



Compensating Youth Work

A Practical Guide

*Youth advocates and volunteers from underserved, less privileged positions and communities are often left behind when they cannot afford to work unpaid roles. When they do serve various volunteer capacities within the **Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRRH)** field, they are disadvantaged as they may lose money, time, and other valuable working opportunities. The AYSRRH field must learn how to better compensate youth for their time and efforts.*

How to use this guide

This practical resource guide is sourced from the YIELD Hub's fourth Action Learning Cycle on **Compensating Youth Work**. The guide is divided into four practical sections: Themes for Exploration, Organisational Levels of Development, Recommendations & Sample Actions, and Next Steps. These sections aim to assist you or your team in assessing your organisation's efforts towards the topic, utilising the provided tools and resources to achieve your organisational goals, and connecting with other organisations to share your journey with a wider community.

Acknowledgements

This guide would not be possible without the commitment and contribution of the **Cycle 5 member organisations** who worked with the YIELD Hub over the course of 7 months. The practical recommendations are derived directly from their Action Learning Goals and Implementation activities. Ten organisations participated in the cycle: **Choice for Youth & Sexuality, Advocates for Youth, Paediatric-Adolescent Treatment Africa, SERAC Bangladesh, Plan International, EngenderHealth, Real Justice +, Migration Youth and Children Platform, Major Group of Children and Youth, Restless Development**, and **Young Women in Action**. Through their collective experience and learning, they identified significant areas for reflection, commitment, and recommendations. These have also been compiled into a resource that is accessible on the [YIELD Hub website](#).

Glossary

ALC - Action Learning Cycle

ALG - Action Learning Group

AYSRHR - Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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“We need to reconceptualise young people's input as 'expertise' with inherent value - and as something that shouldn't just come for free by default.”

- ALC 5 Member -

Compensating Youth Work

Discussion around compensating young people is not only a matter of equity but touches on the power dynamics, privilege, and inequality that exist when working with youth. [The State of Youth Civil Society](#) report, a global, youth-led publication, reveals growing inequality from the lack of compensation for youth work. The report findings show two things. First, not compensating youth creates inequality among people working in civil society, including the reproductive health and rights field. Second, despite inclusivity and representation being a major focus of youth initiatives, the sector tends to be predominantly led by young people with higher education and often from middle and upper-class socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, youth advocates and volunteers are often those who can afford to engage in unpaid roles, with those in underserved, less privileged positions and communities left behind.

Themes for Exploration

Several important themes emerged from the topic of Compensating Youth Work. These themes reflect the challenges that many organisations face when striving to fairly compensate youth for their time and efforts, as well as what process and form such compensation should take. Take a moment to **review the themes** below, consider how your organisation implements the practices described under each theme, and **rate your progress** using the scale provided for each theme. Mark the stars to rate your progress.

01. Advocacy

- Our organisation actively engages in advocacy and provides training focused on the importance of fair compensation for young people.
- We have developed and uphold guidelines and policies that ensure fair compensation, and actively participate in related youth councils.



02. Capacity Building

- Young people are involved in significant roles such as coordination and facilitation, and are empowered to co-create resources and programmes.
- Our initiatives enhance the professional development of young people, building their capacity for future leadership and expertise.



03. Stipends

- We provide uniform stipends and create paid opportunities, aiming to retain interns as employees for sustainable engagement.
- Our compensation strategy for young volunteers is transparent and structured to provide them with a pathway to employment.



04. Incentives

- We cover essential expenses such as travel and food, and provide non-financial incentives like certificates and awards to recognise volunteer efforts.
- Our incentive programs are tailored to acknowledge the contributions of young volunteers, fostering their motivation and sustained involvement.



Rating Themes – Scoring Guide



Extremely Effective - Implementation is exemplary and consistently achieves desired outcomes with best practices in place.



Very Effective - Implementation is consistent and successful, with only minor areas for further improvement.



Moderately Effective - Implementation is regular with moderate success, though further enhancements could be made.



Somewhat Effective - Implementation occurs but with inconsistent results, indicating a need for refinement.



Not Effective - Implementation is rare or unsuccessful, with significant room for improvement.

Self-assessment

Lower scores (1-2 stars) suggest starting with Foundational Level strategies in the practical guide to build a stronger basis towards compensating youth work. Moderate scores (3 stars) indicate readiness to refine existing practices. You should look at the guide's Proficient Level recommendations, activities, and tools. High scores (4-5 stars) imply a strong foundation, allowing your organisation to focus on Advanced Level strategies within the guide, aiming for innovation and sector leadership. Whether you're looking to build foundational strategies, enhance your proficient practices, or innovate at an advanced level, the guide provides a valuable resource for progressing in each of these critical areas.

