

## **Folks with Lived Expertise of Homelessness are NOT Employees nor Independent Contractors**

- Lived Experience folks act in a capacity much like that of an advisory board member. Typically, advisory board members do not receive stipends; however, to reduce barriers to participation for folks that are experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, or recently coming out of homelessness, stipends are provided for food, gas, transportation, childcare, etc. to facilitate engagement.

### **Stipends are NOT pay nor compensation**

- Stipends are not to be considered as compensation for hours worked. As mentioned earlier, stipends are meant to remove barriers for engagement. Participants keep track of their hours on an hours log – it should not be referred to as timesheet since a timesheet correlates with pay for hours worked.

### **Consultation should be provided to people with lived experience to navigate how stipends may impact benefits**

- A workshop with a benefits counselor can help ease participants' concerns that stipends may impact SSI/SSDI payments, housing, and other publicly funded benefits.
  - Typically, stipends under \$800 a month will not affect benefits. Additionally, if people with lived expertise do receive more than \$800 monthly, it would not affect them losing their benefits permanently, but it may impact the amount of the benefit they receive monthly.
- Please keep in mind that if there are participants that will be receiving less than \$600 a year (it may be \$900 now...we will need to verify), a W9 and reporting is not required. Therefore, for example, if the community is having a few focus groups with the greater population of folks with lived experience of homelessness, obtaining a W9 from participants and reporting is not required. Much like when folks get a \$40 Visa gift card for participating in a focus group or study.

### **Alternatives to Stipends for Undocumented Residents or Individuals with Stipend Hesitancy**

- An Emergency Flex Fund could be established to help pay participants cell phone bills, food/clothing/gas gift cards, car repair, storage fees, utility bills, portion of rent, laptop, or anything that would remove barriers to engagement and promote housing, emotional/psychological, spiritual, and economic stability in lieu of receiving stipends.
  - Staff must ensure that payment is made directly to the vendor and not the client. For example, paying the car repair company directly instead of giving the member the funds directly.
  - Flex fund participants still must track and turn in their hours logs to understand how much of the flex fund they could have access to (for example, if they have \$200 in hours, they can draw a max of \$200 from the flex fund towards payment of a barrier that they

have identified). Please keep in mind, payments must be made directly to the vendor and this does not require a W9 from participants.