

PWLEH Learning Lab: Funding to Support Working with People with Lived Experience of Homelessness

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Overview

Participants will learn and discuss creative ways to fund work with People with Lived Experience of Homelessness (PWLEH). This session will prime communities to begin the process and discuss with others how they fund PWLEH engagement, including how to adequately compensate those with lived experience for their work.

Additional Details

In order to end homelessness you need those who have experienced homelessness at the center of the solutions, leading and guiding the work. Just like any other staff or consultant, ensuring you have people with lived experience centered in the work requires proper compensation and demonstrates good faith partnership in seeing their value as key players in designing and operating systems to end homelessness.

Organizations are encouraged to equitably compensate individuals and communities with lived experience for their time and expertise. It is considered exploitative to anticipate voluntary contributions from individuals with lived experience without adequate compensation, particularly in light of the challenges they encounter as a result of marginalization and systemic vulnerability. Furthermore, it is recommended that organizations embrace a trauma-informed approach to compensation, recognizing that financial obstacles are frequently compounded by social stigma. Leadership and staff are encouraged to establish a safe space wherein individuals can freely convey their experiences without fear of censure or lack of compensation in the event that their perspectives diverge from those of the organization. This approach fosters an environment of empathy and consideration, ensuring that individuals feel valued and respected.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A core tenet of quality improvement is the recognition that every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets. If you want different results, you need a new design, and having PWLEH at the table is a must.

Funding can be tricky, and compensation for PWLEH has some unique considerations. Participants will leave with an understanding and will begin thinking through how to fund this work in their community. For example:

- Identifying fundraising opportunities such as creating items to sell (ie t-shirts)
- Utilizing local businesses to fundraise
- Local Community Foundations who do matching donations or do days of giving coupling this with social media campaigns to get awareness and donations
- Utilizing dollars earmarked for consultants for those with lived experience

Organizations should provide equitable financial compensation to individuals and communities with lived experience, recognizing the value of their time and expertise

It is exploitative to expect individuals with lived experience (PWLE) to volunteer their time or to inadequately compensate them, particularly in the context of marginalization and systemic vulnerability, which can severely limit their ability to achieve or sustain a viable livelihood.

Considerations for Equity

Having inclusive voices matters and ensures that the problem is being addressed. It also ensures that when solutions are being implemented, they encompass identity and culture.

Developing a compensation rubric that addresses the cost of living demands is essential for promoting equity. Additionally, compensating individuals with lived experience at a fair market rate for their insights further enhances equity within the organization. Consideration should also be given to establishing long-term positions or roles within the organization to help achieve sustainability.

