

## ACTION LEARNING CYCLE #7

# Compensating Youth Work, Vol. 2

## Recommendations from Action Learning Members

Youth advocates and volunteers from underserved, less privileged positions and communities often face significant challenges when they cannot afford to work in unpaid roles. The organisations participating in the YIELD Hub’s 7th Collective Action Learning Cycle have identified key gaps and challenges in compensating youth for their time and efforts. Based on their reflections and experiences, the following tips and recommendations are proposed to support organisations in improving their practices and commitment to fair youth compensation.

*"It's important to clarify what we mean by compensation. Often, we immediately think of monetary compensation, which we sometimes provide to youth, although many places don't. It's also important to give youth a seat at the table. This is tied to respect, but if we don't truly value their opinions or their expertise, we're not showing them the respect they deserve. These are examples of discrimination."*  
 - Kuhika Seth (Gender Specialist) -

Over their seven-month Action Learning journey, these organisations collaborated to design and implement practical solutions through Action Learning goals aimed at enhancing their approach to youth compensation.



**Adolescent Accelerators Research Hub, Centre for Social Science Research:** To develop, document and advocate for models of participation-compensation that are skill and financial-based and inform the baseline ethics for each project working with young people. This will further produce practical procedures and scholarship unique to the Hub regarding youth compensation. We will enable the Hub to conceptualise, plan, budget and schedule, in preparation for and in parallel with the research process, SOP-guided skill-based and financial compensation models for “meaningful youth engagement” in research.



**Albanian Center for Population and Development:** To create a fair and sustainable way to compensate volunteers in order to engage a larger number of youth within our organisation and create sustainable collaboration with them. This means making sure their contributions, skills, and time are properly valued and rewarded. By doing this, we aim to improve their involvement, keep them motivated, and support their well-being. This also shows our dedication to fairness, respect, and empowerment in our organisation.



**Independent Researchers - Kuhika Seth & Shailza:** To establish by March 2025 a sustainable and fair compensation framework for the youth research participants by ensuring that their data insights and efforts in terms of time, emotional labour, and engagement in research activities are acknowledged by centering their voices around being compensated in a fair and ethical manner.





**The Summit Foundation:** To explore how we as a funder can understand the best ways to support grantees to have systems in place to address fair youth compensation (whether monetary or nontraditional forms of compensation) to appropriately value youth contributions to programs (such as adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights peer programs or after-school educational programs).



**The Torchlight Collective:** To establish a youth consultancy incubation hub within The Torchlight Collective by the end of 2024 that provides a six month programme for young consultants under the age of 26 (30?) with the infrastructure, collateral, and guidance to secure contracts.



**YoSHAN:** Initiated the process of engaging their current donors to emphasise the importance of compensating youth work, aiming to secure extra flexible funding that can support capacity development and fair compensation for their youth volunteers.

Beyond their institutional action learning goals to improve youth compensation within their work, the group members also identified some field-wide gaps when it comes to compensating youth work.

**The group has identified the following gaps and challenges that hinder the fair compensation of youth work in the broader youth engagement field.**

## The Gaps

### Lack of Sustainable Funding



Many organisations struggle to secure consistent funding to compensate youth adequately. Short-term, project-based funding often limits the ability to sustain compensation efforts.

### Inconsistent Compensation Practices



There is a lack of standardised guidelines for compensating youth, leading to inconsistent practices across organisations. Some rely on non-monetary compensation, while others struggle to provide even basic financial support.

### Ethical and Institutional Barriers



There is a lack of standardised guidelines for compensating youth, leading to inconsistent practices across organisations. Some rely on non-monetary compensation, while others struggle to provide even basic financial support.

### Limited Capacity for Fundraising and Strategic Planning



Many youth-led organisations lack the expertise and resources to develop effective fundraising strategies, which hinders their ability to secure funding for youth compensation.



To reduce these gaps, the group proposes a set of recommendations to support organisations that are open and willing to improve their practices and commitment to compensating youth work.

## Recommendations

### A. Advocate for Flexible Funding Models

Organisations should work with funders to advocate for flexible funding models that include provisions for youth compensation. This could involve co-creating compensation policies with funders and grantees to ensure that youth contributions are valued and adequately compensated.

### B. Document and Share Best Practices

Organisations should document their compensation best practices and share these with the broader field. Case studies and success stories can help build a collective understanding of what works and inspire other organisations to adopt similar practices.

### C. Engage Youth in Compensation Discussions

Youth should be actively involved in discussions about compensation. Conduct surveys and focus groups to understand their needs and preferences. This ensures that compensation strategies and guidelines are aligned with what youth value most, whether it's financial support, skill development, or career opportunities. This includes engaging youth in research and revising ethical guidelines that recognise the value of youth contributions and allow for fair compensation, including monetary and skill-building opportunities.

### D. Support Youth to Fundraise

Provide capacity-building workshops and training on fundraising, grant writing, and strategic planning to help organisations secure sustainable funding.

### Collective Advocacy

Compensating youth for their time and efforts is a matter of fairness, strategic investment in their leadership, and the sustainability of youth-led initiatives. Advocacy efforts on compensation should be a joint effort of donors, INGOs, implementers, and youth-led organisations. By adopting these recommendations, organisations can create a more equitable and supportive environment for youth participation, ensuring that their contributions are valued and rewarded.

While these recommendations are not exhaustive, they serve as a starting point for further reflections for relevant stakeholders within the AYSRHR field. We invite you to share and, where applicable, integrate some of these recommendations into your ongoing efforts to compensate youth work fairly.

