

Equitable Engagement Payment Policy – Public FAQs

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Why we created the Equitable Engagement Payment Policy

What is the Equitable Engagement Payment Policy?

The EECPP will pay Oregonians who participate in our engagement and input activities, like focus groups, advisory committees, evaluations, and more. Participants will receive a one-time incentive payment or a stipend, depending on the specifics of the activity. A third option for direct service contracts with individuals or community-based organizations – Community Engagement Contracts – is also available.

Why is ODOT doing this?

ODOT regularly seeks input from community members on various projects, plans, policies, and administrative rules. Yet, our current approach to this engagement does not address a critical barrier to participation: unpaid time.

Unpaid time can manifest in several ways, like taking time off work, travel expenses, childcare costs, and other expenses. It costs time and money to engage with us, and this barrier is higher for many people and communities. This means we are not hearing the voices of people and communities impacted by our work.

Payment will help address this issue by lowering the unpaid time barrier and will allow more people to give us input on our work. As a result, our engagement will be more equitable, resulting in work and decisions that better reflect the communities we serve.

Is ODOT the only state agency doing this?

No. Other state agencies – the Department of Land Conservation and Development, Department of Human Services, and Oregon Health Authority – have similar programs and many local jurisdictions. All have successfully used payment as a tool to start closing equity gaps in their engagement activities.

Is ODOT just paying people to say what they want to hear?

No. The EECP is intended to make it easier for people to participate in our engagement activities. The program will pay them for taking time out of their day to give us specific feedback and will not affect our public engagement process beyond that.

Is this a permanent program?

Yes.

How the EECP works

Payment

What form does the payment take?

Incentives and stipends are provided exclusively in prepaid cash cards. We can offer them in physical or digital form, depending on the participant's preference.

Under Community Engagement Contracts, which are direct procurement services, we can make payments to an individual or community-based organization for services like: serving on multiple committees, or a community-based organization acting on behalf of ODOT as outreach ambassadors.

What's the difference between incentives, stipends and community engagement contracts?

Incentives are payments to specific participants for targeted one-time meetings, activities or events. Examples include focus groups, workshops, hiring or evaluation panels, etc.

Stipends are payments to participants on advisory committees or similar groups that *meet at least twice as part of a series*. Stipends would be used for committees or groups that advise ODOT on projects, policies, rulemaking, etc.

Community Engagement Contracts procure services directly with an individual or a community-based organization for specific deliverables. Some non-exhaustive examples: formal written comments; individuals or community organizations that sit on multiple concurrent groups, projects, or efforts; or community organizations acting as outreach ambassadors on behalf of ODOT.

How much is the payment to participants?

For incentives and stipends, we'll pay participants at \$20 - \$30 per hour, depending on several factors, for example, the complexity of the activity they participate in.

Rates for Community Engagement Contracts are calculated differently based on specific tasks or deliverables, not stipends or incentives. Therefore, rates are between the agency and the individual/organization.

Can participants opt-out of receiving payment?

Yes, they may opt-out even if they qualify for payment.

Is there a limit to how much ODOT can pay an individual?

There is no limit to lifetime payment for an individual, as long as they (and the activity) continue to meet the qualifying criteria.

Are participants taxed on the payment?

Participants who receive more than \$600 in payment in a given calendar year are required by law to report that income on their taxes. ODOT Financial Services will track payment for all individuals participating in the EECP and issue 1099 misc. tax forms when needed.

Does ODOT offer a higher payment for individuals who participate more frequently, or at a higher level, compared to others on the same project?

No. All participants are paid the same amount, agreed on by the project team.

The only factor affecting payment rates among individuals in the same activity would be if a participant didn't show up for that activity. See the question "What if an enrolled participant does not show up for an activity?" for more information.

Does ODOT pay individuals for time spent preparing for an engagement activity?

No, we do not consider time preparing outside of the set activity hours as part of the activity.

For example, if an activity is set at two hours, and an eligible participant spends four hours preparing then attends the activity, they would only be paid for those two hours spent at the activity.

Participant eligibility

Who is eligible to receive payment?

There is one criterion for individuals under the program: the participant is eligible as long as they are not being paid by any other organization, including their employer, to participate in or represent specific interests in the engagement activity.

How does ODOT identify participants? Can a participant reach out to ODOT and ask to be included?

ODOT staff will contact each participant for activities about the EECP opportunity. Participants need to self-certify that they are eligible and then decide if they would like to opt-in or opt-out of payment for the activity.

What if an individual sits on multiple committees or participates in other activities that are eligible for the EECP? Would they be paid multiple times?

Yes, that individual would be paid for their time for each activity they participate in, as long as they meet the individual criteria.

Can ODOT employees participate in the program?

No. ODOT employees are not eligible to receive payment under the program.

Activity eligibility

What types of engagement activities are eligible for EECP?

An "engagement activity" is conducted by ODOT to receive targeted feedback from specific stakeholders on projects, policies, plans, rules or evaluations. This can include but is not limited to activities like:

- Focus groups, workshops or targeted surveys with external audiences.
- Hiring or RFP evaluation panels where external stakeholders are asked to participate.

- Advisory committees/groups.

General public events, such as open houses and public testimony where residents at large are welcome to comment, are not covered under this policy, given their general nature.

Does ODOT pay participants for travel time to/from an activity?

No, we don't pay participants specifically for travel time.

Does the EECP force ODOT to limit attendance to qualifying activities?

No. The EECP doesn't affect how many people participate in a given activity, just how many might be eligible to receive payment for participating.

What about committees or advisory boards that meet multiple times?

Each meeting would be considered an activity, with corresponding payment for each.

Who determines eligibility?

ODOT staff determine eligibility for engagement activities and participants using the criteria stated elsewhere in this FAQ.

Other general questions

Are EECP participant forms available in other languages?

Forms are currently only available in English; however, they will be translated soon to Spanish. If the need for other translations arises, we'll address those too.

Who manages oversight and accountability for the EECP?

The Office of Social Equity, Financial Services, Office of Procurement, and each project utilizing the EECP has oversight and accountability of the program.

What is the retention length for EECP records?

Records retention follows the statewide guidelines.

Where does funding for EECP come from?

EECP payments must come out of an existing project or program budget, to the full extent possible.