

Volunteer living expenses (formerly known as Compensatory budget)

(approved by coordination team for XR summer 2018)

The Issue

Organisations for social change tend to approach the issue of payment for those involved in either of two ways:

1. Traditional charity / NGO route where funds are raised to pay people a salary and people do change work as their “job”
2. Volunteer run organisations - no one is paid

There are problems with both of these approaches. With 1. salary levels are set by the “market” and people approach the work largely as a career rather than a calling. The organisation focuses on surviving and paying people within it. This is a distraction from the apparent purpose of the organisation. Funders and funding pots end up shaping the strategy and focus of the organisation. Organisational goals are inherently compromised.

With approach 2. People are limited as to how much time they can contribute and those with “independent means” can dominate, simply because they have access to time others don’t. Whilst the organisation is naturally run by those with the deepest passions- why else “work for free” - the situation leaves activists trying to manage earning the costs of living around doing the work they really believe in. This can be a significant contributor to drop out and burn out. This gets in the way of achieving critical mass that our movement badly need.

A Third Way!?

We believe that relying on either of the two models above are a key issue preventing radical change in the UK and wider. Rising Up! is attempting to develop a volunteers “living expense” model for activists in which small amounts of payments can be made to help people “keep their heads above water”. This would never be comparable to a salary in either its “hourly rate” or its reliability. It is simply a form of small payment that allows someone to pay a few bills or mean they don’t need to work other jobs for a period of time.

In principle it might cover fines accrued but it is generally best to not agree this upfront because of the possibility of conspiracy charges and potential pressure on funders that may result (there are also benefits to crowd funding for fines- it shares the story and gives others a way to participate). Our draft proposal for how this might work is below and we are hoping to learn from examples elsewhere if anyone knows of them. RisingUp! will also continue to pay volunteers out of pocket expenses where possible such as travel costs.

Examples

Re-inventing Organisations - Frederick Laloux - staff members in organisations transparently say what they want to be paid and why. A culture of openness and accountability mean people are not “greedy” or “unrealistic”

Cosecha - Carlos Savedra’s organisation for undocumented migrants in the US. During a training Carlos shared that they never attempt to pay salaries, but they do have houses for key organisers to get basic needs met. Occasionally they can pay a small amount- basically some pocket money.

Rising Up - we have paid some set, small amounts to those that have committed to a three week period of frontline work for a specific campaign (SKL and VNH) so that money doesn’t get in the way of people participating and ending up in jail.

ARE THEIR OTHER EXAMPLES? - WE WOULD LIKE TO LEARN FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS THAT FUNCTION AS DISTRIBUTED NETWORKS FOCUSED ON SOCIAL CHANGE. We have been posting on forums to see if others have thoughts and ideas.

How this could work going forwards

The process for the Volunteers Living Expenses should be largely based in holocracy, with the possibility of a “flag being raised” if something feels “wrong” to those involved - a person asking for a very large amount of money, or over-estimating their abilities and so on.

Living Expenses would depend on:

- money available
- the strategy and key work that needs doing / the skills of those offering to do it
- a transparent and fair process which also includes encouraging the more “shy” to participate

Fairness should take into account:

- whether someone has been around in RU for sometime- say a minimum of a month - to verify commitment and skill level
- an understanding of power dynamics- setting a process up which mitigates for those who are more likely to ask over those less likely to value themselves (class, race and gender play a role here for example)
- energy and experience levels- an older person may do less in terms of volume and more in terms of quality due to experience (whilst not wishing to be ageist- this is clearly a generalisation)
- other needs and circumstances - do people have dependents for example- a person's circumstances may mean they need to ask for more (eg dependents) or less (eg already own a house or have other income)

For anyone serious about spending time or focussing their lives on struggles for justice, for ecological sanity, Rising Up! folks encourage each other to find ways to create space in our

lives - by minimising the need for money - live differently, live frugally. By taking care of our physical, mental and spiritual health so we can do this in the long haul.....

Draft Process *for discussion*

1. The finance team and holding group (supported by the advisory group) confirm that money is available (a specific amount) to support a strategic aim of RU - this can be a development process or a campaign
2. The coordinators of the development or campaign confirm the key roles and skills that need to be fulfilled- those in the campaign can also make suggestions which can include innovative ideas
3. In an open process people offer time and skills and make a request for compensation. This is likely to be in the ballpark of £2-300pw (at the most- probably less), unless someone is offering a professional skill that is part of the income they rely on - i.e they are substituting paid work at their professional rates to help us out on a “mates rate”. Monies would not be indefinite- they would be for set periods, likely short and to be reconfirmed if work continues- no one should assume in the business of a campaign that since work carried on payments can carry on. Thus RU and compensatee should be clear about the level of compensation before the skill is used
4. The coordination team of the project / campaign (and finance team too if there are fewer than 4 people involved) give advice and feedback to the person making the request, upon which basis they may make a second, adjusted proposal if deemed necessary
5. In rare circumstances the coordination team may “raise a flag” of concern about a proposal - for review by the holding group and finance deciding team. This breaks the holocracy of the process but allows for risk to be mitigated

So far Seedbed and Guerilla Foundation have been open to contributing this kind of funding request and other radical funders may well be too.

Nov 13th- Clarification of process following a coordination meeting (recorded here for historical record- the process has changed- see below)

1. UNDERSTAND THE ETHOS: Ensure people understand the ethos of this process- that it isn't employment, or reasonable days rates, its to stop volunteers that are absolutely essential to immediate network functioning from starving or not being able to pay bills. The [write up is here](#) (below) about our Volunteer Living Expenses (compensatory budget) ethos. We need to stay decentralised and not have a “staff” vs volunteers divide going off or it will kill us for various reasons.
2. IS MONEY AVAILABLE: If someone wants to make a request for Living Expenses then the first thing to do is check that money is [available in our budget spreadsheet](#). Look at

the first line- income minus expenditure - and check it is a positive number and more than the request!

3. IS THE WORK ESSENTIAL: Working group [coordinators are here](#)- they have the sign off for what work their group most needs. They should also check the amount being asked for is not going to appear “over the top” and raise a flag if it is. Eg if someone “needs £1000 for a day of work because they also have to pay their kids school fees...” Coords can share this task with other in their team who they have developed a trusting relationship with.
4. IF THE TWO CONDITIONS ABOVE ARE MET: the money is made available. The amount should be logged in the [spreadsheet IMMEDIATELY](#) (in the area around 24f). DO NOT agree to money and then not put it in the spreadsheet. Do not randomly agree to money to people. You can say it’s possible / probable, but you have to have someone in your team do this admin. Or our finances will fall over.
5. LOG THE COMPENSATION [here](#), so that the process of why someone got something is clear and transparent for everyone. It’s essential that people understand our aim shortly is to be fully transparent with finances. So names and amounts will be publicly available. People need to be on top of any issues that receiving money creates re tax bills, changes to benefits or any other personal arrangements. XR aren’t responsible for these issues, the individual is.
6. TO CLAIM the compensatory amount please use [this form](#) and email Rob Basto cc the person who followed the process above / your coord contact who can agree that the above was satisfied and the money should be paid (crazyco22@yahoo.co.uk) Please note that the first £15 of anything claimed should be covered by the volunteer, so that we can stretch our budget as much as possible.

WE AIM TO BE SUPER TRANSPARENT about money- this is important and good!

FEB 2019 finance [processes and policies are here.](#)