

## Guidelines for Evaluating Stipend Requests in POP Grant Applications

*For projects operated by and for people with lived experience of serious mental illness*

### Background

Peer Operated Project (POP) Grants (maximum \$3,000) support non-commercial, peer-led projects that provide services, supports, or opportunities that would otherwise not be available to people with lived experience of “serious mental illness.” Some projects may request funds to cover materials or event costs; others may include stipends to recognize the labor of project facilitators or organizers. Stipends are allowed but must be justified and aligned with the goals of the program.

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## Reviewer Guidelines: Stipends

### 1. Purpose of the Stipend

Stipends may be used to acknowledge the time, skill, and lived experience of individuals facilitating or coordinating the project. These are *not wages or contractor payments* but a way to support meaningful participation and leadership by peers.

Reviewers should ask:

- Does the stipend support a person or people doing real work (e.g., facilitating, organizing, producing) central to the project’s success?
- Is the work being compensated distinctly peer-led and grounded in lived experience?

### 2. Reasonableness of Amount

- Stipend requests should reflect the time and responsibility involved, not exceed what is necessary, and leave room in the budget for other project costs.
- In general, total stipends should not exceed **50% of the grant** (i.e., no more than \$1,500 total across all individuals for a \$3,000 grant) **unless** a clear and compelling justification is provided.

### 3. Transparency and Clarity

Strong applications will clearly specify:

- Who will receive the stipend
- What role(s) they will perform
- Estimated hours or effort involved
- Why this labor is essential to the project

#### 4. Nonprofit Character and Community Impact

- Stipends must support *non-income-generating* activities
- The project should benefit others with lived experience, not just the stipend recipient(s).

#### 5. Equity and Accessibility

- Will the stipend help someone who might otherwise be unable to lead the project (e.g., due to financial hardship)?
- Is the stipend helping to diversify who can meaningfully participate in or lead survivor efforts?

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#### Examples of Appropriate Stipend Use

- A \$300 stipend to a peer with lived experience facilitating a six-session wellness group
- A \$500 stipend for a project coordinator managing logistics, outreach, and evaluation
- A \$1,000 total for two peer artists creating and installing a community art display

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#### Red Flags

- Vague or unspecified stipend purpose (“for my time” without describing duties)
  - Stipend equals or exceeds \$1,500 with little or no budget allocated to activity costs
  - Proposal lacks clarity about whether stipend is for peer labor or for-profit activity
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