

GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH DONATIONS ON BEHALF OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

In 2008, the Centre for Health Promotion Research (CHPR) at the University of British Columbia (UBC) began an innovative approach to giving back to the community. Study participants were given the choice of donating to a community organization (through research funds) or receiving an alternative equivalent compensation (e.g., a protein/energy bar). In the first study in which this approach was used, 69% of participants chose to donate, resulting in a total of \$2,428 donated across three community organizations.

The purpose of the following guidelines is to help interested researchers incorporate this approach into their research projects. It is a win-win for everyone, including the researchers, the staff/students hired to collect data, the study participants and the individuals who benefit from the selected community organizations.

Choosing a Community Organization

Many community organizations exist. How do you choose which organization to donate to? This step may require a search or asking around. Here are some suggested criteria:

- *Relevance*
Choose an organization whose purpose is related to your research, such as similar catchment area (e.g., inner-city), similar topic (e.g., community capacity building), etc.
- *Registered charity or social enterprise (100%)*
Choose an organization that is a registered charity or is a social enterprise that reinvests 100% of its profits back into its social programs (e.g., jobs/training for those who face multiple barriers to traditional employment).
- *Known organizations*
Choose an organization that has received positive review, e.g., by word of mouth from community members, won an award, etc.

Contacting the Community Organization

It is a courtesy to inform the organization about the study and the potential donation, seek the organization's support, and request information materials about the organization that can be provided to study participants. This is done through an initial letter and follow-up after.

Deciding on the Amount of Donation per Participant

The amount of donation or equivalent compensation should be related to the average length of time a participant is anticipated to be involved in the study. The amount should be calculated based on *no less* than the minimum wage. For example, if the minimum wage is \$8/hr and a survey takes 15 minutes, then the calculated donation or equivalent compensation would be \$2 ($\$8/\text{hr} * 0.25\text{h} = \2) or more.

Informing the Study Participant

As part of UBC ethics and required procedures, potential study participants will be informed of the compensation choice, just like they would be informed were there only one type of

compensation offered. All procedural, contact, and consent materials should list all compensation choices available (donation or equivalents).

Study participants may also be provided with information material about the organization, if the study participant requests it.

Recording the Choice of Compensation

All decisions about compensation must be recorded (e.g., in a compensation log). However, it is not necessary to associate the choice of compensation with each participant (but it may be done). Participants should be given the choice to have their name identified in the donation letter to the organization (along with the cheque).

Processing the Donation

Once calculated, the donation amount may be submitted as a research expense for compensation for study participants. A letter on department letterhead may be used to do this at UBC. Indicate that you will pick up the cheque (so you can personally deliver it to the organization).

Presenting the Donation to the Organization

Compose a letter to the organization specifying the donation amount, and list the names of any individuals who wished to be identified in the letter to the organization. Bring this letter and cheque with you when you meet with the organization (e.g., the Executive Director).