

# STUDENT ENERGY COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

## Context Setting

In a world where the future of work is uncertain and young people face increased competition for meaningful work, there is a global misconception that youth are willing to work for free. We see this in ongoing issues of uncompensated youth labour, such as unpaid youth internship programs and the under-funding of youth-led initiatives.

When sector leaders undervalue youth contributions to the workplace, it aggravates a systems-level equity issue. More career opportunities are inherently available to young people from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, due to the access issues of working for free, and sectors like climate and energy continue to lack the diversity and representation needed to accelerate innovative and inclusive solutions. In educational institutions and many volunteer-led organizations, youth do not gain the important skills of learning how to advocate for themselves and for their labour to be compensated which further enables this issue to persist.

## Introduction: Student Energy's Youth Compensation Policy

Through this **Youth Compensation Policy** Student Energy aims to set an example to our global community by setting parameters around how youth are compensated and recognized for their contributions to our programs and partners.

This policy will serve three key objectives:

1. Our community of organizations and partners will follow suit in our commitment to valuing youth contributions. This in turn supports them internalizing the value of youth.
2. Our community of youth will build trust in Student Energy's commitment to advocating for their participation in spaces in meaningful and equitable ways.
3. Student Energy will be better aligned with our own Theory of Change, maintain our organizational integrity to our community, and be more resilient to scrutiny resulting from growing standards of accountability for large global charities.

Compensation is not a requirement for all of Student Energy's programs. For many of our programs, like Student Energy Chapters, we provide a supportive and flexible model for youth to engage and gain valuable experiences leading their own projects and solutions as part of a team. Student Energy values the role of volunteerism and working to better your communities. Many of Student Energy's core programs like Chapters and the Student Energy Summit enable youth to gain this experience and build community connections while still in school or exploring their careers.

In contrast, Student Energy's growing **Space for Youth** program requires youth to participate at a defined commitment threshold to create value for Student Energy's partner network and provide

input to Student Energy’s strategic growth. When a program requires (1) a minimum threshold of participation – generally any program that requires 4-hours of commitment weekly for a minimum of four-months – and (2) requires participants to take on the responsibility of providing input to stakeholders while representing a broader youth perspective, Student Energy will offer compensation that reduces barriers to youth participation. In the long run, we see this as an important area of work to increase the accessibility of professional development opportunities, support broader network building, and bring diverse perspectives and lived experiences into energy transition solutions.

### Why Compensation?

Compensation is a point of **access**. The youth that we work with have many different commitments, and for some, engaging in one of our programs may take an individual away from another commitment in their life, like paid employment. Uncompensated labor can be a barrier to a young person being able to participate in our programs due to socioeconomic factors.

Compensation **validates** that youth contributions and diverse knowledge is valued by Student Energy and the partners we work with. Compensation functions as one of many ways to show our gratitude to youth for taking the time to engage with us and our partners, and in the long-run we see compensation as a way to build long-lasting relationships and trust with our youth network.

### Why Compensated Youth Labour is Essential to Deliver on Student Energy’s Theory of Change

Theory of Change	Role of Compensation
Understand Value of Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicating the need for youth at certain commitment thresholds to be compensated supports our partners to <b>internalize</b> and <b>recognize</b> the value of youth as important stakeholders in determining the energy future.</li> </ul>
Instill Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compensating youth teaches young people that their knowledge and labor is of value, emphasizing that while they are accessing an opportunity, the organization is benefiting greatly from their contributions as well.</li> </ul>
Devote Resources to Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devoting resources to youth means not only devoting our time, networks, and programming to youth, but also devoting financial resources to youth recognizing that young people face disproportionate barriers to accessing financial compensation for their labour.</li> </ul>

## Assessing When Compensation is Required of a Program

### Areas to consider when determining if/when compensation is appropriate:

- A. The time commitment required of youth to participate. Consider this in hypothetical scenarios where young people may have other commitments in their lives.
- B. The experience or expertise the project requires from youth participants. Lived experiences and non-Western sources of knowledge should be valued highly here.
- C. Program or project deliverables and stakeholders involved.
  - a. Are youth required to take on research, provide recommendations, and spend time collaborating and finding consensus among each other?
  - b. Are youth providing these inputs not just for the benefit of their individual experience, but for the benefit of stakeholders involved?
- D. Duration of the commitment.

### Student Energy program compensation considerations:

- An expressed time commitment of five hours or more per month, for an extended period of time (3 months or greater)
- Significant deliverables (ie; research, program facilitation)
- Published work
- The requirement of unique/specific expertise
- Work that is typically compensated for non-youth actors in the industry (ie; consulting)

### Compensation model: Global Youth Energy Outlook Regional Coordinators Honoraria

Responsibilities:	Regional research, communications, regional youth engagement, virtual engagement
Time Commitment:	4-6 hours/week
Duration:	21 Weeks
Honorarium:	\$2500, approx. \$20.00/hr

The Global Youth Energy outlook Regional Coordinators not only assist us in conducting preliminary research, they also lead in regional communication and youth outreach and engagement, largely online. **The GYEO is not possible without our coordinators** and their contributions are extremely valuable not only to Student Energy, but to every individual who will read the outlook. They are gaining skills in research, communication, and youth engagement, and we are gaining from their leadership skills, time commitment, network, and expertise. With

these contributions, unique skills, and time commitment considered we feel it is important to include compensation in our thanks to the coordinators.

### **Accountability Measures:**

Surrounding the facilitation of compensation (in the form of honoraria), we commit to:

- Communicating that honoraria is a token of our appreciation, but is not equivalent to formal employment with Student Energy.
- Providing the training necessary training for the individual to succeed in their role
- Being flexible in the delivery of honoraria to accommodate participants (whether it be via gift card, direct funds, etc.)
- Equity around compensation. All participants are expected to meet the standard of participation as described and agreed to within the program, and are to be compensated with the understanding that they have met the program requirements.
- Communicating what the compensative amount will be at the onset of a program.
- Being timely with disbursements.

### **The risk of not compensating youth**

- Limits to engagement: programs will remain inaccessible for individuals for whom compensation is a barrier
- Limits organizational ability to deliver on the theory of change
- Opens the organization to criticism

Student Energy facilitates a number of ongoing and emerging programs each year with various partners, and seeking to place a fixed monetary amount for all our programs overlooks the unique opportunities, methods of engagement, and contributions youth bring to each and every program. Rather than formalize a standard amount for all engagements youth have with Student Energy, we hope to set a standard of thinking thoughtfully of how youth engage with each individual program, and how compensation can contribute to the many ways we show thanks to those who share their knowledge, experience, and expertise with us.