Organisational Levels of Development

The scores above should indicate where your organisation stands in its journey towards ensuring young people are fairly compensated within your organisation. Based on this rating, different means and methods are available to evaluate and achieve your goals. Below are three levels: **Foundational**, **Proficient**, and **Advanced**. Depending on the level of work your organisation has done so far, each level offers recommendations, actions, and tools to help you progress towards your goal. We've created a checklist for each level description to help you determine from which level to begin making use of the recommendations. If you've checked 3 or less points from a level's checklist, this means that this is the level you should begin.

1. Foundational Level

At the foundational level, organisations are beginning to acknowledge the importance of fair compensation for youth workers. These organisations are likely to be in the early stages of developing systems and policies to support equitable compensation, focusing primarily on raising awareness and establishing basic standards.

Checklist

| | |
|--|--|
| | Awareness: We recognise the need for fair compensation and are actively discussing how to implement it. |
| | Policy Development: We are in the process of drafting initial policies or guidelines to ensure fair compensation for youth workers. |
| | Training and Dialogue: We conduct basic training sessions or discussions on the importance of compensating youth fairly. |
| | Youth Engagement: We are starting to engage young people in conversations about their compensation needs and expectations. |
| | Resource Allocation: We allocate resources, albeit limited, towards initiatives aimed at compensating youth workers. |

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Engage youth in the planning process: Involving young people in developing compensation policies and practices from the outset can provide valuable insights and lead to more inclusive and acceptable approaches. This engagement can be a catalyst for more tailored and impactful compensation frameworks that directly address the needs and expectations of youth workers.

2. Proficient Level

Organisations at the proficient level have established systems and practices for compensating youth workers fairly and are actively engaged in improving these practices. These organisations demonstrate a commitment to the principles of equity and transparency in compensation, and are involved in ongoing efforts to enhance the effectiveness of their compensation models.

Checklist

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| | Established Policies: We have established and publicly shared our compensation policies for youth workers. |
| | Regular Review: We regularly review and update our compensation practices to ensure they remain fair and effective. |
| | Stakeholder Engagement: We engage with a broader range of stakeholders, including youth workers, to continuously improve our compensation strategies. |
| | Advanced Training: We provide advanced training and resources to our staff and youth workers on the complexities of fair compensation. |
| | Accountability: We have mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and transparency in our compensation practices. |

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



1. Evaluate and adapt based on feedback: At this stage, your organisation likely has some established policies. It's crucial to regularly gather feedback from the youth you compensate to understand the real impact of these policies. Use this feedback to refine and adapt your approaches, ensuring they remain relevant and effective as circumstances and needs evolve.

1. Foster a learning culture around compensation: Compensation is not just a policy area but a strategic element that can significantly affect motivation and retention. Encourage your team to learn about the latest trends and research in fair compensation practices.

3. Advanced Level

At the advanced level, organisations are leaders in the field of compensating youth workers. These organisations not only have well-established, effective compensation systems but also contribute to broader discussions and advocacy for fair compensation practices. They influence policies at higher levels and are seen as models of best practices in compensating youth work.

Checklist

| | |
|--|---|
| | Leadership and Advocacy: We lead advocacy efforts and influence policy changes at local, national, or international levels regarding fair youth compensation. |
| | Comprehensive Benefits: We offer comprehensive compensation packages that include financial, educational, and professional development benefits for youth workers. |
| | Systemic Impact: Our compensation practices are integrated into our core operational strategies and have a documented impact on organisational success and youth worker retention. |
| | Innovative Practices: We innovate and implement cutting-edge compensation practices that are recognised and emulated by other organisations. |
| | Continuous Improvement: We continuously assess and refine our compensation strategies to adapt to new challenges and opportunities in the field. |

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



1. **Lead in Advocacy and Policy:** Utilise your platform to advocate for better compensation standards. This could include leading campaigns, engaging in policy talks, or partnering with others to improve youth compensation.

1. **Innovate and Set Standards:** Enhance your compensation practices, explore new models like remote work adaptations or results-based schemes. These innovations could benefit your organisation and serve as a model for others.

Recommendations & Sample Actions

You may now move on to the level that indicates your organisational development best and implement the recommendations that align with your goals.

