruitment of focus groups, working groups, boards and committees, or other outreach activities.

Focus Groups, Working Groups, Boards, and Committees:

Members of focus groups/committees who are not already being compensated by their employers or other organizations for participating in TRPC-funded meetings may be compensated for attending group meetings. If an alternate is attending a meeting in place of a committee member, the alternate is also eligible for compensation. The compensation rate structure is set by TRPC based in part on its review of focus group/committee compensation paid by peer metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), member jurisdictions, and partner organizations. The compensation rate structure will be subject to periodic evaluation, at the discretion of TRPC. At the discretion of TRPC, adjustments may be made to the set compensation rate per meeting, based on amount of time required and/or level of effort.

Surveys and Interviews:

Members of the public may also be compensated for taking a survey or participating in an interview. The compensation rate structure is set and adjusted by TRPC based on market rates (what other agencies are paying for a similarly sized survey/interview) for time and level of effort. TRPC will use the Outreach Compensation Cost Estimate Form for every new public outreach effort that includes compensation.

4. PROCEDURES

Boards, Committees and Community Meetings, and Work Groups: Total compensation may exceed \$600/participant/calendar year.

1. **Board/Committee/Working Group Certification**
Each eligible member of the board/committee/working group will be asked to fill out the Board/Committee/Working Group Certification. At that time, they can decline compensation. The Board/Committee/Working Group Certification is required to be updated when personal information changes. Members of boards/committees/working groups must disclose in the Certification form if they are being compensated by their employer for preparing for and attending the meeting(s). The Board/Committee/Working Group Certification will be distributed by TRPC staff to the participant, as needed, and must be submitted to TRPC's Finance Department for processing.
2. **Attendance**
Regular attendance in board/committee/working group meetings is required for the member's compensation. Attendance must be recorded by the board/committee/working group facilitator and provided to TRPC's Finance Department within 30 days after each meeting. Participants must stay for at least 75% of the meeting to be compensated. The record of attendance will serve as support for processing compensation to members.
3. **Compensation**
TRPC's Finance Department is responsible for calculating the total compensation per member based on the current compensation rate structure. This task can be delegated to a consultant. The Compensation Schedule will be the current standard compensation per meeting and any adjustment based on anticipated unusual time commitment for a particular meeting. The Compensation Schedule shall be communicated to each board/committee/working group member two weeks prior to the first meeting, as the schedule allows.

TRPC's Finance Department, or the consultant, is responsible for the processing of checks, or online payments (i.e., PayPal, Venmo) for the member's compensation in accordance with its accounts payable policy and procedures. If reimbursed by check, it will be mailed to the participant's address provided on the member's certification.

Surveys, Interviews, and Focus Groups: Total compensation may not exceed \$600/participant/calendar year.

1. Compensation

Participants in surveys, focus groups, and/or interviews may be compensated using check, online payment (i.e., PayPal, Venmo), or gift cards based on the current compensation rate structure and adjusted for time and effort as applicable. TRPC will not keep stock of any gift cards under any circumstances. Gift cards must be purchased for each event and utilized immediately. Proof of purchase and delivery to the recipient is required.

If gift cards are used as compensation by a consultant, the consultant will furnish and safeguard the cards and issue them as appropriate. Proof of purchase and delivery to recipient is required for reimbursement to consultant.

5. COMPENSATION RATE STRUCTURE

Compensation should be estimated during project scoping. The Outreach Compensation Cost Estimate Form will need to be approved by the Executive Director prior to the start of the outreach activity. TRPC staff, or consultant, may complete the form and supporting details. These rates will be reviewed by TRPC's Finance Department to determine reasonability.

TRPC will periodically reevaluate the Compensation Rate Structure compared to market rates. Compensation will be determined by examining what has been done in the past and compared to 2-3 current rates by organizations performing similar work.