

April 15, 2024: Equity Committee Meeting

ORESJ Lived Experience Advisory Board Updates: Stipends, Timeline

Vision and Purpose of Lived Experience Advisory Board

The Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB) will nurture and hold the vision and purpose of the ORESJ, and function as a space for thought partnership, strategic planning and consensus building. The ORESJ Directors will lead efforts in designing the LEAB's structure, role, responsibilities, and functions, as well as in facilitating the transition process between the Core Committee and the LEAB.

With feedback from the Equity Committee (March 18, 2024), and in collaboration with the Core Committee, the ORESJ Co-Directors prepared updates on the stipend proposal and timeline:

Stipends: Best Practices and Recommended Approach

The ORESJ is committed to designing and implementing specific practices that are responsive to communities who have been historically excluded from full participation in the systems we seek to improve. Equity is bolstered by community engagement, and removing financial and other barriers plays a critical role in fostering meaningful participation of individuals who are often most marginalized from government processes yet directly impacted by its policies and programs. Asking community members with lower financial resources and limited time to volunteer their labor, energy, and expertise while employees and representatives of public systems, service providers, and advocacy organizations receive compensation from their respective agency or organization for their time and experience ultimately hinders full and open public participation. It is now an accepted and growing practice across sectors (i.e. education, research, violence prevention, healthcare, social change enterprises, homelessness, etc.) to implement practices that remove financial and other barriers so that community members and residents have increased access to government spaces and can meaningfully engage in public discussions and decision-making processes, ultimately leading to more equitable and sustainable policy and program outcomes. Towards this end, the ORESJ's Lived Experience Advisory Board will serve as a pilot program to test effective compensation practices for members and serve as a potential model for other county advisory bodies.

Countywide Advisory Body Participation

Contra Costa County has 90+ advisory bodies and commissions for which community members are appointed to serve specific terms. The residents who serve on these bodies bring a strong sense of public service and commitment to particular issues or areas of interest. These members provide oversight of county initiatives, develop recommendations, and share real-time concerns from their communities, and in the process, they often incur expenses (e.g. transportation, childcare, food, etc.) and sacrifice personal time (e.g. family time, taking time

off work, etc.). These expenses and sacrifices pose a significant barrier to participation for low-income community members of color and residents with lived and living experiences of systems harm.

Several Contra Costa County agencies already recognize the value and importance of engaging community members for whom their policies directly impact and have implemented reimbursement policies to mitigate barriers. For example, parents who serve on the Head Start Policy Council receive mileage and childcare reimbursement, as well as dinner/meals, greatly improving their ability to participate fully while also enhancing their civil service experience overall.

LEAB Stipends Proposal: A Pilot Program

Grounded in the recommendations for the establishment of the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ), presented to the Board of Supervisors in October 2022, the Co-Directors propose a stipend pilot offering with the following goals:

- To explore the impact of providing stipends and implementing other inclusive practices that mitigate barriers and allow for enhanced, meaningful participation of community members with lived and living experiences of systems harm
- To establish a feasible and effective model of recognition and compensation for advisory body members, particularly for those with extenuating circumstances and lived conditions that pose financial barriers for participation.

In our research efforts these past few weeks, we have discovered a range of administrative and legal (i.e. labor, taxes, reporting) implications that warrant further research. We will continue to explore what is needed to effectively and responsibly implement a robust stipend policy that is practical, sustainable, and that does not pose added burden on participants.

LEAB Development Timeline (Revised)

Dates	Activities
June 2024	Develop Announcement and Recruiting Materials
July 2024	LEAB Outreach; Receive Applications
August 2024	LEAB Interviews
September 2024	Equity Committee Recommendations
October 2024	LEAB Members Appointed by Board of Supervisors