Level 1: Foundational



Establish a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes meaningful compensation for young people

Activities

- Conduct a series of interactive workshops to gather diverse perspectives from young people on what meaningful compensation looks like.
- Develop and distribute a detailed questionnaire to capture a wide range of expectations and experiences regarding compensation.
- Compile findings into a report and use it to guide the development of compensation strategies that resonate with young people.

Tools & Resources

Guide: [Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making](#) by Sam Kaner provides comprehensive techniques for conducting interactive and inclusive workshops.

Resource: [Writing Good Survey Questions](#) by Qualtrics provides best practices for creating effective and unbiased survey questions.

Resource: [Better Evaluation: Data Visualization](#) provides techniques and examples for effectively visualising and presenting data in reports.



Communicate the role of compensation as a catalyst for enabling youth-centred ambitions

Activities

- Launch an online portal where young volunteers can express their career aspirations and receive guidance on leveraging compensation for career advancement.
- Host seminars featuring speakers who have successfully used such compensation strategies to further their careers.
- Establish a mentorship programme that connects young volunteers with professionals who can provide insights into the strategic use of compensation in achieving career goals.

Tools & Resources

Guide: [Creating a Successful Online Portal](#) by the Digital Impact Alliance offers best practices and considerations for launching a user-friendly digital portal.

Guide: [Guide to Planning and Hosting Virtual Events](#) provides a comprehensive guide by Eventbrite on organizing and running successful virtual seminars.

Toolkit: [Designing and Implementing a Successful Mentorship Program](#) available through the Mentoring.org website includes strategies, templates, and evaluation methods.



Level 1: Foundational (cont.)



Explore and implement non-monetary compensation strategies that add value to youth engagements

Activities

- Initiate a certification programme that provides training in skills which are recognised and valued in the industry.
- Set up a collaborative online learning platform offering courses designed to enhance both personal and professional skills.
- Regularly evaluate the impact of these non-monetary benefits on volunteer satisfaction and professional development, and adjust strategies accordingly.

Tools & Resources

Guide: [Developing a Certification Program: What You Need to Know](#) by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence provides a roadmap for developing and implementing a certification program.

Resource: [Online Learning Platform Implementation Guide](#) by GameLearn offers guidance on setting up online learning platforms

Guide: [Guide to Program Evaluation](#) by the CDC provides a framework for conducting program evaluations, particularly useful for non-profits evaluating non-monetary benefits.

Level 2: Proficient



Secure leadership support and understanding for the role of compensation in enhancing young volunteers contributions

Activities

- Arrange quarterly meetings with organisational leaders to present updates on the impact and effectiveness of current compensation strategies.
- Regularly discuss compensation and benefits strategies with colleagues and volunteers. Leverage human-centered design processes to gain buy-in from all stakeholders.
- Use capacity building, negotiation, and endorsements to convince resistant senior management. Invite leadership to participate in consultations or interviews with young people.

Tools & Resources

Resource: [Leadership Meeting Guide](#) focuses on facilitating effective leadership meetings.

Resource: [Guide to Designing Immersive Learning Experiences](#) by eLearning Industry, tailored for non-profits looking to engage their stakeholders through hands-on learning experiences.

Toolkit: [Experiential Learning Toolkit](#) by Niagara College Canada, designed for creating immersive experiences that connect leaders with on-the-ground activities.



Level 2: Proficient (cont.)



Incorporate young people into the planning, execution, and evaluation phases of projects to enhance ownership

Activities

- Implement a participatory design process that actively involves young volunteers in decision-making and planning of new projects.
- Conduct annual workshops where young volunteers can evaluate the projects they are involved in and suggest improvements.
- Develop a continuous feedback mechanism to ensure that young people's voices are heard and acted upon throughout project cycles.

Tools & Resources

Toolkit: [Participatory Design Toolkit](#) by the Community Tool Box, provides methods and best practices for engaging volunteers in the design processes within development projects.

Guide: [A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Planning](#) by Enabling Change, offers strategies for planning and conducting effective workshops that lead to actionable outcomes.

Resource: [Feedback Mechanisms Guide](#) by Feedback Labs, provides detailed instructions on setting up and maintaining feedback channels.



Develop and test innovative financing mechanisms to streamline and enhance compensation processes

Activities

- Collaborate with fintech startups to create user-friendly, digital payment solutions tailored for young volunteers.
- Undertake a pilot study to assess the administrative and practical impacts of new financing models on both the organisation and its volunteers.
- Map alternative funding sources and identify programs that can support organisational initiatives.
- Engage senior management to include a budget line for compensating young people in each project.

Tools & Resources

Guide: [Fintech Partnerships Guide](#) offers strategies for non-profits to establish successful collaborations with fintech companies.

Guide: [Guide to Managing Pilot Studies for Development Projects](#) details the steps for conducting effective pilot studies.

Resource: [Non-Profit Financial Management Toolkit](#) provides practical tools and techniques for non-profit staff to manage finances effectively, including adapting to new financial mechanisms.

Level 3: Advanced



Formulate a globally adaptable yet locally relevant youth compensation policy

Activities

- Formulate a policy development team comprising young leaders and seasoned policymakers to draft adaptable compensation guidelines. Organise group meetings with a diverse set of advisors, including policymakers, academics, young people, and NGOs to discuss better compensation mechanisms.
- Negotiate with donors to maintain uniform stipends for young people.
- Create a comprehensive implementation guide, including case studies and adaptation strategies for varying organisational contexts.

Tools & Resources

Toolkit: [Policy Development Toolkit](#) by the International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) Network, is designed to assist in the drafting and refinement of policies in a globally connected yet locally adaptable manner.

Guide: [Guide to Policy Making](#) is tailored for creating policies in the non-profit and development sector.

Resource: [Implementation Guide for Non-profit Policies](#) by the Council of Nonprofits, offers detailed steps for the adoption and adaptation of policies across different regions.



Enhance financial literacy among young volunteers to empower them towards financial independence

Activities

- Incorporate financial management training into existing volunteer development programmes.
- Schedule regular financial education workshops focused on investment and savings strategies tailored to young people.
- Partner with local financial institutions to provide bespoke financial planning services to young volunteers.

Tools & Resources

Guide: [Integrating Financial Management into Volunteer Training Programs](#) has detailed instructions on how to embed financial management skills into existing training modules for volunteers.

Resource: [Implementation Guide for Non-profit Policies](#) by the Council of Nonprofits, offers detailed steps for the adoption and adaptation of policies across different regions.

Manual: [Financial Training Manual for Non-Profit Administrators](#) offers comprehensive training on financial tools and mechanisms tailored to non-profit settings.

Resource: [Guide to Building Partnerships with Financial Institutions](#) provides steps for non-profits to form effective collaborations with banks and financial services to benefit their constituents.



Level 3: Advanced (conti.)



Advocate for adherence to minimum wage standards across civil society organisations

Activities

- Establish a collaborative advocacy group dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair compensation within the NGO sector.
- Launch a monitoring initiative to regularly assess and report on wage practices among civil society organisations.
- Host educational forums for civil society leaders to discuss the importance of adhering to minimum wage standards and the benefits it brings.

Tools & Resources

Resource: [Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships](#) by Community Tool Box offers detailed steps on forming and managing advocacy coalitions, especially in promoting issues like fair compensation.

Manual: [Minimum Wage Systems](#) outlines methods and tools for monitoring wage practices within non-profits and ensuring compliance with wage standards.

Guide: [Minimum Wage Forum Planning Guide for Non-Profits](#) includes tips on organising, promoting, and facilitating forums focused on wage standards and policy impacts.

Next Steps

Congratulations if you've reached the end of this resource. We understand that this is just the start of a journey that involves time, unlearning, consultations, substantial collaboration, and considerable budget support. We advise organisations to use this guide as a starting point for introspection and action. Engage with the themes, implement the recommendations, and take concrete steps towards incorporating these insights into your organisational strategies. Remember, the journey of compensating youth workers fairly is ongoing. We urge you to connect with others in this field, share your experiences and learnings, and continue contributing to the evolving narrative of youth engagement.



Taking action

Still not sure where to start? Take our **Compensating Youth Work Quiz** to find out which level of actions apply to your organisation.

[Start Quiz](#)



Connect & Share

- Is your organisation on the journey to engage and sustain youth leaders? We'd love to hear how this resource is helping you take action. **Tag us on social media, and include #LearningActivation**
- If you have made significant progress towards your goal but need more personalised and direct support, you can contact us. The YIELD Hub provides technical assistance in the form of consultancy services for organisations interested in delving deeper. **Send us an email, info@yieldhub.global**

We deeply appreciate the ALC 5 member organisations for their invaluable contributions and insights. Their seven-month dedication was crucial in creating this comprehensive guide.

We also extend our thanks to you, the reader, for your dedication to this significant cause. Your efforts to fairly compensate youth workers help support our mission to meaningfully establish youth partnership as the norm rather than the exception in the AYSRHR field.

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